CSSA President’s Message

Getting the Most from Your Society Membership

We have all heard the mantra that the three most important things in real estate are “Location, Location, and Location.” Likewise, the mantra to get the most from your Society membership should be “Get Involved, Get Involved, and Get Involved.”

Our Societies offer endless opportunities to become involved, such as volunteering to present a poster or oral session at the Annual Meetings, be a member of a committee or editor for a journal, or serve in a leadership position for a division/community. It’s easier than you think, and you will likely enjoy it more than you thought.

As a graduate student, when I attended my first Annual Meeting, I felt like the proverbial “deer in the headlights.” I knew that at any minute, I was going to be overwhelmed with information. By the time I went to the next meeting, I knew how to navigate the program, find buildings with important-sounding names and hallways with endless numbers, enter meeting rooms with numerous entrances, and most importantly, find the coffee. After a few meetings, I realized there were activities outside of scientific presentations that focused on specific crops or research areas and others to facilitate engagement and operations of the Society. A whole new world opened up to me, and the best part was that I met people that I recognized from the literature or work as a plant breeder. I will admit that I didn’t do a very good job on my first committee assignment because I didn’t understand the importance of my contribution. Nevertheless, I was hooked.

Ways to Get Involved

The most common way members of our Societies get involved is to present a poster or participate in an oral session at our Annual Meetings. In 2012, nearly 3,000 papers were presented. Involvement in paper/poster presentations is the key to the success of our meetings and must remain the core of the meetings. Did you know that you do not have to attend the Annual Meetings to present a paper? Our Societies understand that travel has become harder as budgets grow tighter and travel and per diem costs increase. There is now a way to present your research remotely in either an oral or poster format without the need to travel to the meetings. This is especially important for our international members and those on limited budgets. Please note that if you do select the remote presentation option, you will also need to pay a registration fee for the meetings in addition to the abstract submission fee. You can choose a remote presentation at the time you submit your abstract.

Another way to get involved is to encourage your students or employees to present at the Annual Meetings. Encouragement and some basic help with submission of the abstract may make the difference in a young member’s lifelong involvement. You may also consider organizing a symposium or session in your division/community to focus on an emerging issue or your favorite research topic. This can be achieved by communicating with the division/community program officers at the business meeting or via email immediately after the Annual Meeting. You can also volunteer to be a judge in divisions/communities that have graduate student competitions. Of course, you can also get involved with undergraduate activities sponsored by SASES (Students of Agronomy, Soils, and Environmental Sciences).

Service on the numerous Society committees is another good way to become involved. Over 1,700 member leaders are currently involved in committee work. Committees develop and recommend policy, provide advice on editorial issues, and assist in creating a rewarding and valuable member experience. If you’d like to make a contribution of your time and be part of a unique and positive community, you can participate as a Society volunteer. You can find a list of every committee organized by our Societies at www.crops.org/about-society/committees. To volunteer for committee service, click the “sign-up” button found on the above web page and choose those committees on which you would like to serve (up to three). Prefix committee codes represent the Society(ies) associated with the committee; A=ASA, C=CSSA, and S=SSSA. A committee may also be associated with two or more societies (AC, ACS, etc.). Society committee members are appointed by the respective Society president-elects. Appointment requests for 2014 are currently being collected, and appointments will be made in late 2013, for committee service beginning in 2014.

You can also volunteer for a leadership position (such as chair or board representative) for a division/community in your Society. The best way to do this is to attend the business meeting of the division/community during the Annual Meetings. This will expose you to how divisions/communities are governed and how they interact with the board of directors and executive committee for each Society. Service on committees is also helpful to better understand the current issues or changes facing our Societies. You can stay informed about division/community activities by visiting their websites, which are all linked to the home page of each Society.

So go ahead and get involved. Be sure to interact with our leadership and express your interest in getting involved. We need bright minds, young and seasoned alike, to take us into the future.

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