Science Societies

The Agronomic Science Foundation—Impacting our Societies for 60 years

By Brian Miller

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ASF

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The Agronomic Science Foundation (ASF) is the philanthropic arm of ASA, CSSA, and SSSA. Founded in 1967 and officially opened for donations in 1968, ASF is now proudly celebrating its 60th anniversary. As a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization, gifts to ASF often qualify as tax-deductible charitable donations.

Contributions from individuals like you directly support a vital mission: to provide the leadership and financial resources needed to advance agronomic, crop, and soil sciences in global crop production, all while promoting human welfare and a sustainable environment. Over the last six decades, donor generosity has powered a wide range of hands-on programs that ensure our Societies remain strong, dynamic, and relevant for generations to come.

Fueling the journey of a scientist: From classroom to world stage

Members across ASA, CSSA, and SSSA have often recognized ASF for flagship programs like the Golden Opportunity Scholars, the “Dig It!” Smithsonian Soils Exhibit, and our diverse lecture series at CANVAS. But behind every dollar distributed is a real person whose career, education, and discoveries were shaped by the investments of

supporters through ASF.

In 2025 alone, ASF distributed $511,147.27 across 488 allocations to support students, educators, and scientists at every milestone of their journey:

Roger Thurow, author of Against the Grain, gave the Betty Klepper Endowed Lectureship at CANVAS 2025 last November. In 2025 alone, the Agronomic Science Foundation supported 22 featured lecturers.

- **Sparking the passion:** ASF funded 149 scholarships ($104,217.19) and 278 travel grants ($43,497.53), breaking down financial barriers so that students, veterans, and emerging researchers could present their work, step into national meetings, and connect with mentors.

- **Inspiring new ideas:** Across 13 distinct lectureships, ASF supported 22 featured lecturers ($123,176.51) who took the stage to share cutting-edge research, sparking

curiosity and helping set the scientific agenda for the year ahead.

- **Recognizing excellence:** For established researchers tackling critical challenges in food security and environmental resilience, 32 professional awards ($203,935.50) celebrated decades of innovation and service.

Looking at the bigger picture, over the last decade (2015–2025), ASF has distributed more than $3.8 million to 3,275 individuals and programs.

What impact looks like in the field

The true value of these travel and scholarship funds is best seen in moments like this past summer at the Fifth International Soil Judging Contest in Nanjing, China. With travel support coordinated through ASF, a delegation of top U.S. students, coaches, and faculty advisers traveled across the globe to represent our Societies.

Elizabeth Eroshenko and William Hernández highlight important features of a practice soil pit this past summer at the Fifth International Soil Judging Contest in Nanjing, China. Travel

support was coordinated through the Agronomic Science Foundation. Photo courtesy of Paul Tietz.

Whether it is sending students to excel at a global competition in China or helping early-career researchers take the stage at the World Congress of Soil Science, ASF funding turns ambition into achievement; everything we do is ***#PoweredByASF****.*

Stepping into practice pits carved into ancient agricultural terraces, the American students quickly mastered international soil classification systems alongside peers from 14 different countries. When contest day arrived, Team USA dominated the field, securing the top four individual spots, six of the top eight overall teams, and capturing the overall World Championship title for the fifth consecutive time. Overall individual champion Holden Mrizek noted in a recent podcast episode with CEO Jim Cudahy, that spending hours in the pit with teammates and making real-time calls not only led to victory, but also solidified his commitment to a career in soil science.

Beyond the medals and trophies, the real victory was the lasting international network built in the soil pits. As University of Tennessee–Knoxville graduate and bronze medalist Callie Goodwin shared: *“I can't believe it led me to China. I'm incredibly grateful to have met*

so many amazing people from across the country and the world who love soil just as much as I do."

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Emerging needs and long-term vision

The Agronomic Science Foundation will continually look for new ways to meet the evolving needs of the scientific community. Over the years, donors have funded caregiver support grants—originally championed by the ACS Women in Science Committee—and created targeted travel assistance to ensure that the CANVAS meetings are accessible, diverse, and welcoming to all. As we look ahead, broadening representation and retaining active members across ASA, CSSA, and SSSA remains a top priority.

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We want to make it easier than ever for our community to be involved in these initiatives:

- **Effortless year-round giving:** We will soon be introducing a new recurring gift initiative designed to make continuous support simple and impactful throughout the year. With accessible monthly giving levels of $26, $60, $110, and $202 per month, regular contributions provide a steady, reliable foundation that allows supporters of the foundation to fund emerging opportunities quickly.

- **Planning for the future:** Thoughtful, long-term gifts play a transformative role in sustaining our mission. We recently received an inspiring $25,000 gift transferred directly from a generous supporter's IRA after passing. To help others make a lasting mark on the disciplines they love, we will be placing helpful resources right at your fingertips to show how you can easily include the Foundation in your own long-term financial and charitable plans.

Sustaining growth for the next 60 years

While sound investment of our portfolio sustains our existing core programs, new donations are what allow our Societies to expand, innovate, and meet unforeseen challenges. In 2025, ASF received $237,513.39 from 185 individual contributions spanning across the United States and around the world.

Because ASF operates with a dedicated volunteer board and shared staff time, our administrative overhead remains exceptionally low compared to other nonprofits. That means more of your gift goes directly where it matters most: into the field, the lab, the classroom, and the community.

As we celebrate 60 years of advancing agronomy, crops, and soils, we invite you to be part of the next chapter. There is no foundation better positioned to champion the future of our sciences, and your support truly makes a lasting impact.

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To learn more about ongoing initiatives, explore long-term giving options, or make a direct gift, visit sciencesocieties.org/asf or donate securely at web.sciencesocieties.org/shop/donate. Share your stories and see our impact in action with **#PoweredByASF**.

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