



**Science
Societies**

Building a Strong Foundation for the Future

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Our 87th Annual Meeting was a success! As always, the Annual Meeting provided a multitude of opportunities to learn about new research, network, and recognize award winners. I'd like to take this opportunity to highlight the SSSA Presidential Award winners.

The Presidential Award is given to an individual or group of individuals who have influenced soil science or the practice of soil science so greatly that the impact of their efforts will be enduring on the future of our science and/or profession. Their work may have influenced any aspect of soil science in the agricultural, environmental, or social science fields as a researcher, educator, or practitioner; but the fundamental criterion is that their influence be such an important one that their impact will be long lasting.

As I thought about who should receive an award like this, I began to consider soil science's role in providing solutions for our planetary grand challenges. We need trailblazing science to solve grand challenges. And trailblazing science doesn't occur if we don't have trailblazing scientists.

The 2023 Presidential Award was presented to the SSSA Diversity Trailblazers, those members who were the first or among the first women, people of color, indigenous, and LGBTQ+ scientists to take on leadership roles in our Society. As President, Board member, Editor, Division Chair, Committee Chair, and SSSA Fellow, these Diversity Trailblazers have created a pathway for others to follow in their pursuit of advancing soil science. I am thankful for and inspired by the Trailblazers' contributions and sustained commitment to SSSA. They have built a strong foundation for the future.

Strategically Planning for the Future

Speaking of SSSA's future, last fall, the SSSA Board of Directors embarked on a year-long strategic planning process built around the needs of members and stakeholders. We held focus groups and had one-on-one conversations with members. A comprehensive member and stakeholder survey was conducted. We spent time at

several board meetings discussing needs and the future. Finally in late July, the SSSA Board of Directors had a productive strategic planning retreat. We formulated a vision statement for our Journey to 2029: *Unite a global community advocating for soils through education and science*. We developed four strategic objectives:

1. **Increase, engage, and diversify our membership.**
2. **Workforce development: Increase awareness of the diverse career paths for soil scientists.**
3. **Ensure SSSA is positioned to be responsive to emerging issues.**
4. **Expand our economic engine: Increase revenue to support the vision and strategic objectives.**

I left the retreat feeling energized and excited about our future. The Board of Directors approved the strategic plan at the Annual Meeting. We will begin to operationalize the plan in 2024. There will likely be new opportunities for members to volunteer to work on various objectives. Look for more information in *CSA News* magazine and the website.

*“I encourage all of you ... to tell everyone that
SOILS are AWESOME”*

It's been a privilege to serve as your president in 2023. I continue to be excited about the future of soil science and SSSA. I encourage all of you to use every opportunity possible to tell everyone that **SOILS are AWESOME** and soil scientists are key to sustaining life.

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