

DEI highlights from CANVAS 2025

Building belonging across the Societies

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The CANVAS 2025 meeting in Salt Lake City showcased a strong and intentional commitment to diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) with programming such as the Women in Science Workshop pictured here.

The [CANVAS](#) 2025 meeting in Salt Lake City showcased a strong and intentional commitment to diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI). Through dedicated programming, student support, and a clear focus on community belonging, the Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion in ASA, CSSA, and SSSA Committee continues to promote inclusivity in a scientific setting.

The meeting opened with a diversity welcome, reaffirming the three Societies' shared [DEI Statement](#) and the DEI Committee's ongoing work. This early emphasis set the tone for an environment where all attendees—students, researchers, educators, and professionals—were encouraged to engage and be themselves. Look for a more detailed article on the CANVAS 2025 opening ceremony in a future *CSA News* article.

Diversity Summit: Finding your place

This year's Diversity Summit focused on cultivating a sense of professional belonging. Participants explored strategies for building confidence, navigating identity within the scientific community, and creating meaningful mentorship connections.

Our featured speaker, Brandon Bell, explored the meaning and importance of inclusive cultures for professional belonging and how it shapes careers, fuels collaboration, and strengthens our sciences. Bell led attendees in interactive discussions on creating inclusive cultures (in the workplace and as individuals) that foster belonging.

Brandon Bell is the People and Organizational Development Lead at Syngenta and is passionate about creating a culture that fosters belonging, innovation, and growth.



This year's Diversity Summit at the CANVAS meeting featured Brandon Bell (right), People and Organizational Development Lead at Syngenta.

Women in science workshop: Cultivating resilience

Focused on resilience and career development, this workshop brought together women scientists across disciplines and career stages. The session highlighted practical approaches to thriving in research, teaching, and extension while strengthening peer support networks. Watch for an article on the workshop topics in a future issue of *CSA News* magazine.

Finding common ground: Morning coffee

Held every morning at 7:00 am Monday through Wednesday, these informal gatherings created space for interdisciplinary and cross-identity networking. With more than 30 attendees each day, ranging from new students to new professionals, the relaxed format encouraged conversation among colleagues who may not typically meet, strengthening community across the Societies. Each day had a different theme to encourage discussion over coffee and pastries.

This event will continue next year, so keep an eye on the schedule!



More than 30 CANVAS attendees in Salt Lake City gathered each morning for coffee and conversation.

Diversity Student Poster Contest

The Diversity Student Poster Contest is designed to spotlight research by undergraduate and graduate students who self-identify as members of groups historically underrepresented or marginalized in science. With 97 posters in the preliminary round (up from 65 in 2024) and 63 expert judges, each entry received a thoughtful review by at least three judges. After the preliminary, virtual round, 15 posters were selected to move on to the final round at CANVAS 2025 in Salt Lake City. The in-person posters were judged by a range of scientific experts, including past Society presidents. Here are the results:

First place: Daniel Hong, Virginia Tech

- Carryover Phosphorus (P) Effects on P Cycling in Southeastern U.S. Loblolly Pine Plantations

Second place: Gagandeep Kaur, Washington State University

- Feeding the Future: Strengthening Nutrition Through Agronomic Biofortification

Third place: Subash Thapa, South Dakota State University

“Participating in the Diversity Student Poster Contest was an invaluable experience. It gave me the opportunity to learn about innovative research ... and ... strengthened my science communication skills...”

—Daniel Hong

- Advancing Wheat Disease Phenotyping through YOLOv11 and YOLOv12: Automated Detection of FHB Severity and Damaged Kernels

More than just a competition, the event served as a platform for meaningful dialogue and connection.

“Participating in the Diversity Student Poster Contest was an invaluable experience,” says 2025 first-place winner, Daniel Hong. “It gave me the opportunity to learn about innovative research beyond my own discipline while still staying deeply rooted in soil science—soil folks really do know how to cultivate good ideas! Preparing a poster and a short pitch for a broader audience strengthened my science communication skills, which

are increasingly essential in our field. I'm truly grateful and honored for the chance to stay well grounded within such a supportive community."

Abstract submissions for the 2026 Diversity Student Poster Contest will open with abstract submissions in early 2026. Students interested in participating must submit their abstract by the published abstract deadline by selecting the Diversity Poster Contest checkbox during the abstract's "Title" step. Finalists will be selected through a virtual preliminary review (no presentations) of submitted posters followed by live judging during the CANVAS 2026 meeting in Portland, OR.

This contest continues to be a vibrant platform for scientists to share their work, connect with peers and mentors, and be recognized for their contributions to a more inclusive scientific community.

Supporting students and early career scientists

A major component of this year's DEI efforts was the continued success of the Bridge Scholars Program. More than 130 students applied with eight being chosen. Each student was provided with:

- Meeting registration and abstract fee coverage
- One year of Society membership
- Travel support
- One-on-one mentorship

By reducing financial and structural barriers, the program ensures that more students from underrepresented backgrounds can access the full benefits of Society membership and participation in the international conference.



ASA, CSSA, SSSA Bridge Scholar students and mentors at the CANVAS 2025 meeting in Salt Lake City.

Safe and inclusive environments

CANVAS 2025 provided an on-site safe space advocate, Dr. Kathleen Canul, who was available to confidentially assist attendees experiencing harassment, discrimination, or conduct violations. This resource reinforces the Societies' commitment to providing a welcoming and accountable meeting environment.

Continued commitment to DEI

The 2025 Society Meeting in Salt Lake City demonstrated that agronomy, crop science, and soil science are at their strongest when scientists from all backgrounds are

welcomed, supported, and empowered. Through intentional programming and bold leadership, the DEI committee efforts at CANVAS 2025 cultivated belonging and helped shape a scientific community where every participant has space to thrive.

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