

Annual report of the BSA Committee on Human Diversity. July 2020.

Committee members 2019-2020

- *+Ann Sakai (2020), chair aksakai@uci.edu,
- *James Cohen (2021), co-chair jcohen@kettering.edu
- *+Anna Monfils (2021) monfi1ak@cmich.edu
- *+Vivian Negron-Ortiz (2020) vivian_negronortiz@fws.gov
- *+Muriel Poston (2021) muriel_poston@pitzer.edu
- *+Roland Roberts (2021) ROLROBER@nsf.gov
- *+Adriana Hernandez (2022) aih32@cornell.edu

Incoming members (to 2023):

- *Chelsea Specht, Chair-elect cdspecht@cornell.edu
 - *Janelle Burke janelle.burke@howard.edu
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 - *Keri Maricle kmaricle@ncktc.edu
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- *+Linda Watson (2020), President, ex officio linda.watson10@okstate.edu
 - *+Heather Cacanindin, Executive Director, ex officio hcacanindin@botany.org
 - *+Cynthia Jones, President-elect, ex officio cynthia.s.jones@uconn.edu
 - *Catrina Adams cadams@botany.org, BSA Diversity and Inclusion grant PI, BSA Director of Education (guest)

* attended meeting of June 25, 2020; +attended meeting of July 17, 2020

1. In 2020, the current and incoming committee members were both invited to two virtual Zoom meetings (June 25 and July 17). Several issues were discussed at the June meeting, some of which were resolved by the July meeting, and some of which are ongoing. Issues discussed and acted on before the second meeting included discussion of the statement now renamed 'BSA's 2020 Response to Racism Against our Black Colleagues and Community'; changing the format of the Diversity Lunch to remove the lunch from the Enhancing Scientist Diversity in the Plant Sciences presentation so that the audience was not limited by cost or seating; and arrangement by BSA to use a professional facilitator to provide training for the BSA Board and Staff and to lead the conference-wide townhall discussion on diversity, equity, and inclusion at a time without competing conference activities.
2. The committee discussed how criteria for some awards may make it harder for some deserving members to be recognized. The current Human Diversity Committee was polled by email and the Committee unanimously voted to recommend to the Board the changes in wording for the Distinguished Fellow award and for the Emerging Leader award (described at the end of this report in an addendum). Most changes to the Emerging Leader award were to make the criteria more in line with those for the Distinguished Fellow award.

The current committee was also unanimously in favor of a major lifetime achievement award to recognize substantial efforts to increase diversity and inclusion (although if the change in wording to the Distinguished Fellow is accepted, this award may not be

necessary). The majority of the current committee favored the name Distinguished Botanist as a change from Distinguished Fellow.

The current committee re-emphasized the need to consider the diversity of the speakers as a factor to be considered in approval for symposia.

Although not discussed at the committee meeting, the current and incoming chairs of the Human Diversity Committee (who are also the Directors at Large for Human Development) recommend the following name changes to better align with the responsibilities of the committee and position:

- Rename the 'Human Diversity Committee' to the 'Committee for Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion'
 - Rename the position 'Director at Large for Human Development' to the 'Director at Large for Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion'
3. The need for baseline statistics to assess progress in recruitment and retention of different groups within the BSA as well as the success of different DE&I efforts was also discussed. The Executive Director indicated that BSA would try to collect more precise baseline data on overall membership, including level (undergrad, grad, postdoc, academic, professional, etc.), identity (ethnicity, gender), nationality (US/international), etc. with a response required for each question but with one of the answers for each question being the option not to answer. With these finer categories (for example, identifying student members as undergraduate or graduate), and ideally with a higher response rate, it should be possible to combine/cross these categories for better analyses and assessments. In the current design, applicants for membership are allowed to totally skip questions and provide no answers, and about a quarter of those applying/renewing membership skip most questions.
 4. The issue of how to recognize members who helped BSA lead efforts in new activities (by awards, membership, and/or compensation) was discussed at length, but there was no clear resolution during this discussion, given the complexity of the issue, origin of the activities, and different nature and involvement in the activities. There was a unanimous feeling that it was critical not to ask too much of the same people, particularly early career members and members of underrepresented groups, and that organizers of panels who might want draw upon their expertise should make sure to coordinate such requests.
 5. The committee also discussed the need for greater visibility of Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC) in their scientific and professional contributions through articles in Plant Science Bulletin, BSA e-newsletters, American J. of Botany, and social media, especially during events such as Black History Month. This suggestion was made by Maya Allen.
 6. The PLANTS program began to advertise the program at the beginning of 2020 but suspended recruiting because of the spread of the coronavirus pandemic. As a result, the eleven students chosen to attend the Botany 2020 virtual meeting were from a very small pool. Each student was paired with a peer mentor and senior mentor but with modified expectations for interactions in a virtual environment. Because of the anticipated reduced costs of the PLANTS program in 2020 (the fifth year of a five year

grant), the BSA asked for and was granted a one-year no-cost extension from the NSF to run the program in 2021.

Future considerations for the Human Diversity Committee that were discussed include:

- **Assessment:**
 - Work with the BSA office to help with the collection of baseline statistics to ensure that they can be used for appropriate analyses
 - Work with BSA to help design a system where the rate of acceptance and number of publications by authorship of articles by women, underrepresented groups, and/or other measures of diversity can be assessed legally. Models used by other journals or the NSF on how to do this assessment may need to be examined.

- **Structural issues:**
 - Discuss and make recommendations to the Board on how the current system of appointment of members to committees could be revised to make the process more transparent to all members, and committee membership more open to people with diverse perspectives.
 - Re-examine/rewrite the charge and goals of the Human Diversity Committee
 - Write a more general diversity, equity, and inclusion statement for the BSA
 - Ensure that issues of diversity, equity, and inclusion are included in the development of the more long-term strategic plan for the BSA, with inclusion of a person deeply familiar with DEI issues on the strategic planning committee
 - Recommend ways to promote greater involvement of BIPOC in symposia, and as special speakers.
 - In general, encourage the retention of students and early career members, many of whom are BIPOC, by mentoring them not only in applying for fellowships and writing, but also mentoring in how to review papers and the responsibilities of associate editors.
 - Develop and recommend criteria for a major lifetime achievement award to recognize substantial efforts to increase diversity and inclusion.

- **Funding:**
 - Work with BSA and the Director at Large for Development to solicit funds for diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) activities, including but not limited to
 - Clarification of the purpose and goal of the Diversity Fund (or a renamed DEI Fund) before and as member donations are requested during membership renewal. Goals might include unrestricted use in the general area of DEI but also more targeted goals.
 - Suggestions for mechanisms of fund-raising (e.g., matching funds, fundraisers, or other mechanisms)

- **Making BSA a more welcoming environment for Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC):**
 - Consider how to coordinate DEI efforts with other societies, including ASPT

- Consider how to implement Ally Training (including training in unconscious bias) for members in general to create a safer, more welcoming, and more inclusive environment at the Botany meetings and within the BSA membership
- Consider how to best solicit opinions from the membership on how BSA can become more welcoming and inclusive, e.g., continuation of the current anonymous survey: https://docs.google.com/forms/d/13BLAfM0-_FflNj0p9aj9DSZ0uRYltp-yti7JhVcKYg/edit?usp=sharing_eil&ts=5eea31c6
- Develop an accessible list of BSA members from the Black community and other People of Color for institutions to use for seminar speakers and other events (or potentially job searches as well. (anonymous contribution)
- Create a list of resources on diversity issues including https://www.aesa.us/conferences/2013_ac_presentations/Continuum_AntiRacist.pdf (anonymous contribution)
- Consider how to increase involvement in SACNAS through undergraduate poster awards (requires attendance of BSA judges), possible symposia sponsorships, booths, etc. The number of BSA members who regularly attend SACNAS is very small and it may be necessary to subsidize the cost of members who wish to judge or participate in symposia. Collaborations with other societies may help with some of the costs of attending and participating.

Submitted by Ann Sakai, Human Diversity Chair
July 22, 2020

ADDENDUM

PROPOSED CHANGES. Distinguished Fellow award description (or whatever becomes the name of this award).

The "Distinguished Fellow of the Botanical Society of America" is the highest honor our Society can bestow. Each year, the Distinguished Fellow Committee solicits nominations widely from the membership, evaluates candidates, and selects those to receive an award. Awardees are chosen based on their outstanding contributions to the mission of our scientific Society. The committee identifies recipients who have demonstrated excellence in basic research, education, public policy, or who have provided exceptional service to the professional botanical community, or who may have made contributions to a combination of these categories.

Requirements for Nomination. Nominations will be submitted by BSA members through the BSA online awards portal and should include: (1) a formal letter of nomination including a clear statement of (a) the notable accomplishments of the candidate; (b) disciplines or areas that have been significantly influenced by the contributions of the candidate; (c) **at least three letters of support and evaluation including complete contact information for each letter writer (email, postal address, phone)** supporting and evaluating the candidate's nomination; and (2) the curriculum vita of the candidate being considered and (3) letters of support. All items should be combined into one PDF file that will be submitted with the nomination form. **Please feel free to contact the Executive Director with any questions about the nomination and application process.**

Proposed changes to the Emerging Leader Award description:

The "**Emerging Leader Award**" of the Botanical Society of America is given annually in recognition of creative and influential scholarship as well as impact in any area of botany reflecting the breadth of BSA. Awardees should have outstanding accomplishments and also have demonstrated exceptional promise for future accomplishments in basic research, **education, public policy, exceptional service to the professional botanical community, or a combination of these categories.** The **BSA Emerging Leader Award Committee** will evaluate the applications. Awardee(s) will be recognized at the annual **meeting** and have the opportunity to each present a special lecture at the next annual meeting, with all reasonable meeting expenses covered by the BSA. Each awardee will also receive a five-year membership in the BSA, an invitation to submit a special paper to the *American Journal of Botany*, and free on-line publication for two years in *AJB*.

Eligibility: 1) The candidate must be within **ten** years of earning a Ph.D. (or equivalent; not including time on parental or other leave) and 2) must be a member of the Botanical Society of America **at the time of the award.** **Nomination/Application Process:** Candidates may apply directly, but **more senior members** also are encouraged to nominate outstanding young scientists who may be unaware of the existence and prestige of this prize.

Each application must be supported by the following materials detailing the candidate's career to date to be considered for this award by the BSA Emerging Leader Award Committee.

Please send in pdf format to bsa-manager@botany.org :

- (1) Nominee/Applicant: First and Last Name, Email Address, Institution, Phone Number
- (2) Nominator: First and Last Name, Email Address, Institution, Phone Number
- (3) Applicant's curriculum vita,
- (4) Applicant's summary statement including accomplishments in research **and** activities to

promote education, outreach, and/or service as well as a vision for future activities in these areas. This document should be no more than three pages.

(5) Three recent publications (pdf format),

(6) Names and contact information (email, address, institution, phone) of letter writers

(7) Under separate cover, two letters of reference (including the nominator's where applicable), should be sent directly to bsa-manager@botany.org. No application will be considered complete without these letters.