

Membership and Communications Report

2021 July Board Meeting

Amelia Neely – Membership & Communications Manager

Membership Overview as of July 1 each year

	as of 7/1/21		7/1/20		7/1/19	
	2021	% of Total	2020	% of Total	2019	% of Total
Corresponding	69	2.4%	69	2.4%	65	2.4%
Life	96	3.3%	91	3.2%	82	3.1%
Emeritus	301	10.3%	282	10.0%	278	10.3%
E Family	43	1.5%	42	1.5%	39	1.5%
Retired	65	2.2%	63	2.2%	53	2.0%
R Family	2	0.1%	4	0.1%	2	0.1%
3 Yr Professional	287	9.9%	275	9.7%	287	10.7%
3 Yr Prof Family	20	0.7%	21	0.7%	18	0.7%
Professional	747	25.7%	814	28.8%	813	30.2%
P Family	102	3.5%	101	3.6%	108	4.0%
CC Professional	32	1.1%	41	1.4%	32	1.2%
CC Family	2	0.1%	3	0.1%	2	0.1%
3 Yr Postdoc*	27	0.9%				
PostDoc	124	4.3%	147	5.2%	145	5.4%
PD Family	0	0.0%	3	0.1%	3	0.1%
3 Yr Student	173	5.9%	128	4.5%	0	0.0%
Student	648	22.3%	571	20.2%	618	23.0%
S Family	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%
S Chapter	14	0.5%	20	0.7%	22	0.8%
K-12 Teachers	7	0.2%	11	0.4%	9	0.3%
Affiliate	18	0.6%	25	0.9%	18	0.7%
Associate	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	1	0.0%
Amateur	47	1.6%	51	1.8%	42	1.6%
Developing Nations	85	2.9%	68	2.4%	51	1.9%
	2909		2830		2688	
Professional	2002	68.8%	2024	71.5%	1978	73.6%
Student	835	28.7%	719	25.4%	640	23.8%
Other	72	2.5%	87	3.1%	70	2.6%
Growth/Decline	2909		2830		2688	
	as of 7/1/21		as of 7/1/20		as of 7/1/20	

3-Year Membership Comparison through June of each year (2021, 2020, 2019)

Three years were used for comparison due to 2020 being extraordinary in regards to COVID and therefore 2019 will serve as a benchmark to a “typical” year.

Looking at the last three years **membership has continued to grow each year, with 2021 having the highest number of members** (79 more members than 2020, and 221 more than 2019). Though many categories increased, **the student category, once again, showed the most strength** with an increase of 116 members over 2020 and 195 over 2019. The **Professional membership totals have continued the trend of decreasing slightly each year** (55 less Professional members in 2021 compared to 2020 and 70 less compared to 2019). There was an increase in Emeritus/Retired totals, but they do not explain the total decrease in the professional categories. Both the student and professional membership trends have been consistent for several years and were discussed at the strategic planning sessions to be addressed with further planning.

Membership Totals at the End of Each Year

(Professional totals below include all categories except Student, K-12 Teachers, Affiliate, and Amateur, whereas the totals in the paragraph above only refer to the Professional and Professional Family 1 and 3-year categories)

	2020	% of Total	2019	% of Total	2018	% of Total	2017	% of Total	2016	% of Total
Professional	2161	68.8%	2130	70.4%	2161	73.5%	2132	73.1%	2209	70.7%
Student	878	27.9%	808	26.7%	679	23.1%	670	23.0%	797	25.5%
Other	103	3.3%	86	2.8%	101	3.4%	115	3.9%	118	3.8%
Growth/Decline	3142		3024		2941		2917		3124	

Looking at the membership totals at the end of the last 5 years it is encouraging to see that the current total of members at the end of June 2021 (2909) is very close to some end-of-year totals of previous years. In the last two years there was a bump of over 300 additional members between July and December of each year, so we can project that our year-end totals could possibly be around 3200 if not higher, a number not seen since 2015.

Membership Category Highlights June 2021 vs 2020:

- The **Developing Nations** category grew by 17 members (~25% growth) for a total of 85, which is greater than year-end totals for 4 of the last five years. This upward trend shows the importance of offering this membership level to developing nations members as well as creating programming (like the virtual conference), that makes it easier for international members to connect and take part in the BSA community.
- Overall **Postdoc Member** totals have plateaued compared to last year at this time, however 27 (almost 17% of the total) have taken advantage of the new **3-Year Postdoc membership option** which was started on October 1, 2020. With several more months left in the calendar year it is more than possible that the year-end total will be similar to last year's total of 176. Special attention to reaching out to Postdoc members regarding the 3-Year option was given in this year's renewal cycle and will continue to be done so in the coming renewal cycle.
- **Student membership** numbers continued to increase in 2021, adding 116 members over the same period the year before.
 - 173 Student members have taken advantage of the **3-Year Student membership category** so far this year compared to 128 in 2020 (~35% growth).
 - There have been 316 **New Student members** so far this renewal season (October 2020 to June 30, 2021), which is about 38% of our current student member total. This percentage typically reaches about 50% by the end of the calendar year. We continue to have challenges renewing our student members at a high rate.
 - **Gift memberships** allow current BSA members to purchase a one-year membership for either students or developing nations colleagues at a discounted price of \$10. Students receive the largest number of gift memberships by far (only 13 were used for developing nations memberships this renewal season).

The 2020 3-month **Gift Membership Drive** was a great success. We exceeded our goal of 175 purchased gift memberships with a total of 189, which was 31 more than 2019's total of 158. Gift recipients who started their membership by a certain time were entered into a drawing for a free Botany Conference registration for 2021. This year **we were able to give out three conference registrations** due to the conference being virtual, two to students and one to a developing nations member.

A total of 302 gift memberships have been purchased from October 1, 2020 to June 30, 2021. **It is my recommendation that a 3-Year gift membership option be created to support both students and developing nations colleagues at the price of \$30 and that we also keep the one-year option with a price of \$10.** This will allow both students and developing nations members to stay connected for a longer period of time, increase their retention in the society, and help them build stronger bonds with the BSA community.

- **Professional Members** (Professional, 3-Year Professional, and Professional Family) decreased by 55 members (about a 4.5% decrease) in 2021 compared to 2020 YTD. As seen in past years, this category renews at a very high rate but we do not have the new members needed to keep this category growing (only 6% were new members so far this renewal season, October 1, 2020-June 30, 2021).
 - Professional members are asked each year to consider a **membership fee increase of \$25 per year**. This additional amount goes toward the **Graduate Student Research Award fund**. So far, this fiscal year (Oct 1, 2020 through June 30, 2021) \$17,000 was raised by Professional members opting-in to this membership fee increase including 356 1-Year and 48 3-Year Professional members. Through these and other available funds we were very excited to be able to give out 40 GSRA awards for 2021.
 - I recommend to pilot a “Refer a Professional” program which will offer a one-time 20% discount off a professional membership for any new professional members referred to us by current members. If approved, it will be included in the next PSB and launched via email and social media at that time. The purpose of this program is to increase the new member rate for this group. A possible drawing for a free conference registration could also be used to encourage participation.

BSA eCommunications

The first six 2021 *Membership Matters* eNewsletters had an increased **average open rate of 49.5%**, which is outstanding compared to the industry standard of around 30%. This high interest indicates 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.

In 2021 we continue to send **monthly eTocs for AJB and APPS** with an amazing increased **open rate of 50.2%**, showing the incredible value that our members find receiving eTocs from BSA. The **eTocs for the Plant Science Bulletin** are also well received garnering an impressive **45.35% open rate** for the two issues sent so far in 2021.

Nine **conference eBlasts** have been sent out this year advertising and promoting Botany 2021 – Virtual! These were accompanied by numerous social media posts on all three platforms including two countdowns, one for abstract submission and one for pre-registration deadline.

Other types of emails sent include awards notifications, BSA officer nominations and elections, emails to specific BSA sections, education announcements, renewals, and publication emails.

Member Demographic Information Changes

In preparation for the 2020-2021 renewal season BSA implemented changes to the demographic section of the membership form where we collect ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, disability, and citizenship information. Because members are now required to answer all demographic questions an option of “Do Not Wish to Report” was added. We also added a new category for career demographics which we think will prove helpful in better understanding our membership. Part of these changes are a result of discussions in the last year by the DEI Committee. A demographics report will be available at the end of this calendar year.

Other Updates

- I updated BSA and SEB websites as needed.
- I worked with SEB and SSE on their eCommunications and renewal needs.
- I worked with Rob to update BSA, SSE, and SEB CiviCRM online renewal forms for 2020-2021 renewal season.
- I supported and promoted the BSA publications efforts through email campaigns, creation and updating of website pages, social media promotion, and creating graphic design for ads.

Social Media Report

It is exciting to announce that the BSA's Social Media Platforms have over 50,000 followers combined! I want to share my gratitude to the liaisons for their hard work this year. Jared Meeks is finishing up his second year as the social media liaison in charge of Twitter and will be leaving at the end of September. Sonal Gupta started in October 2020 and is in charge of Facebook and Instagram.

After careful consideration of the Society's needs for the coming year, my increased knowledge of social media content management, and decreases in available funding, **it is my recommendation that we change the Social Media Liaison program to include only one student for one year at a time and continue to pay them one payment of \$1,500.** The student will work with me on all three platforms and I will take on more of the Society's social media needs (conference posts, award posts and winners, and society publications for example) with the liaison focusing more on student and unique content (such as the Spotlight Series, finding and sharing interesting content with our members, and helping with projects such as the SciComm Celebration and the ECAB Twitter Takeover).

The original intent of the social media liaison role was several-fold: to give the students a way to be involved in the society, to have a student voice on our social media platforms, to record and report data from our social media platforms, and finally, to bring new and interesting content to our social media platforms that we did not have bandwidth to find as staff.

This year several things became evident. A two-year contract is too long for students and their ever-changing responsibilities at this stage in their career. Second, with the liaisons in charge of posting almost all of the posts for our social media platforms they were bogged down by Society posts and did not have time to focus on as much innovative and new student-centered content. In the last 6 months I have been producing most of the SM content for the Society already (and sending it to the liaisons to post). I believe by me taking on full responsibility for the Society posts for all three platforms, we can take advantage of one student liaison who can really focus on both student-oriented and new and innovative posts for our community.

Duties that I foresee this person having are:

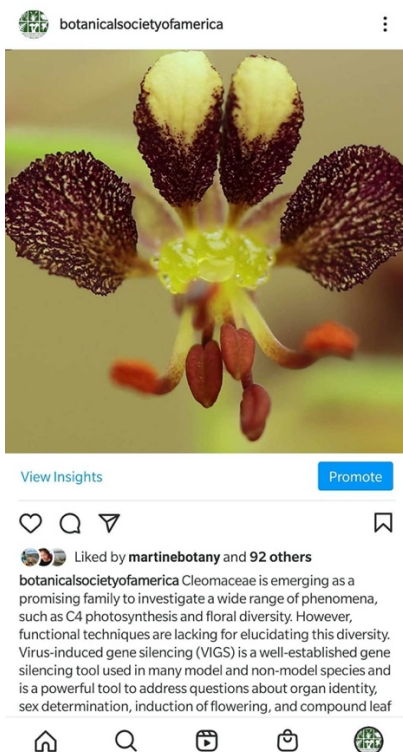
- Continuing the Spotlight Series once per month
- Creating other unique content regularly (Morphology Monday for example)
- Finding content to share with our community (re-posting relevant posts)
- Creating and reporting on social media statistics as well as researching social media trends and new ideas
- Helping with projects such as the SciComm Celebration and ECAB Twitter Takeover

Sonal Gupta's Report:

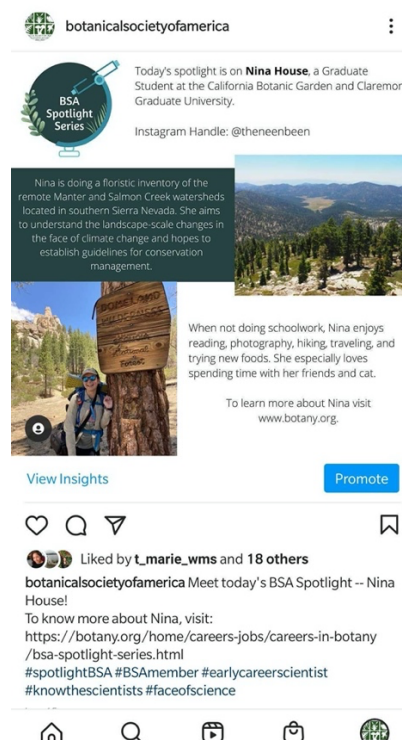
As a Liaison, I have started the #BSASpotlightSeries initiative with the aim of highlighting **early career scientists** in the BSA community. The spotlight series aims to share both scientific goals and achievements, as well as personal interests of the botanical scientists, so we can get to know our BSA community better. The posts seem to be doing well in the community (with ~50 likes on both Instagram and Facebook).

Our Instagram following has reached 2400 followers and has increased by 209 followers since March 2021, gaining about 70 followers each month. Although it is more difficult to create posts for this platform due to its picture requirements, posts with science images (examples include papers recently published in BSA journals) seem to be getting highest traction, receiving likes on average from 150 followers. Recently, I have been trying to post stories regarding cool plants/science from BSA followers since these are quicker alternatives for our audience and I am considering posting all our posts as additional stories too.

Facebook following has increased by only ~100 overall followers and now the page has 33,848 followers. The number of followers per month seems to be low, and this is not attributed to new people following our page, but due to older followers unfollowing our page. I am not quite sure why this is happening and there does not seem to be a particular post trend associated with this. Posting items on Facebook has increased since March. We have had over 25 posts per month (with the exception of May wherein we had 15 posts), which have had an average of a 2647 reach and 118 engagements (click/reactions/comments/shares) per post. Hopefully, with Botany2021 coming up soon, we will start getting more visits on our page and posts.



Example Instagram Post



Example Spotlight Post

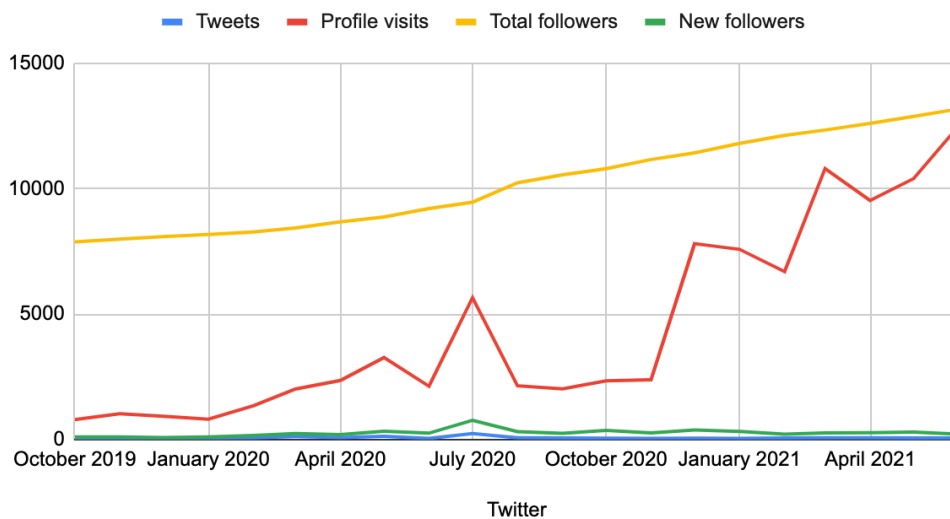


Example IG Story_1

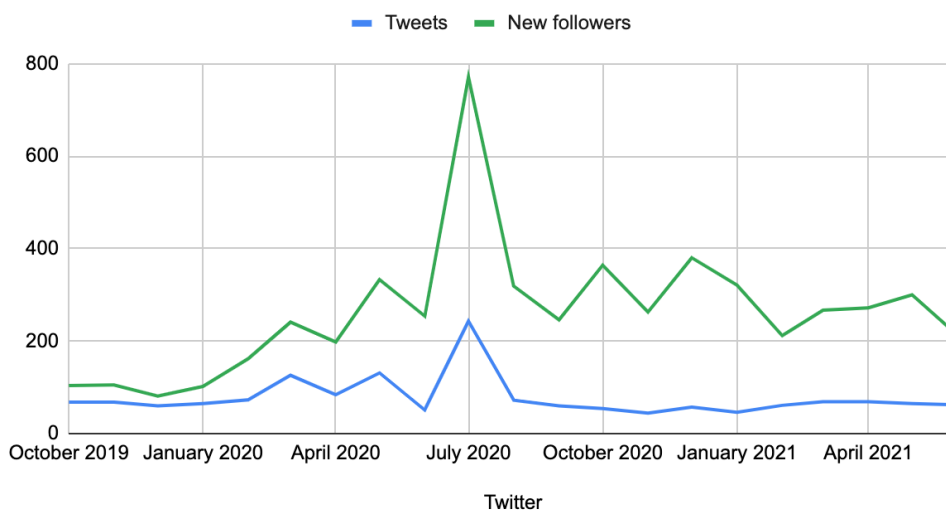
Jared Meek's Report:

The Botanical Society of America's Twitter account currently has 13,174 followers. We gained 1,052 new followers over the last four months (March - June 2021) - an average of 263 new followers per month. Since reaching 10K followers in August 2020, interest in BSA's Twitter content has remained fairly consistent, and I believe we have the potential to reach 15K followers by the end of September 2021, especially considering the upcoming Botany 2021 Virtual conference. We have an amazing group of BSA SciComm contributors that we're planning to highlight at the beginning of the conference, and we have also started highlighting students and early-career researchers through the BSA Spotlight Series, which is organized and led by Sonal Gupta. These initiatives have been a great contribution to BSA's efforts to highlight the diversity of plant scientists and to be more inclusive for all plant people.

Twitter Oct. 2019 - Jun. 2021 (All Metrics)



Twitter Oct. 2019 - Jun. 2021 (Tweets and New followers)



Twitter Examples

