



**Science
Societies**

Working together to navigate through challenges, meet our goals

By P.V. Vara Prasad, CSSA President, vara@ksu.edu

| December 27, 2020



Greetings and welcome. I hope all of you had a wonderful holiday season with time to celebrate and reflect upon this past year. This holiday season was unusual and difficult for many families and friends due to restrictions on all travel and the need for social distancing caused by the ongoing human health pandemic. Despite differences of

opinions and beliefs, this is the time to come together and do the right thing.

There is certainly hope with the advancements and contributions of science toward developing effective vaccines to control this viral disease. Thanks to scientists around the world, we have positive signs of effective vaccines that will soon be available for frontline workers and the general population, respectively. There are still several unanswered questions about its ability to provide complete immunity and the duration of its effectiveness. Getting back to complete normality will take time. We all need to be resilient and vigilant, have patience, and work together to overcome and navigate through challenges and hardships as we plan our activities and meetings this year. Moving forward, the experience we all have on our side will certainly help us to be well prepared in advance.

I am excited to start this new year with a lot of hope and enthusiasm as I begin to serve as your president of CSSA. I want to start by thanking Shawn Kaeppler (president, 2020) and Beth Guertal (past president, 2020) for their leadership, dedication, and service to CSSA. Despite the challenges faced this past year, we had an exceptional virtual Annual Meeting. The numbers were on par with many of our previous meetings. Many thanks to Nick Goesser, CEO of the three Societies (CSSA, ASA, and SSSA), and his team at the headquarters office, the program planning committee, and to all members for their dedication and support.

2021 Resolution: Working with You to Implement Strategic Plan

Several of you may have made resolutions for the new year. One of my resolutions is working for and with you to implement our strategic plan and pave a path to meet the goals and objectives of CSSA. Last year, we worked hard together to clearly define our grand challenge and developed a strategic plan with specific goals, objectives, and metrics to measure our progress and success for the upcoming three years. I

encourage all of you to visit the CSSA website and read our strategic plan (<https://bit.ly/3gvaapm>).

It is time to pave a path and steadily move forward to meet our milestones. We can achieve them in a timely manner if all of us are working together, listening to each other, and being transparent, inclusive, and creative. We must effectively communicate about opportunities and show value to retain current members and motivate new members to join by telling them how their research, education, outreach, investments, and policies are key to our success. I plan to communicate with you on these topics in this column this year.



Vara Prasad with his wife, son, and daughter at home in Manhattan, KS.

We have many challenges and wicked problems in our agri-food system such as: food and nutritional security, food sovereignty, climate change, inequalities and social justice, among several others. Access to healthy food and a clean environment is a moral right to all of us, and we should ensure these resources are abundantly available to our future generations. Crop science, agronomy, and soil science are the foundation of agriculture that provides nutritious, healthy, and safe food as well as ecosystem services and a healthy environment for humans, animals, and all life forms on earth. Working together in collaboration and leveraging the strong partnership among CSSA, ASA, and SSSA, we can find effective solutions to our pressing challenges.

Your Input Welcome: We Are Here to Serve You

It is my privilege and honor to serve the members of all divisions of CSSA, and I am fully committed to the cause and purpose of this organization. I look forward to learning

from you, listening to you, and doing my best to ensure that your needs are fulfilled and that barriers are removed for your success. I have a great team of chairs and board of representatives from all divisions of the CSSA. If you have any thoughts or ideas that can help achieve our objectives and goals, please do not hesitate to contact me or reach out to the leaders of your divisions or headquarters staff. We are here to serve you.

And last, but not least, I would like to take this opportunity to thank my family (wife, Lakshmi; son, Abhinav; daughter, Ananya; mother, Kasturi Bai; father, Pagadala Janardhana Rao; and sister, Nirmala), my teachers, advisers, mentors, donors, and many friends for their continuous support and encouragement throughout my personal life and professional career. I would not be here and be able to do what I enjoy the most (research, education, outreach, service, and seeing the world) if it were not for their unconditional love and blessings.



Citing literature

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