



Membership provides opportunities

By David Clay

| April 15, 2022



David Clay, ASA President. Photo courtesy of South Dakota State University.

When you think about joining anything, you typically will consider both the costs and the benefits. When you are considering joining a professional society, the society web page often lists many of the benefits, such as networking, keeping current, visibility, career development, advocacy, and discounts on publications. If these were the *only* reasons to join ASA, CSSA, and SSSA, I am confident that most of our members would not continue to renew their membership for 20, 30, or even 50 years. As ASA president, I have learned that each person has a unique story of how membership in the Society has helped them accomplish one or more of the goals on their bucket list. Being an ASA member helped me move my research from a conceptual idea on blackboard to sharing my ideas with agronomists, crop scientists, and soil scientists worldwide.

I believe that the real power of professional societies is that they provide opportunities that help you achieve your personal goals. Members can be active or passive participants, they can be leaders or followers; they can organize symposia, create learning communities, sponsor workshops, or even have enlightened discussions about the differences between Big Macs and Whoppers. In many situations, these discussions have resulted in scientific breakthroughs or lifelong friends whom they can bounce ideas off of.

Personal Stories

When asked about her experience as a Society member, Heidi Peterson, Vice President for Research and Conservation with the Sand County Foundation, said, "I was encouraged by my adviser to become a member as a graduate student and have been one ever since. At the Annual Meeting, I have always felt welcomed and part of the research community, even well before I was published. I have interacted with

professionals who are at different stages in their career, which has improved my confidence because I have experienced firsthand that regardless of who we are, we all continue to learn from each other. I will never forget the day I published a paper with one of my greatest career ‘role models.’ It made me see that those ambitious goals you set as you start your career are within arms reach.”

Similar sentiments were expressed by Amanda Ashworth, a Research Soil Scientist with USDA-ARS: “Membership and leadership opportunities in the Societies have helped and continue to help me reach my professional goals. Serving as the ASA Early Career Representative has expanded my professional network, enabled me to see how a successful organization is governed, and allowed me to provide input on issues affecting early career members. Since joining ASA 14 years ago, I’ve been afforded mentorship and professional development opportunities, which have helped me develop throughout my career. For these reasons, ASA is my ‘home’ scientific society for volunteering and publishing and my go-to source of information!”

The bottom line is that joining a professional society is a personal decision that may change as you move through your career. Our Societies are committed to making each person, either member or guest, feel welcome and safe. Additional information about our membership in our Societies is available at www.agronomy.org/membership, www.crops.org/membership, and www.soils.org/membership.

Membership: What’s Your Story?

Each person has a unique story of how membership in the Societies has helped them accomplish one or more of their goals. In this issue, we’re launching a new column (see p. 28) to share the stories of some of our members. What’s your

story? We'd love to hear from you. Email [Send Message](#) with your thoughts.

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