Report of the ad hoc Awards Committee
(Charge to the committee in italics)

The charge to the committee is to review all the awards offered by the Botanical Society of America for potential bias in selection of awardees, relevance, financial sustainability, clarity of criteria for awarding, and appropriateness of the selection committees. These points are elaborated in more detail below.

The committee found the information about the awards themselves difficult to find. We also did not find the history of the person for whom the award was named to provide any important aspects of the award itself and often the history of the person was all the information provided – criteria for the award were sometimes lacking. We also found that various types of awards were buried in listings – for example the PLANTS Diversity Student Travel awards were not listed under travel awards, and would therefore be missed by some students who might actually be eligible for these awards. Likewise, several awards were buried under an elusive category called “Named Awards”, which could be uninformative for potential applicants. The committee response is “so what is this award actually recognizing?” If this is committee response, then we believe that the people who might actually be eligible may not be applying or may not be nominated by others. Newer awards should be added, such as the Public Policy travel award to the AIBS Congressional Visits Day.

The committee recommends reorganizing the web information into a single first page listing the awards and providing appropriate links to the information required for criteria and application processes, solicitation notices for the award nomination (or links to the appropriate section pages if a section award), eligibility (include this to facilitate screening in the BSA office for membership verification and other demographic requirements, leaving award committee to judge deeper award criteria), selection requirements for award, and information for the awards committee members regarding procedures of operation. We recommend that for added transparency, information about each award should be organized similarly, with brief information on the award accompanied by links to more detailed information. To facilitate knowledge of history of the award (origin and rationale for the award, followed by past winners), there should be a link at the central award site to this information as well. The awards document itself should focus on the award process and the criteria for the award, to emphasize the importance we attach to these honors. We also recommend that when solicitations for the nominations are distributed for BSA awards, the section awards be listed so that a wider audience is reached for nominations. Some of the awards could apply to all members of BSA and not just the members of a particular section, and this would also help the section committees receive nominations through a standardized process.

On the BSA web site, regardless of the name of the award, we recommend that the awards be listed by type of award using categories such as early career, advanced career, student research, student travel, etc. as appropriate. Section awards should also be listed on the web site, but separate from BSA society level awards. Other organization awards can be also be listed. Now that the sections have their own pages, we also recommend that section awards be posted on their respective section web pages following a similar format for the awards listings. The paleobotanical section, as an example, has already begun to assess its awards and a document was prepared for section review. The committee recommends that all sections review their awards to be sure that the criteria, committee membership, and decision process are clearly stated and that they also emphasize the standard procedures established by BSA.

Some of the committee members examined the web sites for other societies who have awards, and there are several models which BSA could modify, for example, the Ecological Society of America awards’ web page, which provides additional drop down information on the award and tabs for the
other pages to explain their sectional or other awards. The committee would like to see a similarly user-friendly integrative web presence for the BSA awards.

Specific comments addressing the charge to the committee from the board follow each charge below.

1. **Review information from AWIS (American Women in Science) on potential bias in society awards, and devise means to ensure that award committees are aware of the problem of implicit bias.** Consider recommending that committees review short clips from AWIS on this subject, as a means of familiarizing committee members with potential problem of implicit bias.

   The committee recommends that the BSA Office be charged with distributing the following material to each award committee:
   1. the description and criteria of the award,
   2. the charge to the committee with duties of the members according to BSA policy,
   3. the list of nominees for the award received by the BSA Office,
   4. the guidelines for committee procedures suggested below if accepted by the board,
   5. the information on implicit bias below and the sheet on implicit bias from AWIS (which we attach to this report) which provides links to the workshop videos on implicit bias and guidelines for committees to follow to ameliorate implicit bias,
   6. the BSA conflicts of interest policy, and
   7. the BSA statement on human diversity.

   This material may be distributed through posting on a web page with links to the documents. The chair of the committee should re-iterate to the awards committee members the importance of reviewing these documents prior to discussion of the award nominees.

   Implicit bias can influence selection processes, even with well-defined criteria. The committee suggests these actions to mitigate this bias and we note that:
   a. Everyone has implicit bias because of exposure to various situations during their lives and this must be recognized in order to be addressed. Implicit bias is more than gender bias and can influence selection processes because of other factors.
   b. Recognition of implicit bias as a factor is the biggest step to ameliorate it (see the end of this report for additional websites).
   c. It is important that standard criteria be followed and any deviation from these criteria should be questioned by the committee.

2. **Revise current procedures and other information about awards if necessary to ensure that the purpose of the award and how it is administered are clear.** Ensure that for each award, the criteria that have been established for choosing the recipient are clear. Determine whether selection committees for individual awards should develop a statement of the award significance, or whether information about the award is sufficient.

   The committee has examined the awards and we recommend that the committee for each award review the criteria and award statement and add any information into the standard BSA format suggested. The committee finds that not all awards have clear criteria stated. We think that the awards committees are the appropriate initial source for statements about the awards and the clarification of the award process but appropriate governance procedures within the sections should be followed for any changes made. Historical information may inform the award committee of the intent and potential historical bias that may need to be addressed. Therefore, the committee recommends that information about awards be consolidated into a document which is posted on the BSA web page under awards and that a standard format is set for all award information. Standard formats for the awards should include:
   1. Criteria for the award
   2. how many recipients if there are limits on numbers awarded each year
3. Evaluate whether current awards match the state of education, research, and/or service conducted by society members. Many awards were established years ago, and the area of anticipated award may no longer be actively pursued. If current activities have diverged from those outlined when the award was established, determine current areas or topics that are acceptable substitutes.

The committee reviewed the awards given by BSA and the sustainability of these awards. For the most part, the awards are appropriate and encompass areas that are still pertinent to BSA. The Pelton Award is one that has not been given for several years and should be reexamined and the people funding this award should be consulted about the continuation of the award as it now stands. (One member of the committee commented that “to a large degree, this is a failure of understanding the history of the award and poor liaison between the Conservation and Research Foundation which manages its funds and the BSA which awards it. We do not know the current situation, but suspect that investments are not returning sufficient funding and with the requirement of an address and paper, there are greater costs than originally endowed. Although this increased stature of the award, it has impeded awards to early career candidates. The comment emphasizes the committee recommendation that the appropriate groups should assess the awards for which they are responsible and make recommendations for the future of these awards.)

This committee strongly suggests that sections review their awards for clarity and appropriateness to the areas within their subdisciplines of plant biology. We have not had the time nor do we feel it appropriate for us to make recommendations on issues where experts within subdisciplines would be better consulted. We endorse the actions taken on the Darbaker prize to work with the Phycological Section and the Phycological Society to make that award more viable and pertinent and this model could be applied to other awards that may need to be revised, rejuvenated, or dropped. The committee also supports the Education Committee recommendation for the Bessey Award to emphasize activities in botanical education (not just teaching) and to emphasize activities on a broad scale.

4. Review current procedures to determine whether the language is sufficient to make committee responsibilities clear, particularly with respect to obtaining nominations. Stress the importance of committees in providing nominations in the absence of suggestions from the membership, and determine the best means to encourage committees to ensure that candidates for awards are nominated either by the committee or the membership at large.

The committee has emphasized and recommended language that allows the committee members to provide nominations for the awards (see below). We also suggest making all the documentation required for the nominations universal for the various categories of awards. This has already been done by utilization of the standard form for the student travel awards by some sections and we suggest that these kinds of forms or applications be standardized within each award category. We also suggest that when awards require a nomination from another individual, whoever makes the nomination should be responsible for obtaining electronic endorsements for the nomination and these should be included in the nomination document itself. Letters for achievement awards should be
Discussions to include all members. Suggested guidelines for committee procedures

Committee membership:
The committee-on-committees works with the President-Elect to populate the various awards committees with appropriate members. These new members may be drawn from the list of society members who volunteer on an annual basis to serve on committees and other qualified individual members representing a diversity of academic and personal perspectives, plus the committees for individual awards may suggest potential new members and the committee on committees and the President-Elect should solicit volunteers from the membership. Nomination of committee members should be done with attention to providing diversity on the committees (gender, race, level of experience, types of institutions, etc.) within the confines of eligibility for service on committees. Once the committee membership has been populated, the membership of the various committees is sent to the BSA board for approval. The Committee-on-Committees should strive to appoint persons that will best meet the needs of specific awards, both in commitment to attend meetings for presentation of awards as well as to academic and personal diversity. The BSA President appoints the chair of the committee.

Most award committees consist of a chair and two members, each serving three year terms with one member rotating off each year, except where stated in this document.

Section award committees are selected and appointed by the section overseeing the award.

Nominees for awards:
Nominations for the various awards and honors are solicited by the BSA President each year through a series of messages to the membership and through announcements on the BSA web pages, and in addition by informing the chairs of the award committees that it is the duty of the individual committees overseeing the awards and honors to help solicit nominees and aid in getting nominations to the BSA Office. Committee members may make nominations themselves but should then follow the COI procedures when these nominees are considered by the committee. The BSA Office coordinates all nominations received and distributes them to the various committees where appropriate. The various committees are responsible for making the selection of the awardees, communicating these names to the BSA board and/or office, and preparing any statements on the awardee to be presented at the annual meeting and/or published in PSB. The awards and honors committees will follow the guidelines for these honors as prescribed under the individual honor.

Committees should follow standard procedures during the process of selecting awardees and the following guidelines for committee procedures are offered for board consideration. The awards committee chair should inform the committee about the procedures to be followed, criteria for awards, and issues such as implicit bias before reviewing the nominees for selection.

Suggested guidelines for committee procedures

1. Discuss the process of award selection and criteria by which the potential awardees will be selected before reviewing nominations. The committee should make a list of award criteria as stated in the BSA documents and use only this list for making decisions on the recipient.

2. List your personal top nominees before hearing the recommendations of others. Each member should review all nominees according to the priority criteria and list his/her choices prior to discussions with the other members of the committee.

3. The chair of the committee should ensure that every committee member’s voice is heard. The committee chair should budget adequate time to make a decision and moderate selection discussions to include all members.
4. Make sure that all members know the society’s conflict of interest policy. The BSA COI policy should be distributed to all the committee members and committee members should make clear any connection with a person under consideration for an award so that the committee can come to a decision with respect to participation in further discussions. Committee members should recuse themselves from all discussions, votes, and decisions on the candidates for awards if they have a conflict of interest for or against that nominee.

5. Ask all committee members to review reference materials regarding implicit bias. In addition, the committee recommends that award committee chairs make their members aware of the effect of implicit bias on selection of individuals, noting that implicit bias can impact various characteristics of a person: e.g., gender, race, institution, position, etc. Committees should be strongly encouraged to view the videos available regarding implicit bias through the AWIS website. [http://www.awis.org/displaycommon.cfm?an=1&subarticlenbr=397](http://www.awis.org/displaycommon.cfm?an=1&subarticlenbr=397).

6. Committee procedures should include a description of the mechanism put forth by the BSA leadership for members to call attention to situations where a member considers an unfair situation has arisen. State that any committee member who feels that a decision has been unduly influenced can follow the BSA procedures for reporting such situations.

5. With respect to the Merit Award Committee, revise policy language if necessary to reflect that committee membership will be restricted to senior members of the society. Also, determine if this award should be restricted to a set number of individuals in any one year. Investigate ways of enhancing the prestige of the award.

The committee suggests adding language to the Merit Award Committee composition stating that the committee includes members who have received the award in order to avoid conflicts. We should strive for diversity in gender, race, area(s) of expertise, and institution type on this committee, as with all committees. To emphasize that the language describing the award should be broad with respect to the areas that will be considered meritorious, we would like to see committee members drawn from various types of institutions and whose botanical contributions have been in areas other than only research (i.e. members who do research, education, and service of various kinds such as public outreach, policy, administration, etc.) which also reflects the emphases stated in the BSA strategic plan for the society. We feel that the current description of the Merit Award also indicates that these are areas of importance to plant biology and in order to recognize these areas, the members of the committee need to reflect more diversity in contributions to plant science.

The committee was divided on number of awards per year and also ways to enhance the prestige of the award. One view was that to enhance the prestige of the ‘highest honor the society bestows’ would be to limit the award to one recipient per year. Another view expressed was 1-2 recipients, and the third view was up to 4 awards depending upon the pool of qualified applicants. Several committee members expressed the view that the overall average number of awards per year should remain at about 2.7 (the current average). The committee therefore makes no recommendation on this question and suggests that the board discuss the intent of the award and determine which option will best reflect that intent or seek input from all members of the BSA for a broader perspective.

6. Investigate the possibility of creating an early-career award sufficiently prestigious to have a positive effect on rising “stars” within the society. A goal of this award would be to advance the career of the recipient both at his/her home institution and nationally, as she/he is considered for tenure and/or promotion. If such an award is instituted, its sustainability must be considered, in terms of finding committee members strongly supporting the concept. Awards at other levels should be considered as well. Could the duties of the Merit Award Committee be expanded to encompass career awards at other levels?
The committee recommends establishing an ‘Emerging Leader’ award for a person within 8 years of their Ph.D. for creative and influential work in any area of botany and demonstrating outstanding scholarship, education and leadership activities as noted by the society in the strategic plan statements. We propose a separate committee for the selection of this award. The committee will be three members who are 10 years or beyond the receipt of their Ph.D. serving three year rotating terms. Details of this award should parallel those of the Merit Awards for materials required. Nominations should be solicited broadly across the sections, committees, and members of the society and sections should be encouraged to submit nominations to be sure many disciplines are represented. The committee suggests 1, or up to 3, of these awards could be given each year.

7. Work with Bill Dahl and the BSA treasurer to ensure that awards are sustainable financially. In some cases, the frequency of the award might be altered to achieve sustainability. In other cases, it may be necessary to terminate an award. Decisions should be made in consultation with sections.

The committee has suggested above that sections review their awards and here we suggest that they consult with Bill Dahl on the feasibility of maintaining the awards. We recommend that any awards must be sustainable if the award is to continue and that appropriate measures be taken to achieve this sustainability (requesting additional financial support on the annual dues notice, decreasing frequency or number of the awards presented, reallocating funds from other accounts if available, or setting aside endowment funds such that the interest is adequate to cover monetary awards if those funds are available, etc.)

8. Prepare a report to the BSA board by February 1, 2013, for discussion at the April 2013 board meeting.

This report is submitted to the board on January 31, 2013 by the Ad Hoc Awards Committee: Amy Litt, Allison Miller, Scott Russell, James Seago, Judith Skog, chair, Steve Weller, ad hoc member from the BSA Board.

Afterword on Diversity:

Although the problems of implicit bias extend beyond gender, the use of the AWIS site was chosen for several reasons: 1. it is the result of a workshop which was support by NSF and BSA was one of the many scientific societies that participated, 2. although it was mainly concerned with implicit bias for gender, it includes on the website scientific studies with findings about the influence of implicit bias, and 3. since it was funded by NSF the site recommendations include the language which is used by NSF in all their instructions to review panels regarding the awareness of implicit bias and how to mitigate it.

We are concerned with the emphasis on gender, so we added a note that implicit bias can be much broader in scope. To emphasize that point we suggest including not only the AWIS site as a source of guidance on the issue, but two others - the Rutgers University site on their program of implicit bias (http://philosophy.rutgers.edu/graduate-program/climate/133-graduate/climate/529-climate-of-women-implicit-bias), and the National Center for State Courts (http://www.ncsc.org/~media/Files/PDF/Topics/Gender%20and%20Racial%20Fairness/IB_Strategies_033012.ashx) which cautions against implicit bias for minorities of any type and emphasizes the pervasive nature of implicit bias.

We believe that the inclusion of alternative sources strengthens the importance of this topic in any situation where decisions of various kinds are being made.

We sincerely hope that BSA will be seen as an ‘honest broker’ when it comes to many decisions and analyses about plant biology, and having sound policies in place will strengthen the society's position to become a ‘go to’ place for careful and impartial analysis.
Unconscious Bias

Research shows that when presented with two equal candidates, one male and the other female, most evaluators prefer the male candidate – regardless of the evaluator's gender.

The Experiment

- Experienced evaluators were given a resume and asked if they would hire the candidate for a position in psychology.
- Groups of evaluators had a balanced ratio of men to women.
- The same resume was given to all evaluators, with the exception of the name at the top.
- Some groups were asked to evaluate “Karen” and others were asked to evaluate “Brian.”

![Bar chart showing preference between female and male candidates]

Both male and female evaluators preferred to hire the male candidate... even though the female candidate had the exact same CV!

The Results

- Since the resumes were identical except for the candidate's name, this study clearly demonstrates gender bias at work.
- Because both female and male evaluators rated the male candidate higher than the female candidate, this is clearly not a malicious or overt stereotype, but an unconscious bias that associates science more strongly with men.

The solution? Bring unconscious bias out into the open.

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