



## **2021-22 WSSA Standing Committee Report February 2022**

**Committee Name and Code:** Professional Development and Membership Committee, F4

**Committee Chair:** Mayank Malik

**Committee Members (includes sub-committee members):**

Malik, Mayank

Pete Eure

Daljit Singh

Cara McCauley

Byron Sleugh

Steve Li

Lauren Lazaro

**Board of Directors Liaison:**

President – Anita Dille

**Committee members rotating off and recommended replacements:**

Cara McCauley, Byron Sleugh, Steve Li

**Recommended Replacements**

John Hinz, Dilpreet Riar

**Summary of past year's activities including:**

- Committee goals
  - Evaluate ways to encourage participation of more graduate students in WSSA meetings.
  - Encourage more students to apply for the WSSA Graduate Student Travel Award and Travel Enrichment Experience
  
- Committee accomplishments

The first goal for this team is to select the winners Travel Enrichment Experience (TEE) awards. This year TEE winners from 2020 also completed their TEE experience as 2020 program was moved to 2021 due to COVID-19 restrictions. Both winners for 2020 and 2021 programs visited hosts in 2021. The committee reviewed 26 applications for 2020 program. The winners of 2020 and 2021 programs are

**2020**

<b>Name</b>	<b>Status</b>	<b>University/Region</b>
Bishwa B. Sapkota	PhD	Texas A&M/SWSS
Nick Hurdle	PhD	Univ. of Georgia/SWSS
Delaney Caitlin Foster	MS	Texas Tech/SWSS
Chandrima Shyam	PhD	Kansas State
Devon Elizabeth Carrol	PhD	University of Tennessee

**2021**

<b>Name</b>	<b>Status</b>	<b>University</b>
Ramawtar Yadav	PhD	Iowa State University
Justine Fisher	MS	Michigan State University
Cynthia Sias	PhD	Texas A&M University
Matthew Osterholt	PhD	Purdue University
John Fluttert	MS	University of Guelph

The second responsibility that the committee has got is to select the winners for WSSA Graduate Student travel awards. This year the rules were changed that allowed the 2021 applicants to apply for 2022 meeting again since the 2021 meeting was virtual. The committee received 31 applications.

Students had put up a lot of effort in the applications and it was difficult to select winners. The students who received the WSSA graduate student travel award are

Name	Degree Program	University
Josaine Argenta	PhD	Mississippi State University
Alyssa Lea Miller	MS	University of Georgia
Navdeep Godara	MS	University of Arkansas
Gustavo Camargo Silva	MS	Texas A&M University
Christopher G. Galbraith	MS	Michigan State University
Varsha Singh	PhD	Mississippi State University

- Impact of committee activities/accomplishments on membership, publications, policy, education, other, etc.
  - The applications for Travel Enrichment Experience and Graduate student travel awards are increasing every year. Selected 5 students for Travel Enrichment Experience and enabled the winners of both 2020 and 2021 TEE program to complete the visits in 2021. The 2020 TEE visit could not be finished due to COVID-19 travel restrictions
  - Graduate Student Travel award winners also selected.
  
- WSSA funds requested if any?
 

Funds requested for professional development webinars
  
- Current state of the committee’s projects or activities?
  - In 2021 meeting, the key point of discussion was the activities that this committee can do for the professional development of scientists and students besides selecting the six graduate student travel awards and Travel Enrichment Experience. The idea was to have the professional development webinars. This could not be done due to COVID-19 pandemic. The main objective for 2022 is to conduct some professional development webinars
  
- Any new information posted on the WSSA website?
  - The information regarding call for applications for the Travel Enrichment Experience and Graduate Student travel awards was posted on website. In addition, the updated rules allowing the 2021 Graduate Student Travel applicants (excluding winners) to apply again for 2022 meeting because the 2021 meeting was virtual.

- Summary of plans for next year (changes in goals, key initiatives, plan of action, etc.):
  - Continue the plan for 2020-21, which could not be accomplished to COVID-19.

Recommendations for Board or Membership action (funds or other requests):

WSSA Professional Development and Membership Committee last week. There was a great discussion on professional development ideas/seminars for WSSA members and students. One idea is to start webinar series

- Effective presentation skills
  - Speakers - Presenting an extension talk, industry talks
  - Effective use of social media for communication of scientific ideas

Apart from discussing these ideas, the committee had proposed some changes in Travel Enrichment Experience and Graduate Student Travel Awards to make the process smoother. These changes may include making some changes in the **MOP** for these award categories.

Here are the proposed changes that committee thinks can further help improve these programs

**Travel Enrichment Experience (TEE) Program** – This is a great opportunity for the students to go out and participate with different university and industry professionals across multiple regions. Every year we get a great response from students who participate in this program. However, the participation is limited to mainly the students from NCWSS and SWSS regions. Therefore, the student winners are concentrated mainly in these two regions as we receive a few applications from other regions. The other concern is the process of reviewing the applications. The committee has to spend a lot of time putting all the applications into one big review packet. If the application process be streamlined, it will be helpful.

Here are some proposed changes the committee is recommending for TEE program

- Reach out to other societies and spread the word about the TEE program and encourage students to participate. This way we can also get some more hosts from all regions. The committee has started to contact the GSO reps from all regions and provide the details for this program
- Select a student from each society if we get enough applications from all regions. This way the students from one region may be able to go and broaden the knowledge in other regions.

- Process improvement for application review - Is there a way WSSA can do the online applications for both TEE and graduate student travel awards. One option may be google forms where those applications can easily be converted to excel files. This would make the application evaluation very easy.

**Graduate Student Travel Awards** – This is another great opportunity that encourages graduate student participation in the WSSA meeting. There are six awards that are given to the students. Usually there is no distinction between masters and PhD students which sometimes makes it difficult for first year's master's student to get this award.

Here are couple of proposals to make changes in this program

- Split the graduate student travel between master's and PhD level students - The best thing will be giving 3 awards to MS students and 3 awards to PhD students. This may promote more participation from master's students.
- This is the second year in a row where WSSA meeting will be virtual. The committee proposes to allow the students who attended the virtual meeting for the first time to compete for the Graduate student travel awards second year, so they can still get a chance to attend their first in-person WSSA meeting.