



2023-2024 WSSA Standing Committee Report

Committee Name and Code: Professional Development and Membership Committee (F4)

Committee Chair: Cara McCauley

Committee Members (includes sub-committee members): Pete Eure, Sandeep Rana,

Dilpreet Riar, John Hinz, Lovreet Shergill, Steve Li, Aniruddha Maity

Board of Directors Liaison: Lauren Lazaro

Committee members rotating off: None

Recommended members to replace those rotating off:

None

Summary of past year's activities including:

- Committee goals
 - Evaluate ways to encourage participation of more graduate students in WSSA meetings.
 - Execute the WSSA Travel Enrichment Experience and Graduate Student Travel Award
 - Encourage more students to apply for both awards
- Committee accomplishments (impact of activities on membership, publications, policy, education, other, etc.)

The first goal for this team is to select the winners Travel Enrichment Experience (TEE) awards. One student from each society (including CWSS) was selected in the 2023 TEE class. The WSSA Professional Development and Membership Committee received 27 applications for this award. All the students had put tremendous effort in putting together the application packets and it was very difficult for the committee to select the top students. The top five students for TEE 2023 program were:

2023 WSSA TEE Award			
Name	University	Region	Host
Isabelle Aicklen	University of Guelph	CWSS	Dr. Marc Fisher, Corteva Agriscience, Sacramento, CA
Victor Hugo Vidal Ribeiro	Oregon State University	WSWS	Dr. Gary Schwarzlose, Bayer, Corpus Christi, TX
Bholuram Gurjar	Texas A&M University	SWSS	Dr. Darrin Dodds and Dan Reynolds, Mississippi State University
Jeanine Arana Cordonero	Purdue University	NCWSS	Drs. Lauren Lazaro, William Patzoldt, Jesaelen Moraes, Sunnyvale, CA
Eli Russell	Virginia Tech	NEWSS	Dr. David Simpson, Corteva Agriscience, Indianapolis, IN

The team will continue with the program outreach efforts to each regional society, particularly in using the GSO connections to advertise on social media so that we get good response and applicant pool from each regional society.

The second responsibility that the committee has got is to select the winners for WSSA Graduate Student travel awards. Like TEE program, there was a great response from graduate students regarding this program. The committee received 27 applications for this award, but we received 0 applications from NEWSS and only 1 from WSWS. This was unexpected and the committee will work with regional GSOs to try to improve on the geographic breadth of applicants. The top six students for 2024 WSSA Graduate Student Travel Award were:

2024 WSSA Graduate Student Travel Award Winners			
Name	University	Region	Degree
Isabel Werle	University of Illinois	NCWSS	PhD
Joe Johnson	Texas A&M University	SWSS	PhD
Guilherme Chudzik	University of Wisconsin	NCWSS	MS
Emily Witt	University of Florida	SWSS	MS
Manjot Sidhu	Michigan State University	NCWSS	PhD
Ryan Hamburg	Texas A&M University	SWSS	PhD

- WSSA funds requested if any?
 - To continue to increase student attendance at WSSA, we are requesting funds to expand the number of Graduate Student Travel Award

- Current state of the committee’s projects or activities?
 - Travel Enrichment Experience and Graduate Student Travel award programs are going well. The committee is working on ways to continue increased participation from students, increase awareness of opportunity in NEWSS and WSWS to increase applicants from those regions.
 - We are working with Eric Gustafson and Joe Omielan to provide a headshot opportunity at the 2024 WSSA meeting as a professional development opportunity for all members and help them “get something to take home” from the meeting. If it goes well, we would like to offer this at every other WSSA meeting.

- Any new information posted on the WSSA website?
 - The information regarding winners of WSSA Travel Enrichment Experience (TEE) awards was posted on WSSA website.
 - The information regarding the winners of WSSA graduate student travel awards will also be posted on WSSA website.
 - Information regarding applications for 2024 TEE awards will be posted on website in March.

Summary of plans for next year (changes in goals, key initiatives, plan of action, etc.):

The WSSA Professional Development and Membership Committee met on 12/15/23 for our committee meeting held virtually on Teams. Pete Eure, Steve Li, Dilpreet Riar, John Hinz, Lauren Lazaro, and Cara McCauley were in attendance. Sandeep Rana, Lovreet Shergill, and Aniruddha Maity were absent. There was a great discussion on how to best utilize the two awards and ensuring the awards are provided to the best intended students. We extensively discussed the intent of each award and how to select the best students moving forward:

1. TEE award: the award should be given **primarily on merit** with the goal of selecting a student from each region. The selection process will include dividing the applicants first by region with the goal of identifying the top student from each region using merit-based criteria. We will not account for student need or degree type.
2. Grad Travel Award: the award should be given **primarily on financial need and diverse research not typically represented at WSSA**. The selection process will include dividing the applicants by degree (MS and PhD) with the goal of identifying the students with the greatest need (with a representative spread of award winners by degree type based on applicant pool). This is consistent with wording in the existing application (“These awards are provided by WSSA to graduate students to encourage their involvement in the society’s annual meeting early in their degree programs, and to broaden the attendance of graduate students from nontraditional weed science research programs”), and the committee is also considering to update the wording to be most descriptive of the intention of the award (ex. Expand focus to include underrepresented or new weed science programs/professors). It was also discussed on if we should limit the number of applications to 2 students by professor.

Future Ideas:

- Coordinate with GSO for 2025 WSSA meeting event where an industry HR person is invited to provide interview tips, resume writing, immigration, career shadowing, etc. This event would be targeted for students.

Recommendations for Board or Membership action:

1. Help the committee in execution of Professional Headshots at the 2024 WSSA Meeting. This is the first time trying this new offering for members and we have worked closely with Eric Gustafson, Joe Omielan, and Pamela Carvalho-Moore to try this out. Hopefully it will go well and we can continue to organize this offering for WSSA attendees in future.
2. Provide insight on Grad Student Travel Award selection changes (focus on need vs merit) to support committee towards any changes. Consider increasing number of Graduate Student Travel awards to continue to increase student attendance and participation in the meeting.