2015 Report of the Director at large for Education.

As in the past we have had several conference calls between the Staff Director of Education (Catrina Adams), the Education Committee Chairperson (Phil Gibson), and myself. In addition this year one of the calls included all members of the Education Committee. This has been very useful for program planning and hopefully it will continue in the future. All three primary aspects of the BSA Education program are doing well.

Education Committee.

The Committee sponsored a symposium on the AAAS Vision and Change program which is focused on improving introductory college biology courses. The program brought in experts in different aspects of the program, from redesigning individual courses through implementing department-wide innovations, with the intent of explaining the program to society members and providing go-to contacts.

The long-in-development Plant Ed program, in collaboration with ESA and others, is now up and running. The BSA has a core of reviewers but the task is now to solicit additional plant-based materials.

We again participated in the Life Discovery Network program and are in planning for next-year’s conference. BSA is a co-sponsor of this program.

A new initiative, resulting from the all-committee conference call, is to sponsor a competition for BSA Student Chapters to develop and present an outreach type of activity suitable for any BSA member to use in local outreach promoting plants and plant biology to local schools, museums, non-profits, etc. An invitation is to go out to all student chapter members participating in this year’s meeting to attend the BSA Education Committee meeting Sunday morning to brainstorm on how best to implement the competition at the 2016 meeting in Savanna.

Planting Science

The 2014-15 academic year sessions were successful but again the number of schools and participants was limited by the platform and available funding. A revised renewal proposal was submitted by Catrina and her co-PIs, notably including BSCS, and we have recently been informed that it is recommended for approval. This is great news and should overcome our recent limitations.

Despite the shortcomings noted above, we piloted a unique new approach with a school in the St. Louis Area. Every biology teacher and biology student in the school participated in planting science. This involved a school-wide hybrid in person/video conference introduction to the program by Catrina and a handful of experienced PlantingScience mentors, as well as typical group/mentor teams during the session. The outcomes have not yet been fully analyzed but overall it seemed to be a “better than average” experience for the students.

Two new pilots are planned for this year; one with Canadian schools and another with schools in Minnesota. We are also anticipating several new international participants.
Teaching Section.

The Teaching Section had a successful meeting program in Boise with 15 oral papers presented, 15 posters, and 6 educational workshops. These are comparable numbers to the previous two years and the last 3 years were markedly better than any year in the previous decade. Section Chair Carina Anttila-Suare and Vice-chair/Program Director Madhav Nepal have done an excellent job.

Respectfully submitted,

Marsh Sundberg
Director-at-large for Education