

PRESIDENTS' MESSAGE

Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Initiative Update

ASA, CSSA, and SSSA have made the commitment to resourcing actions supporting diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) as our top strategic priority. This article provides an update on the initiative. The initiative, comprehensive across our communities (members, certificants, leadership, and staff) and programs, seeks to:

- Elevate our sciences, Societies, disciplines, and communities;
- Provide a more robust platform to address our grand challenge;
- Guide our missions, and actions;



By **Jeff Volenec**, ASA President (jvolenec@purdue.edu); **Vara Prasad**, CSSA President (vara@ksu.edu); and **April Ulery**, SSSA President (aulery@nmsu.edu)

ASA, CSSA, and SSSA Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Statement

We, as the ASA, CSSA, and SSSA Boards of Directors, approve and fully support this statement and affirm our commitment to Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion in our Societies and sciences.

—March, 2021

Our Vision and Role

We envision a scientific community where every person, regardless of their background and challenges, is able to explore their potential. Our role is to help elevate professional and scientific growth of individuals in all career stages. We proudly serve our members, collaborate with stakeholders, and partner with policymakers to help empower, engage, and cultivate the advancement of all within our scientific community.

Our Pledge

We are committed to enhancing the experiences, opportunities, and safety

of all members by creating a diverse, equitable, and inclusive environment in our scientific fields of study and throughout the Societies. Our boards of directors, committees, and staff are working to bring diverse voices to the table and provide unique perspectives to enhance the quality and innovation of our sciences and our scientific organizations. We pledge to be a reflection of the communities we serve through fostering an atmosphere of respect, open communication, and diversity that serves as a model for our members and other stakeholders.

At the American Society of Agronomy (ASA), Crop Science Society of America (CSSA), and Soil Science Society of America (SSSA), our core values guide our efforts and long-standing commitment to proactively build a culture where every person can develop and apply their limitless potential in the fields of agronomy, crop, soil, and environmental sciences. We are committed to increasing diversity in Science, Technology, Education, Agriculture, and Mathematics (STEAM) by seeking out participation from

underrepresented groups in order to build and develop a world in which studying, working, utilizing, contributing, and promoting science are open to all. We define diversity, equity, and inclusion as:

Diversity

Individual diversity is a unique collection of attributes and life experiences that make us each who we are. These include, but are not limited to, national origin, language, race, color, political viewpoints, disability, ethnicity, gender, age, religion, sexual orientation, gender identity, socioeconomic status, veteran status, career stage, and family structures/backgrounds. Collectively, the diversity of our members helps guide our missions, provides innovative ideas to solve the problems facing our communities and our planet, and provides a richer connection to each other.

"Diversity is not about how we differ. Diversity is about embracing one another's uniqueness."
—Ola Joseph, Author

- Ensure opportunities for all, and
- Provide richer connections to each other.

Leadership, members, and staff have been working on several action items—some that help define the initiative and some that are direct results of the work being done because of the initiative. In March, the ASA, CSSA, and SSSA Boards of Directors approved and unanimously supported the statement below, which affirms our commitment to DEI in our Societies and our sciences.

By the time you read this, we will be developing a cross-Society DEI Advisory Council comprised of members and external partners who will provide guidance as we move forward. The DEI survey results will have been analyzed and used to inform recommendations that will be presented to the ASA, CSSA, SSSA, and ASF Boards of Directors. This will include near- and long-term actions compiled into a roadmap to support DEI in our science communities. A communications plan is in place to provide you opportunities for engagement with and input to Society leadership on this strategic initiative.

We want to give special thanks to Dr. Elizabeth Gillispie for leading the development phase of the DEI Initiative. ASA, CSSA,



Source: Adobe Stock/freshidea.

SSSA Director of Member Services, Susan Chapman, will coordinate and manage the portfolio of activities we are undertaking. Your feedback is welcomed on our DEI initiative and may be sent directly to any of us, Susan Chapman (schapman@sciencesocieties.org), Elizabeth Gillispie (egillispie@sciencesocieties.org), and/or posted on the DEI Discussion Board at www.agronomy.org/discussion-boards, www.crops.org/discussion-boards, or www.soils.org/discussion-boards.

DOI: 10.1002/csan.20479

Equity

Equity is providing various levels of support and assistance depending on the specific needs or abilities of individuals to ensure all can succeed. Equity is different from equality in that equality implies treating everyone as if their experiences are exactly the same. Being equitable means acknowledging and addressing structural inequalities—historic and current—that advantage some and disadvantage others. Equal treatment results in equity only if everyone starts with equal access to opportunities.

“Equality is leaving the door open for anyone who has the means to approach it; Equity is ensuring there is a pathway to that door for those who need it.”

—Caroline Belden, Author

Inclusion

Inclusion is to pursue deliberate efforts to ensure that our organizations welcome differences, respectfully listen to diverse perspectives, and make every individual feel welcome, empowered, accepted and that they belong.

“Inclusion is not a strategy to help people fit into the systems and structure which exist in our societies. It is about transforming those systems and structures to make it better for everyone.”

—Diane Richler Past President,
Inclusion International

Our Commitment

ASA, CSSA, and SSSA are committed to encouraging a culture of diversity, equity, and inclusivity that ensures:

- All members and staff are valued, belong, and can have their voices heard.
- Staff and leaders are able to clearly articulate and reflect our commitment to diversity, equity, and inclusion. They are aware of social context, create positive inclusive environments, eliminate microaggressions, and help each other build genuine relationships and networks.
- All are treated collegially in all communications, public or private.
- Pathways are promoted for students to transition into

agricultural and natural science careers that maximize their unique perspectives, competencies, and abilities.

- Leadership understands and works to change the conditions needed to create an environment where everybody can thrive and grow personally, academically, and professionally.
- Scientific career and professional development opportunities are available to support lifelong growth, and by extension, promote inclusion for all Society members.
- Leadership represents the diversity of our Societies—including the diverse perspectives and beliefs of our members.
- An environment that is safe and free from harassment and other negative behaviors.
- Society policies and activities support diversity, equity, and inclusion.
- Our efforts act as an example for other organizations.