



BOTANICAL SOCIETY OF AMERICA

Mission: To inspire and promote an inclusive global community committed to advancing fundamental knowledge and innovation in the botanical sciences for the benefit of people and the environment.

BUSINESS OFFICE REPORT - Fall 2024

I. Financial Update

BSA finances remain strong. Tricia and I have been working to finish off the fiscal year-end financial reconciliation as well as preparing for the upcoming audit of FY2024 (year-end of Sept 30). The Board has a draft FY2024 Profit and Loss Statement for review and a Budget-to-Actual financial report will be available for our next Board meeting after the audit work is complete. Although not finalized, it looks like we will end the fiscal year with a net operating loss of \$210,937, which is better than our budgeted loss for FY2024 of \$237,318. Also, it was a great year for investments. Our investment account made significant gains of \$1.5 Million.

Total giving in FY2024 amounted to \$83,593, a decrease from \$95,461 the previous year (note that in FY2023 we ran a special campaign to raise over \$22K for the new AJ Harris Award). Our donations this year included a successful “A Day for BSA” campaign to raise funds for the endowment. Due to this effort, giving to the BSA Endowment was up, ending the fiscal year at \$41,296, an 83% increase. However, grad student research award giving was down by 38%. We will focus the Giving Tuesday and year-end giving on the GSRA account first and endowment second so we can increase the funds to give out at least 25 GSRA awards in 2025.

Key things to note about our fiscal year performance:

- 1) Our overall income from membership dues decreased by 7.6%, although membership numbers are up. (the mix of members, 3-year vs 1-year members, and an increase in those that opted out of the extra \$25 dues to support the GSRA all contribute to this discrepancy)
- 2) Publications income was \$4K more than what we had budgeted, reflecting the first royalty payment from Wiley under our latest contract. (The royalty payment is from the 2023 sales year and is made to the Society in February or March of the following year)
- 3) Grant income and expenses are less than last year. Activity and spending for our F2 Education/PlantingScience grant has slowed down just a bit as we move toward the data analysis work of the grant.
- 4) We continued to trim expenses where we could and held very tight to the budget we set.
- 5) This was the second year we pulled down funds from the investment portfolio to keep our operating bank balances above the \$400K required amount. The amount of \$229K (4% of Investment account unallocated funds) was pulled in late September with the previous approval of the Financial Advisory and Investment Committees, the Board and Council.

As of September 30, 2024, our BSA Investment portfolio stood at \$8,480,295, which is a 19% increase from the same date in 2023.

Recent Bank Balances as of Oct 31, 2024:

Conference Account: \$ 35,775
BSA Checking Account: \$214,408
BSA Money Market Account: \$313,830

II. Governance

Since our Botany conference meetings, I have been working on four main issues related to overall governance for the Society. First, I have been engaged with the national search for a new Botany conference meeting planner. I'm pleased to say that after a two-month search, reviewing over 50 applications, conducting several interviews and reference checks, we signed an agreement with Burk Inc on October 1. With excellent references from other scientific societies, and a part-time contracted position, this appeared to be the best fit for our needs. Johanne and I have been working with their main meeting planner, Lori Strong, to ease her into the position. Lori has over 30 years of experience in planning conferences and handling scientific society meeting needs and has jumped right in to the work on meeting needs for 2025 and 2026.

Second, I have spent a good deal of time working with Amelia, Vivian Negrón-Ortiz and the Ad Hoc Committee on Climate Change to prepare for our first ever two-day virtual symposium. From the design of the meeting web site, the marketing, abstract collection and selection, invitation of speakers, and all of the logistical details, this has been a learning experience and a time-consuming effort for our staff. With over 1000 people registered to attend, it will be interesting to see the survey results and the downstream effects of hosting a free global event of this nature. We are very excited about the exposure this brings to the Society and the opportunity we have to foster community and connections on this important topic. Kudos to Amelia Neely who really contributed so much work to make the high-caliber branding and communications surrounding the symposium.

Third, Brenda Molano-Flores and I have been engaged in the next steps of work related to the Election and Nominations reforms suggested by the Ad Hoc Committee from 2023. I reviewed several options for Board-balanced rubrics and matrices, as well as how other associations were managing self-disclosure of Board demographics and competencies. Together with the assistance of the previous Ad Hoc Committee members, we drafted a balanced Board-matrix, made changes to the Board Nomination Acceptance Form and discussed its use with the Election Committee. These proposed adjustments will be discussed with the Board at this fall meeting.

Finally, Tricia and I have been deeply engaged in year-end financial reconciliation for the conference books as well as BSA's finances for the last few months. We are now beginning to engage in the early prep work for our audit. The audit field work will be conducted in January with a written report ready this spring. Another year of conference loss was one that, while we tried our best to avoid, signaled that deeper changes are needed to the financial handling of the conference.

Other items I have been working on:

- Ramping up new committees and attending their meetings: DEI, Committee on Committees, Election, Financial Advisory, Research Awards, Kaplan Memorial Lecture

- Working with the Botany and Beyond: PLANTS III Project Coordinator on post-conference survey results, reimbursements, annual report preparation and early planning for the 2025 program
- Working with the AISES staff and the Steering Committee for the LEAPS RCN: Indigenous Voices (BSA, ESA and Ent Society), and preparing for the IV convening and action planning at HHMI which took place in October
- Handling BSA award payouts, reimbursements, end-of-year conference reconciliation
- Prepping the award descriptions and 2025 awards for opening to the community
- Leading the Botany 2025 and 2026 planning and reorganization calls in conjunction with Melanie Link-Perez and Lori Strong
- Researching Ethics and Professional Conduct policies of various scientific societies
- Overseeing the work and agreement for a Publications podcast
- Reviewing and discussing options for the preparation of new education grants
- Participating in the SSE Council meeting in July as a representative from their business office and assisting in some banking adjustments
- Working with SEB Council and conference organizers to assist in the planning of their June 2025 meeting in Prague

III. Membership and Communications

The 2024 membership totals as of November 1 are strong and up by 55 memberships compared to the same time last year, which is a 1.9% increase. Our total has exceeded 3,000 members and stands at 3,027 on November 1st, ahead of both 2023 and 2022 during the same time period. The Professional memberships, which had been declining year after year have plateaued this year with a slight gain of 15 members, a very welcome shift. The Student member total is about the same as last year. Students have moved more toward the 3-year membership options so far this year with almost 50 more students choosing this option than this time last year. Postdocs are down slightly, with less choosing the 3-year option. Finally, the Developing Nations' memberships continue to grow at an impressive 23% increase compared to last year, with many choosing the 3-year option. Renewal season has started for those expiring at the end of this year, and a lapsed campaign has also been launched for those who expired between 2020 and 2023. The renewal messages also encourage members to make donations, join sections, and purchase gift memberships.

As we close out the year, we will also be sending emails to members to consider donating to the Graduate Student Research Awards and also the BSA Endowment. With a very successful "A Day for BSA" bringing in just over \$14,000 for the BSA Endowment, we have decided to emphasize the GSRA fund at year-end and increase our ability to give out as many \$1,500 awards as possible for 2025. **I ask that all board members consider a donation of any size for the GSRA fund in the month of November.** This could be via "opting in" to the additional fee for GSRA when renewing your Professional membership, or by [clicking here](#) and making a donation. This would allow us to promote that we have had 100% participation from our board for this effort. Thank you in advance! **The 2024 gift membership drive has a goal of 100 memberships this year.** We are currently at 21 memberships purchased. Please consider giving or donating gift memberships when you renew this year, or anytime by [clicking here](#).

There have been 8 Botany360 events so far this year. Several of which have recordings available for viewing on the [landing page](#). Several BSA committees, especially the Early Career Professional Development Committee, and the BSA Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Committee have worked hard to put together these offerings. If you have an idea for a Botany360 event,

please email me (aneely@botany.org). The largest virtual offering of the year is the **BSA Virtual Symposium on Climate Change November 14-15**, spearheaded by Vivian Negrón-Ortiz. As of writing this report we have over 1000 registrants, of which we expect about one third – one half to attend. We will also be recording the event and making that available to the public. Over two-thirds of those registered are not current BSA members, so we will be following up after the event with an offer to join the Society and stay connected.

The BSA social media audiences have continued to grow. This year we have added many of the same posts to BSA Slack to keep the audience there informed and engaged.

Instagram – 5,954 followers (up 490 since the June report)

X (formally Twitter) - 22,971 (up 402 since the June report)

Facebook – 36,862 followers (up 603 from the June report)

BlueSky – 678 (up 252 since the June report)

BSA Slack – 678 (first time reporting)

Total Followers on all platforms: 67,143 followers (up 2,425 since the June report)

Finally, several awards are now open for applications/nominations:

- **Graduate Student Dissertation Award in Phylogenetic Comparative Plant Biology** – Deadline February 3, 2025
- **Donald R. Kaplan Dissertation Award in Comparative Morphology** – Deadline February 3, 2025
- **BSA Graduate Student Research Awards** – Deadline February 17, 2025
- **BSA Corresponding Members** – Deadline February 3, 2025

Please share these opportunities and links with your community.

Respectfully Submitted,
Heather Cacanindin
Executive Director