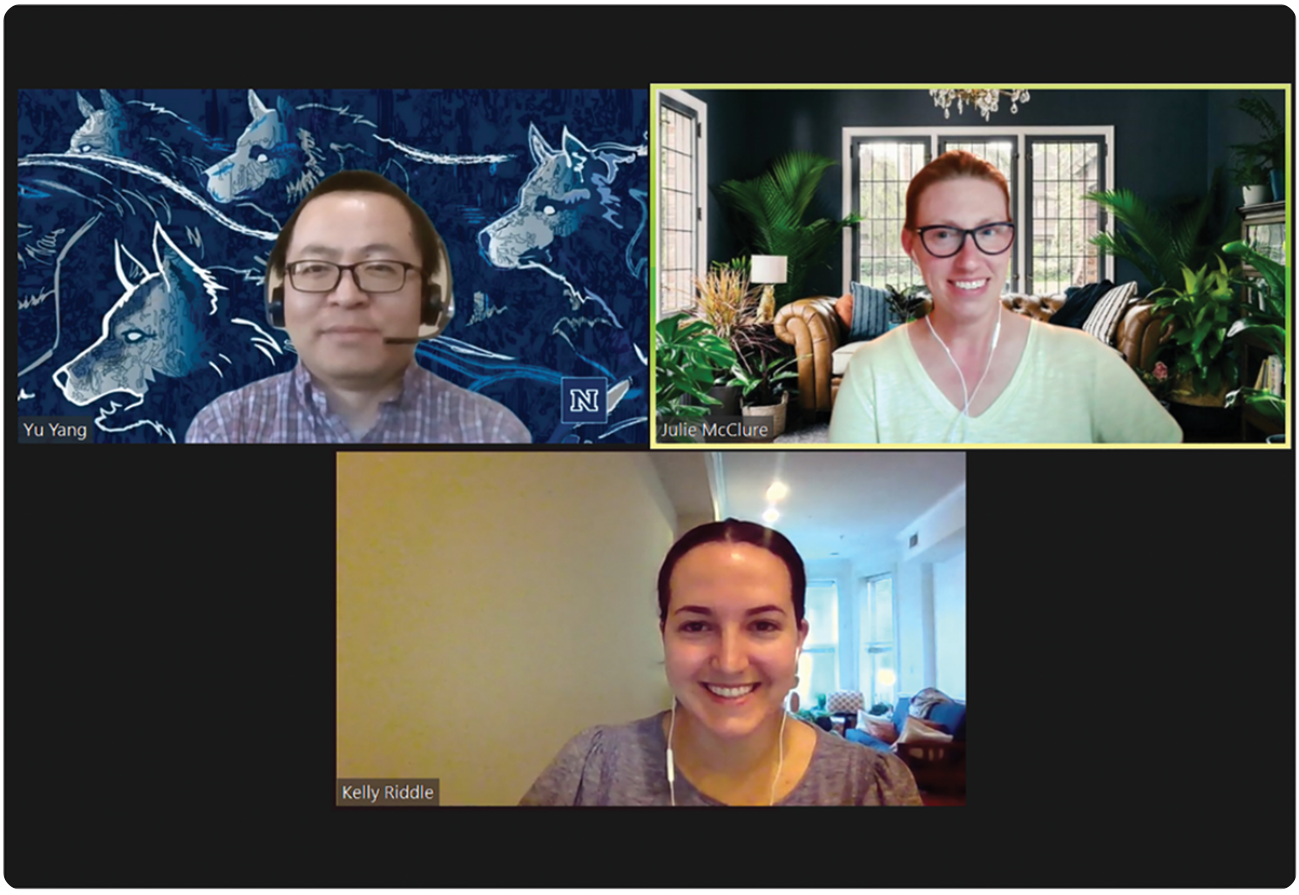
Science Societies

Spurring innovation: NSF advocacy

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Yu "Frank" Yang, University of Nevada, Reno, and Julie McClure, ASA, CSSA, and SSSA, met with Kelly Riddle in Sen. Jacky Rosen's office (NV) to discuss the National Science Foundation.

Every spring, participants in the ASA, CSSA, and SSSA Congressional Visits Day program meet with Congress to advocate for USDA research programs. By partnering with other stakeholder groups, the Societies advocate for other key federal research programs. ASA, CSSA, and SSSA advocate for the National Science Foundation (NSF) through the Coalition for National Science Funding (CNSF).

This coalition brings together 130 professional societies, universities, and industry groups to support the U.S. science, math, and engineering enterprise. The CNSF is so powerful in large part due to the diverse membership who all bring the same message to Congress: that innovation is the cornerstone of U.S. economic growth and competitiveness and that NSF is a key driver of innovation across all STEM fields. Each year, CNSF asks Congress and the administration to support innovation by increasing the federal investment in NSF.

A major part of the CNSF advocacy strategy is the annual congressional exhibit. The exhibit features dozens of researchers from across STEM disciplines sharing their NSF-funded research projects with members of Congress. For 2021, instead of the in-person exhibit, CNSF invited researchers to meet virtually with congressional offices to discuss their research and the importance of federal funding for NSF. On 24–25 June, CNSF members met virtually with 75 House and Senate offices.

SSSA member Yu “Frank” Yang, Associate Professor in the Department of Civil and Environmental Engineering at the University of Nevada, Reno, volunteered to represent the Societies and participate in the CNSF virtual advocacy days. Yang had considerable experience working with NSF, both through his own NSF-funded projects and working with NSF directly in his capacity as the 2019 ASA, CSSA, SSSA USDA NIFA Fellow. Then in March, Yang participated in the 2021 Virtual Congressional Visits Day,

meeting with several members of the Nevada congressional delegation to advocate for USDA research programs.

“This is a great opportunity to discuss with Nevada offices for our science, education, and outreach activities supported by NSF and their broad implications,” Yang says.

The NSF meetings focused on two requests: support $10 billion in funding for NSF in the annual federal funding process and include NSF in any forthcoming infrastructure legislation. The timing of these meetings couldn’t have been better. The House and Senate were working to finalize funding bills for federal programs like NSF. President Biden had recently released his fiscal year 2022 budget request, which included $10 billion in funding for NSF, so there was good momentum behind this request. There were also bipartisan bills aimed at significantly increasing NSF funding, which had just been approved in both the House and Senate (see p. 30 of the June issue or https://doi.org/10.1002/csan.20486 for a summary of these bills).

Participants were encouraged to discuss the various ways that NSF funding supports innovation, not only through research grants, but also through education, STEM workforce development, outreach, and investments in instrumentation. Yang was able to give examples of almost all of these topics. He discussed his research on carbon cycling and water quality, the mentorship of graduate students supported by the NSF Graduate Research Fellowships, and participating in the Innovations in Graduate Education (IGE)and Research Experiences for Teachers (RET) programs for graduate education and training K-12 teachers.

Yang added, “All the meetings are very productive and encouraging with the bipartisan support for the potential life-time growth in NSF funding.”

ASA, CSSA, and SSSA thank Frank Yang for his participation in this event and for his continued advocacy for natural resources research.

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