Wow, this year has been a whirlwind! I was pretty excited to be able to serve as ICCA chair this year as we all heralded the program’s 20 year anniversary. It is milestones like these where organizations can take time to look back at the previous year’s successes, but I was most excited to build on the first 20 years and set goals for the years to come.

During my time as vice chair, I gave several presentations on how important I believe partnership and open communication is to the success of the ICCA program. As chair this year, I spent a lot of time working on strengthening key partnerships that will help to add value to being a CCA. Although most of the contacts were made by the ICCA executive board, there are opportunities for all CCAs to have a voice in the industry—and believe me, the industry wants to hear our voice. Some of the important partners we have worked with this year include: The Fertilizer Institute (TFI), Ag Retailers Association (ARA), Crop Life America (CLA), Weed Science Society of America (WSSA), National Alliance of Independent Crop Consultants (NAICC), NRCS, USDA, USEPA, and our own association, American Society of Agronomy (ASA).

Rapid response teams
This year, the ICCA executive board has set up a rapid response network where partners can contact us, and we will provide for them representatives who are CCAs. There are four main areas in the network that are based on our performance objectives: crop management, integrated pest management, soil and water management, and nutrient management. Each area has a leader who is currently working to identify team members and set up communities for interested CCAs to join. Those communities will serve as a format for communication between team members and leaders. Look for more information on this in the upcoming months.

Greenfield Scholars
In addition to the rapid response teams, we have worked to implement a few other projects. Together with ASA, we have co-sponsored a new “Greenfield Scholars” program. As another offering through the Golden Opportunity Scholars program, this opportunity focuses on identifying undergraduate students of a two- or four-year agronomy program who are planning on entering the job market as practicing agronomy professionals upon graduation. We hope to start with five students, pairing them with a CCA mentor from their state who will introduce them to the state’s CCA network through continuing education events held each year. The goal is for this program to become endowed. Anyone wishing to donate toward the Greenfield Scholars program should contact Luther Smith (lsmith@sciencesocieties.org) at the Madison, WI ICCA office.

Weed resistance survey
A large number of you helped me out at the end of last year by providing input on the topic of weed resistance via a survey. The results have been popular, and I have been asked to share them with many organizations including WSSA, CropLife America, and CropLife Canada as well as attendees at the ASA Annual Meeting and a Canadian NuFarm retailer meeting. Herbicide resistance is an issue in many crops across the U.S., and the CCA program has provided valuable information to bridge the scientific and manufacturing communities to the growers in order to identify social, economic, and environmental hurdles in implementing best management practices.