



**Science  
Societies**

# **Engaging the next generation of scientists: The Societies' workforce development campaign**

January 16, 2026



Find your dream job in agronomy,  
crop and soil science >>>

**DIRTY HANDS.  
CLEAN CONSCIENCE.**

With interest in STEM—and especially agricultural sciences—lagging among today's students, the Societies are launching a focused workforce development campaign to inspire the next generation of agronomists, crop scientists, and soil scientists. Learn how this strategic, Gen Z–focused effort aims to change perceptions, build awareness, and grow enrollment in these rewarding, high-impact careers.

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Who will be the next generation of agronomists, crop scientists, and soil scientists? That's the burning question. A 2022 survey found that just 16% of high school seniors were interested in pursuing a STEM career. And of those, even fewer are interested in our sciences. One study found that only 5% of students preferred a career in agriculture or natural resource management.

Yet job opportunities for agricultural scientists are expected to grow by 6% from 2024 to 2034, faster than many other occupations. And we know that careers in agronomy, crop science, and soil science can be very rewarding—and fun!

**The goal: Increase student enrollment in our sciences**

That's why ASA is investing in a workforce development campaign, designed to increase enrollment in agronomy, crop science, and soil science programs at post-secondary institutions throughout the United States. To accomplish this ambitious goal, we have two challenges—awareness and perception. [We need to raise awareness](#)

that our sciences are a viable, appealing career choice and change perceptions that the agricultural sciences are invaluable and high-tech while honoring our agricultural roots.

To have the most chance of success, our campaign will be focused and strategic, leveraging a wide variety of proven tactics and designed to build a student pipeline year over year.

Our target audience is a focused selection of the more than 15 million U.S. high school students. We want to capture the attention of those who are college bound. Those who are already interested in science, taking biology or related courses. Some may even be involved with our sciences through agriculture, forestry or natural resource programs at their school. We are also targeting current college freshmen or sophomores who are undecided. Focusing our resources on the students most likely to respond to our message gives us the biggest bang for our buck.

*"We need to raise awareness that our sciences are a viable, appealing career choice and change perceptions that the agricultural sciences are invaluable and high-tech..."*

It's equally important to understand what drives our targets. What do they care about? What motivates them? What do they want? Where do they get information? Who do they trust and listen to? That helps us choose the best tactics to reach them and helps us develop the messages they will respond to.

### **A message that resonates with Gen Z**

Our basic value proposition is that choosing to major in agronomy, crop science, and soil science isn't just about deciding on the courses you want to take—it's about choosing a path to a future offering nearly limitless opportunities to make a difference, to personally grow and succeed.

### **How can you help?**

Excited by our workforce development program? Let us know if you want to help by [emailing Susan Chapman](#), Director of Special Projects. We may ask you to review content as it's being developed or to share informational emails with your colleagues upon program launch.

If you are employed by a university, please encourage your department head to participate in our university database—that's a central database for students of all of the exciting programs available to them. They can connect with Susan for more information.

We know that resonates with Gen Z and their priorities. Those of you who connect with undergraduates probably realize that the students of today are quite different than even

5 or 10 years ago. They don't think about, or even want to, save the world—that's too much pressure—but they do want to make a difference. And they really want a career that will give them a work-life balance, pay the bills, and let them feel competent.

They're looking for help as they try and make these big decisions, and our campaign is designed to provide just that. We are developing a mobile-first website, robust social media campaign, paid advertising, PR, and more—all centered around our campaign theme of "Dirty Hands. Clean Conscience" represented by our website URL, DigInDoGood.com. This campaign platform was tested with real-life high school students as well as our own Societies' student members.

Work on the campaign started in July 2025 and is moving forward with input from our boards of directors, an advisory board, and key staff members. Our goal is to launch the program in late Quarter 1 or early Quarter 2 of this year. Look for more news and updates in future issues!

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