

BSA Section report, 2021

Primarily Undergraduate Institution (PUI) Plant Network

Committee:

Chairperson: Jennifer Ison (serving one year as chair after serving as vice-chair, to rotate off 2021)

Program Coordinator/ Vice-Chairperson: Jason Cantley (resigning the position in 2021)

Secretary/Treasurer: Stephanie Lyon (serving three years, to rotate off 2022)

Student/Postdoc: Rachel McCoy (serving one year, with the potential to continue)

Botany 2020 meeting activities:

We held a successful section meeting and meet-and-greet with at least 38 attendees. The committee updated the members on section business and then had breakout group discussions on how members of the PUI section can support each other, particularly during the pandemic. After the abrupt halt to research programs and sudden transition to online teaching in spring 2020, many members expressed increased isolation and increased workload. Elections were held for the vice-chair position, and topics for future workshops were also discussed.

Activities during the year:

PUI Zoom check-ins

To support PUI members and foster a PUI community, we held two peer Zoom check-ins at the beginning of each semester during the 2020-2021 academic year. The check-ins were a direct response to what we heard from members during the section meeting. Members said they wanted an opportunity for faculty at PUIs and those interested in PUI careers to talk and connect but keep stakes low and not add to workload. The first check-in was Sept. 24, 2020, at 7 pm EDT (topic: *What's going on at your PUI?*). There were eight section members in attendance, and we had a productive conversation about COVID restrictions, online and hybrid teaching, and research programs. The discussion about research programs sparked the next check-in topic (*PUI research during a pandemic*) and the Botany 2021 workshop (see below). The second check-in was Jan. 21, 2021, at 7 pm EDT and there were eleven members in attendance. We had a productive discussion and had good suggestions for the Botany 2021 workshop. We found it hard to find a time that would work for all section members. We heard from a few members that the 7 pm EDT time was particularly challenging for parents in the Atlantic, Eastern, and Central time zones. Still, earlier times would be in the middle of the teaching day for members in the Mountain and Pacific time zone. We plan to discuss with members during the section meeting if making small peer groups based on availability would be a better model for these check-ins.

Other activities

Throughout the year, the section committee has engaged in a few other activities. We have promoted and monitored the PUI BSA Slack channel, including creating a thread on researching a pandemic. There has been some community engagement with the Slack channel, but it has

been limited. We plan to ask members during the section meeting for ideas on how to increase engagement and suggestions for resources to provide on the channel. We have also promoted and continue to promote the usage of #PUIplantnetwork for social media. We also sent two PUI section email newsletters (one 'end of the year' newsletter in December 2020 and one 'pre-Botany 2021' newsletter in mid-July 2021). Finally, we have exchanged initial emails with the ASPT PUI section and planned a Zoom meeting in August to share ideas about how PUI sections can support their respective society members. Given this challenging year, we did not make progress on the proposed mentoring program from 2019. We plan to see if the section would like to start lower-stakes peer check-in groups for the 2021-2022 academic year.

Planned Botany 2021 meeting activities:

After not holding a workshop in 2020, we are pleased to be holding a virtual workshop during Botany 2021. As of early July, we have 52 registered attendees for the workshop. The workshop will be a space for PUI faculty and future PUI faculty to share barriers and successes of PUI research programs. We will focus on restarting research programs as pandemic restrictions are lifted. The workshop will also provide a space to discuss how to make labs more inclusive and start collaborations across PUI institutions. We will also be holding a section meeting and have advertised the meeting in the email newsletter.

Respectively submitted by,
Jennifer Ison, Jason Cantley, Stephanie Lyon, and Rachel McCoy