Greetings! As I write this column, it’s early September, and even in Kansas, there are beginning to be some noticeable indications of fall. The students are back on campus, corn harvest has started (yields are very good so far), and the leaves of the walnuts and hackberries have just a hint of color. That all means that the ASA Annual Meeting is getting close, and it’s time to get those papers and posters ready.

Agency Visits

It has been a busy and eventful summer as president representing your Society. In July, I spent a week in Washington, DC making agency visits with David Baltensperger, CSSA president; Jan Hopmans, SSSA president; and Carolyn Olson, SSSA president-elect. We visited a number of federal agencies, including the National Academy of Sciences, USDA, DOE, NSF, OMB, and OSTP. The meetings were organized by our Washington science policy office staff—Bethany Johns, Julie McClure, and Karl Anderson. It was good to see that there are people in all of these agencies with a genuine appreciation and interest in the things we do, and in most cases, a willingness to help. One of the important things we discussed was how the Societies could also assist them with some of the issues they face getting budgets and programs through Congress. That was a perspective I had not really thought about much in the past. But many members of Congress and their staff value the relatively unbiased opinions of our members and staff. Keep that in mind the next time you are asked to comment on legislation or policy issues.

Ag Public Outreach Initiative

David, Carolyn, and I also participated in a visioning session with the U.S. Botanical Garden on developing a new public outreach initiative on agriculture. Imagine a chance to educate more than 1 million visitors a year on agriculture! Located adjacent to the Capitol and on the National Mall, there couldn’t be a better place for agriculture to educate the public about our industry. The Botanical Garden is administered through the Office of the Architect of the Capitol. Exhibits on agriculture are not something new to the garden either. This year, one of the focal exhibits has been “Amber Waves of Grain,” an exhibit centered on wheat that includes wheat plantings in some of the beds on the outside terrace at the entrance. The exhibit talks about the domestication of wheat, the many uses and importance of the crop, and Dr. Borlaug.