

## **BSA President's report: 2023-2024**

Brenda Molano-Flores

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### **Selected highlights**

As President, during the period of July 2023 to June 2024, my focus was to continue to support the mission and activities of BSA and serve our members. In addition, I worked with the Executive Director (ED) Heather Cacanindin and the BSA staff to support and implement aspects of our Strategic Plan. As part of my duties, I have led the regular BSA Board meetings, replied to BSA emails, met with the ED every two weeks to ask about and inform myself of BSA activities, grants, finances, annual meeting, and committee developments. In addition, I conducted the annual evaluation of our ED with assistance from other Board members and approved her monthly timesheets. Overall, as a society BSA is doing well, and we keep navigating the financial landscape to make sure that our society is making decisions that will allow us to stay fiscally healthy. Below, I present several updates and highlights of activities that I was involved with or that the ED in conjunction with the BSA staff accomplished this year.

*BSA Journals* – Several meetings occurred throughout the year to assess the financial viability of our journals. The ED, Board, and BSA publication staff met with Wiley staff to inform ourselves about the publication landscape, to better increase the visibility of our journal, and to better project revenue from our two journals. In addition, the Editor in Chief for AJB and for PSB will be stepping down and a committee was formed to find their replacements. Interviews were conducted and two new editors have been selected. Many thanks to the search committee Chair - Emily Sessa, the committee, and the BSA staff for leading this effort as these two journals will be in good hands.

*Botany 2024* – BSA staff members (Tricia, Heather, and Johanne) have developed a financial projection tool to evaluate gains/losses for our Botany conferences. This new tool is meant to track expenditures and revenues in “real time” to keep the conferences financially viable.

*BSA Committees* – The BSA Committee on Committees, with the assistance of BSA ED, was once again successful at appointing new members to all the committees. However, the application pool for some of the committees was none or very low (see Committee on Committees report).

*Virtual Events* – Botany360 virtual events continue to be successful and well attended by our membership.

*NSF Desk Review* – In August 2024, BSA finalized all the items associated with an NSF Desk Review that started in April 2023.

*International Botanical Congress and meetings with other international societies* – BSA provided travel support for eight BSA members to attend the 2024 IBC in Madrid, Spain. In addition, several emails were sent, and conversations are ongoing associated with exploring the possibility of having joint meetings with colleagues from Canada and Mexico.

*AJ Harris Graduate Student Research Award* – A new award was established in honor of AJ Harris, a BSA member that lost her battle with cervical cancer. The award will support research by a graduate student and will continue AJ's legacy.

*BSA and Ethical Guidelines* – BSA Board members finalized our “Ethical Guidelines for Nominated Awards and Invited Speakers/Panelists.”

*BSA Audited Financial Statements and Single Audit* – Due to BSA exceeding the \$750K in expenditures threshold for grants, a single audit was conducted. No significant findings were found.

*Site Visit to Grand Rapids* – In the fall of 2023 I was part of the team that visited Grand Rapids (MI), the host city for the Botany 2024 meeting. We had a hybrid meeting with the leadership of the other participant societies to talk about venue, finances, vendors, and code of conduct. In addition, we visited all the facilities to be used and determined that they met, for the most part, the inclusive conference standards developed by ROOT & SHOOT.

*Botany & Beyond NSF* – A final and positive resolution associated with the Botany & Beyond grant was achieved after two years. This resolution has allowed BSA to sponsor more students and mentors to attend the Botany 2024 meeting.

*Physiology Section* – The leadership of the Physiology Section met with ED and I to address a financial dispute associated with a former award. A positive resolution was achieved. In addition, members of this sections during their business meeting voted to change the section name to the Physiological and Ecophysiological Section.

*NSF ROOT & SHOOT RCN* – I continue to attend the monthly ROOT & SHOOT meetings as one of two BSA steering committee members of the NSF ROOT & SHOOT group (<https://rootandshoot.org/>). The ROOT & SHOOT program is a collaborative effort among six scientific societies (including BSA) to address issues associated with DEI within and among the participating societies. In 2024 ROOT & SHOOT and BSA provided travel awards to defer travel costs for BSA members to attend the Botany 2024 meeting.

*BSA nominations/election reform* – With the assistance of the ED, we have moved forward to create greater clarity, transparency, and equity in BSA's processes for nominating and electing BSA's leaders. During the winter and spring of 2023, a small Ad Hoc group from

BSA engaged in a capstone project as part of our participation in the NSF ROOT & SHOOT RCN regarding inclusive and best practices in Society nominations/elections resulting in a report titled, “Report on BSA Election Processes, Outcomes, and Recommendations for Reform.” Already three items have been achieved or are in progress: 1) revised several of the job descriptions and responsibilities of Board positions, 2) held a Botany 360 webinar describing roles of leadership positions, and 3) created a two-step nomination process with a simple form for nominations to be made and a separate form for nominees to complete and accept the nomination. Other items such as balanced Board matrix, a Board member handbook, cleaning up bylaws/policies that have old language or outdated/broken links will be the focus of activities as Past-President and Chair of the Election Committee.

*Partnerships with Federal Agencies and other entities* – Several meetings were held with staff from BML and USFS to develop partnerships with these agencies. Also, BSA staff members (Amelia, Rich, Johanne, and Heather) obtained funding from Longwood Gardens for the sponsorship and advertising of their Fellows Program.

#plantjoy – BSA staff (Amelia and Rich) approached me regarding the development of a social media campaign as the result of my Presidential speech. It was name #plantjoy and I hope you have enjoyed it. I truly enjoyed hearing and seeing everyone’s stories and photos of how they experience #plantjoy!



I will end this report with a big thank you to the ED, BSA staff, BSA board, and members serving on our committees, as without your support I would have been lost. Professionally, I have furthered my leadership skills, and I have met and worked with so many kind and hard-working people. It has been my honor serving as your President.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Brenda Molano-Flores".

Brenda Molano-Flores, President of the Botanical Society of America