Students

Graduate Students Getting Involved

by Kristy Borrelli

A few years back, several perceptive people noticed that there were about 1,800 graduate student members of ASA, CSSA, and SSSA, with more than half of them attending the Annual Meeting. While the graduate students were great in number and had many opportunities during the event-filled meeting, there was an obvious lack of community among them and a lack of specific activities for them. These observations identified a need to address the expectations that graduate students had for their membership within the three Societies. In 2011, the Graduate Student Sub-Committee was born as part of the ACS 237 Membership and Society Identity Committee, and in 2013, it was promoted to full committee status.

The Graduate Student Committee is organized and managed by graduate students, with the mission to promote mentorship and collaboration and the specific focus of addressing the needs and interests of graduate student members. Committee members have the desire to extend their own expertise and experiences as graduate students to improve the quality of involvement in the Societies for all student members. The committee is actively involved and has monthly phone meetings to coordinate events at the Annual Meeting and to develop other important resources for graduate student members. The committee originally identified four areas of need with equal relevance to the members:

1. Developing a stronger network among graduate students;
2. Preparing graduate students for jobs and careers;
3. Providing opportunities for international graduate student members; and
4. Promoting interactions between junior and senior Society members.

To address career building and to help promote a sense of community, the committee has developed and hosted both a graduate student networking session and a panel discussion on career opportunities at the Annual Meeting (Tampa, 2013; Cincinnati, 2012; San Antonio, 2011). The networking sessions provide students opportunities to meet and interact with other students outside of their own university. Past sessions commented that sharing experiences allowed them to connect with others who were facing similar opportunities and challenges. The panel discussion hosts a group of professionals from multiple career backgrounds, in both the private and public sector, as a means for introducing graduate students to potential career paths. Past attendees appreciated the diversity of panelists, who allowed them to realize many different career opportunities. Additionally, in response to graduate students who wanted to learn more about job and career opportunities outside of research and academia, the committee collaborated with the Early Career Members Committee in 2013 and hosted a session called, “Graduate Students Getting Involved.”

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