

# Membership and Communications Report

## 2020 Board Meeting

Amelia Neely – Membership & Communications Manager

### Membership Overview

	<b>2019</b>	% of Total	<b>2018</b>	% of Total	<b>2017</b>	% of Total	<b>2016</b>	% of Total	<b>2015</b>	% of Total
Corresponding	69	2.3%	65	2.2%	68	2.3%	63	2.0%	62	1.9%
Life	87	2.9%	76	2.6%	69	2.4%	60	1.9%	57	1.8%
Emeritus	283	9.4%	280	9.5%	281	9.6%	262	8.4%	255	7.9%
E Family	39	1.3%	39	1.3%	38	1.3%	36	1.2%	36	1.1%
Retired	66	2.2%	65	2.2%	53	1.8%	49	1.6%	52	1.6%
R Family	2	0.1%	0	0.0%	4	0.1%	4	0.1%	2	0.1%
3 Yr Professional	300	9.9%	242	8.2%	178	6.1%		0.0%		0.0%
3 Yr Prof Family	20	0.7%	17	0.6%		0.0%		0.0%		0.0%
Professional	881	29.1%	984	33.5%	1050	36.0%	1305	41.8%	1367	42.6%
P Family	111	3.7%	129	4.4%	145	5.0%	173	5.5%	186	5.8%
CC Professional	38	1.3%	34	1.2%	44	1.5%	46	1.5%	41	1.3%
CC Family	3	0.1%	2	0.1%	4	0.1%	2	0.1%	4	0.1%
PostDoc	159	5.3%	173	5.9%	173	5.9%	207	6.6%	183	5.7%
PD Family	3	0.1%	3	0.1%	1	0.0%	2	0.1%	5	0.2%
3 Yr Student-NEW	94	3.1%		0.0%		0.0%		0.0%		0.0%
Student	692	22.9%	643	21.9%	630	21.6%	751	24.0%	818	25.5%
S Family	0	0.0%	2	0.1%	3	0.1%	5	0.2%	6	0.2%
S Chapter	22	0.7%	34	1.2%	37	1.3%	41	1.3%	24	0.7%
K-12 Teachers	12	0.4%	15	0.5%	13	0.4%	19	0.6%	21	0.7%
Affiliate	22	0.7%	24	0.8%	33	1.1%	38	1.2%	35	1.1%
Associate	1	0.0%	2	0.1%	5	0.2%	3	0.1%	2	0.1%
Amateur	51	1.7%	60	2.0%	64	2.2%	58	1.9%	54	1.7%
Developing Nations	69	2.3%	52	1.8%	24	0.8%		0.0%		0.0%
	<b>3024</b>		<b>2941</b>		<b>2917</b>		<b>3124</b>		<b>3210</b>	
Professional	2130	70.4%	2161	73.5%	2132	73.1%	2209	70.7%	2250	70.1%
Student	808	26.7%	679	23.1%	670	23.0%	797	25.5%	848	26.4%
Other	86	2.8%	101	3.4%	115	3.9%	118	3.8%	112	3.5%
<i>Growth/Decline</i>	<b>3024</b>	<b>2.8%</b>	<b>2941</b>	<b>0.8%</b>	<b>2917</b>	<b>6.9%</b>	<b>3124</b>	<b>2.7%</b>	<b>3210</b>	<b>2.0%</b>

Membership increased slightly in 2019 (83 more members than 2018). We have surpassed 3000 members for the first time since 2016 so we are heading in the right direction.

### Membership Category Highlights:

- 2019 was the third year that a **3-year Professional** membership option was available. This option continues to attract more members with an increase of over 60 members to the 3-year option last year. **2020 will be the first year that this multi-year group will be asked to renew.** Special attention will be made during the 2020 renewal season (which starts in October) to renew these professional members.

- We saw an increase of 17 new **Life members** who took advantage of our one-time cost to stay members in perpetuity. This is the largest growth in this category for the last 15 years, with typical years increasing only by an average of 4 in the last 7 years. Life members are asked to donate each year and have been shown to do so generously.
- **Student membership** numbers have been very strong this year, increasing almost 130 members (over 17% growth).
  - 94 student members took advantage of the **3-Year student membership** in its first year, 28% of those being new student members.
  - Last fall we implemented a new **Gift Membership Drive** with a Botany Conference registration drawing and had a goal of 125 gift memberships. We exceeded that with a total of 158 gift membership purchases (compared to 72 during the same time period last year). Of those redeemed 57 were new students.
  - **Total New Student members** this year was 378, which was 47% of our student member total. Looking at total number renewing (not percentage), the number of renewals have been consistent for the last 3 years only growing mildly. With strong new member growth this year we will be focusing on keeping these new student members in the years to come to increase our overall renewal numbers as well as sustain the already very successful new member rate. Here are some ways we will do that:
    - Strong Student Social Media Presence
    - Student driven communications by the BSA Student Reps
    - Consideration of needs for upcoming mentoring program
    - Consideration of needs for upcoming website redesign
    - Conference Booth to highlight students and be welcoming
    - Continued awards and programs that we already have in place to promote students and support their needs
    - Promote Gift Memberships for Students
- The **Developing Nations** category grew by 17 members (28% growth), continuing to show the importance of offering this membership level to developing country members.
- **Professional Categories Totals (Professional, 3-Year Professional, Professional Family):**  
**2019 = 1312      2018 = 1372      2017 = 1373      2016 = 1478      2015 = 1553**  
 New = 63 - 4.8%      65 - 4.7%      94 - 6.8%      100-6.8%      107-6.9%  
 Renew = 1076 - 82%  
 Moved to Prof = 11 - 1%  
 Lap Renew = 162 - 12%

**Professional Members** weakened this year by 4.5%. This general downward trend can be seen over the last 5 years. The new member percentage average over the last five years is about 6% and in 2018-2019 it was closer to 5%. Though this shows a **very strong renewal percentage** (82% renewed from last year and 13% were lapsed and came back), it does show the **need to focus on attracting new professional members** to keep this category strong. We intend to do this by:

- Membership acquisition at the Botany Conference BSA booth to promote new professional members joining the society. Possibly with a special offer or special gift if joining for the first time at the booth.
  - Ask our current professional members, including the board, to "refer a friend" and bring them into the society.
  - Utilize our social media presence to highlight professional members, and start a "new member" social media profile to be shared.
  - Use the website redesign process to create a welcoming and relevant experience for professional members
  - Continue to require that for most BSA awards and grants current memberships are needed to apply, nominate and to give recommendations
- **Post Doc memberships** have fallen by 14 (8.3%) in 2019, the lowest in the last five years. 5 Members moved from Post-Doc to Professional and 10 Students moved to Post-Doc in 2019. There were 23 New members (14.2%), 82 Renewed from last year (50.6%) and 57 were lapsed and returned (35.2%). This performance highlights the need to meet the needs of this small group of members to encourage them to join and renew their membership during this stage of their career. One way to do this is by **offering them a 3-Year Post-Doc membership option** with the same caveat as the 3-Year Student membership that they will continue to benefit from this membership level for the entire 3 years not dependent on their career stage.

## Social Media

This year we welcome our first two BSA Student Social Media Liaisons **Taran Lichtenberger** from Northwestern University and **Jared Meek** from Columbia University. The purpose of these positions is to use the unique student perspective to help foster a thriving digital community for botanists, plant researchers, and plant lovers.

This year's liaisons have been very active in promoting the society on Twitter, Facebook and Instagram. Rich Hund and myself meet with the liaisons once a month to check on their progress and they have been successful in fulfilling the obligations put forth in the original job description as well as willing to take on extra roles when asked. They are not only posting interesting and relevant topics on social media, they are also preparing a draft copy of the BSA Student Social Media handbook to be presented to next year's liaisons. They have met with the Student Representatives, PlantingScience team, and are now starting a plan to work with the 2020 ECAB to cross-promote on social media. Rich and I could not be more satisfied with the work that has come from the liaisons and look forward to seeing what they accomplish in the rest of their time with us.

Both liaisons have shown interest in coming to the 2020 Botany Conference and they want to facilitate promoting BSA by volunteering their time while there. We hope that we can help financially support their attendance at the conference which would greatly benefit BSA as well as their own careers. The following are their reports.

## Jared Meek's report:

Since beginning work as a BSA Social Media Liaison in October, I have primarily been focusing on the BSA **Twitter** account. Since October, we have **averaged 98 new Twitter followers a month** and **893 visits** to our Twitter profile. I have implemented three main efforts to foster increased interactions among our Twitter followers. One has simply been **to include the hashtag #BSAmember(s)** any time we tweet or retweet about the work of one of our members. Another has been to create the **“BSA Member” list on Twitter**, which is a collection of all the current BSA members who have shared their Twitter handles (profile names) with us. The list makes it very simple for us and all other BSA members to see a Twitter feed that is focused only on what their fellow society members are working on and talking about. It has been a good way for us to more easily see and promote our members' activity, but I'm unclear how frequently other members look at it.

The third effort is called **#Morphology\_Monday**, which involves us posting plant pictures that members send to us and asking the BSA Twitter community to identify. The first couple of #Morphology\_Monday posts seemed promising (see below), but only a few members have sent in their pictures to us so far. I hope this will turn into a fun, weekly way to engage our members with each other, but it will require more consistent participation from members than currently exists. Rather than a post every Monday, I am just posting a #Morphology\_Monday on the Monday after receiving plant pictures from someone.



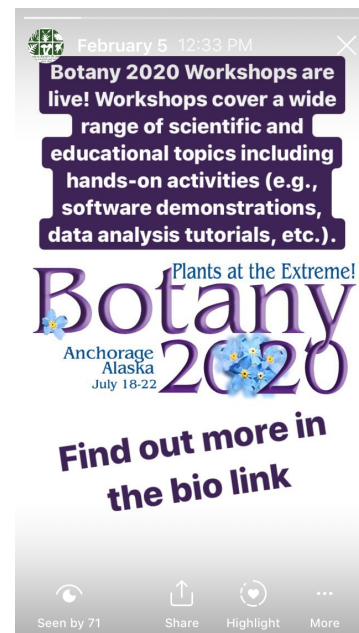
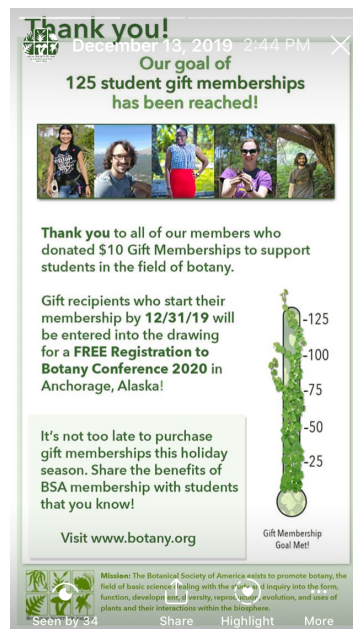
**-Action item for Board:** Do you have images you can send to Jared for Morphology Monday? If so email them to [socialmedia@botany.org](mailto:socialmedia@botany.org).

## Taran Lichtenberger's Report:

**Facebook** following has **increased by roughly 1275 followers** or **4%** since October 2019 and now the page has over **32,000 followers**. We average about 5 posts a week with an average of 363 engagements (reactions/comments/shares) on each post. Minimal changes have been made as the page was already well established. Tabs were rearranged to be more user friendly and statistics on the page are being recorded monthly. Our post about the January issue of *AJB* performed very well reaching roughly 49,000 accounts and Giving Tuesday posts reached almost 20,000 accounts.

**Instagram** following has **increased by roughly 170 followers** or **almost 60%** since October 2019 and the account has **290 followers**. This medium has been more difficult to craft posts for because a picture is necessary and we are aiming for two to three posts a week. Working recently on posting about #AJB and #APPSPlantSci articles has made this easier and may lead to more frequent posting. **Posts about the journal articles tend to do well, receiving likes from about 10% of followers.** Humor seems to do well, with a recent post about a citizen science article featuring a picture of a plant with binoculars garnering 38 likes. The Instagram account was converted to a business account at no cost, but this allows us to track our audience better, statistics are also being recorded monthly. An updated description for the account to more closely match the Twitter bio is in the works.

So far I have contributed 5 pages of information to the **Future Liaison Handbook** integrating the initial document of log-ins and account guidelines to now include photo specifications, social media tips, and recording statistics instructions.



**-Action item for Board:** Vote on providing \$1000 per liaison for travel expenses so they can attend the conference. This amount would cover registration and most of an airline ticket. Though this would not cover all of their expenses it would go a long way to making their attendance feasible. The liaisons would have specific duties to perform at

the conference in exchange for this financial assistance. This amount is for 2020 only, with future years to be determined.

### **BSA eCommunications**

Our 2019 *Membership Matters* eNewsletters averaged an open rate of 43.6% which is over 3% higher than 2019 and outstanding compared to the industry standard of 25%. This shows that the monthly eNewsletter is seen as a great benefit to our members and has consistently included relevant and useful information to our member base. This year we also sent monthly eTocs for *AJB* and *APPS* with an amazing open rate of 47.5%, showing the incredible value that our members find receiving eTocs from BSA. Our eCommunications are compiled with information from the team as a whole which allows for a wide variety of relevant content and resources made available to our members.

### **Future projects**

- 3-Year Post-Doc membership option to be approved and implemented by 2020 renewal season in October 2020
- Once SEB's database is transitioned to CiviCRM I will take over responsibility for database integrity and their membership program (Heather is currently doing this)
- BSA website redesign, with my focus on member experience
- Continue exploration and possible implementation of new BSA Mentor Program by 2021 Botany Conference as a member benefit
- Explore Micro-volunteer opportunities for BSA members as member benefit
- Explore a Refer-a-Friend program for Professional members for 2020
- Explore new member onboarding experiences, including new member highlights on social media, asking for hash tag for member twitter group and promoting any micro-volunteering opportunities, gift memberships, and possible refer-a-friend program