

Spring 2018: Student Representative's Board Report
The Botanical Society of America

Officers

James McDaniel (2016–2018)

Chelsea Pretz (2017-2019)

Membership

We would like to start off by applauding the society's continued commitment towards making membership accessible to students by providing memberships to students at a discounted rate, keeping the cost of student memberships affordable, and urging professional members of the society to gift memberships to their students. We hope this commitment will continue as a means of building a strong body of members for the future!

Student membership numbers over the past 15 years have been compiled by Heather Cacanindin reflecting a trend of growth followed by relatively stable student membership.

2003: 351 (14% of total BSA membership)

2004: 359 (16%)

2005: 384 (16%)

2006: 382 (17%)

2007: 715 (24%)

2008: 794 (26%)

2009: 835 (25%)

2010: 842 (26%)

2011: 909 (27%)

2012: 851 (25%)

2013: 860 (25%)

2014: 838 (26%)

2015: 848 (26%)

2016: 797 (24%)

2017: 670 (23%)

Throughout the past decade, student memberships have consistently made up 24-27% of total BSA membership. 2017 was a rough year for student membership as we lost 127 student members. The decline in student membership (and total BSA membership) has been correlated in part with the Texas location of our last BOTANY conference in conjunction with the competition that we faced from the IBC and Evolution meetings last year. Furthermore, we had 274 student attendees at BOTANY 2017 making up over one-third (38.9% to be exact) of the conference participants!

Conference Activities

Skill-Building Workshop:

Last year, our title for the skill-building workshop was “Cutting the cord – a workshop for computer-free presentation skills”. Our keynote speaker was Melanie Link-Perez who focused on presentation skills and specifically highlighted how any topic can be presented well (and often better) without depending on PowerPoint slides. After Melanie’s presentation, we had many students practice their own “chalk-talk” in a friendly, low-risk environment. In the end, the event was a great success, and it even appeared as an article in the fall issue of the Plant Science Bulletin.

At BOTANY 2018, our skill-building workshop will be “The Elevator Speech: Crafting an Effective Pitch that Highlights your Research and Illustrates the Broader Impacts” (<http://botanyconference.org/engine/search/index.php?func=detail&aid=69>). We are currently in the process of looking for a keynote speaker, so if anyone on the Board has any suggestions, they would be greatly appreciated! Nevertheless, the general format of the workshop will be to start with a presentation from our keynote speaker that highlights effective ways of communicating one’s research to anyone in a manner that is appealing, understandable and concise. This will be followed by a breakout session, which will give attendees the opportunity to revise and modify their elevator speeches before organizing into groups as a means of practicing their speeches with one another in a friendly, low-risk environment.

Undergraduate Networking Event:

2017 was the first year that the BOTANY conference had an Undergraduate Networking Event, which was held on Sunday evening before the plenary address. This event was added as a means of facilitating networking among undergraduate students so that they would have the opportunity to become comfortable with the environment of a professional conference. Overall, this event was a success and well-attended with 47 registered participants (not including PLANTS grant recipients or their mentors). At BOTANY 2018, this event will continue and our hope is to add “icebreaker” activities along with a “Meet your Student Representatives” table.

Student Luncheon:

In 2017, we had a decent crowd for the student luncheon with 57 registered participants versus 106 participants the previous year. Again, this dip in the number of registered participants has been correlated with location as well as competition from other professional meetings that were occurring. Ned Friedman gave a wonderful keynote speech at the luncheon that focused on getting students to take time to enjoy their work/research. Ned also showed us some really amazing high-speed videos associated with *Rhododendron* pollen! Additionally, our career panelists encompassed a wide swathe of professions that include the following: different NGO’s, smaller academic institutions, and non-academic sectors. In the end, we received a ton of positive feedback from student attendees as well as panelists, and our goal is to keep this event going for many years to come! In fact, as the event continues to grow and evolve, we are

starting to explore ideas to adjust the format in an effort to make sure that every participant can get the most out of it.

Currently, we are in the process of securing our keynote speaker and contacting potential panelists for the student luncheon at BOTANY 2018. In the past, we invited Susan Pell to be our keynote speaker, but she was unable to attend the conference. We would like to invite her again this year and also welcome any suggestions from the Board. As always, we would like to thank Johanne for helping us out with the logistics associated with this event!

Student Social:

At BOTANY 2017, our student social was at a great venue known as the T&P Tavern, which was formerly a train station diner. The T&P Tavern was quite spacious, which provided us with a great opportunity to entertain our 83 registered attendees. We are extremely grateful for the work that the BSA staff put into organizing this event as well as the sponsorship provided by Wiley! During the event, there was low representation for Wiley at the social, and we think it would be beneficial to work on highlighting the BSA's relationship with Wiley in the future so that students get an idea of how AJB and associated journals are moving forward with publications.

Communication

Students of the Botanical Society of America Facebook Group:

We have an active, open Facebook group, consisting of 686 members, that has existed since the fall of 2014. Although a vast majority of our members are students, some of them definitely aren't, which is to be expected by virtue of having an "open" Facebook group. In the past, we had to start screening potential member requests because we had a problem with spam; however, our efforts have drastically cut down on this issue. The page provides students with a comfortable way to interact with each other, and it seems communication among students has increased considerably since it became open. Most of the posts include links to opportunities, resources, or just neat things about plants. The student representatives (present and past) and BSA staff regularly share society-related information with student members through the page including links to the Student Section articles from the PSB.

Newsletters & the PSB Student Section:

Over the course of each year, we disseminate information to students about society news, upcoming events, and important deadlines through student newsletters (via e-mail) as well as the Student Section of the Plant Science Bulletin. Our last two articles included an interview with Chelsea Pretz (our new student representative) and an updated round-up of opportunities that included the following: lists of grants/fellowships/awards, summer courses, ideas for 'broader impacts' and sharing your love of science, and resources related to jobs in the botanical field.