Science Societies

Scientists and Students of Nepali Origin

Connecting Nepal and the global scientific community through CANVAS

By Madhav Dhakal and Dinesh Panday

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Members of the Scientists and Students of Nepali Origin specialty group pose for a photo at CANVAS 2025, Salt Lake City, UT.

The Scientists and Students of Nepali Origin specialty group is doing more than building a professional network. Through mentorship, collaboration, and community within ASA, CSSA, and SSSA, the group is helping connect Nepali-origin scientists and students while creating opportunities that strengthen

agricultural research around the world.

Scientific societies grow not only through publications, conferences, and technical discussions, but also through relationships that connect people across disciplines, institutions, career stages, and countries. The Scientists and Students of Nepali Origin (SSNO) specialty group of ASA, CSSA, and SSSA has provided such a connection. It offers dynamic celebrations and builds cross-generational mentorship networks. By connecting newcomers and early-career researchers with experienced peers, SSNO facilitates direct experience sharing and constructive feedback on research and project management. Through guidance, mentorship, and support, SSNO helps shape the next generation of Nepali-origin research leaders in the global scientific community.

The formation of SSNO grew from a simple but important need. Over the years, increasing numbers of students and scientists originally from Nepal began pursuing education and careers in agronomy, crop science, soil science, environmental science, data science, and related agricultural disciplines in the United States and elsewhere. Many became active members of ASA, CSSA, and SSSA, presenting research at the Annual Meetings (now known as CANVAS), publishing in Society journals, serving on committees, reviewing manuscripts, and contributing to research and education. Yet participation in a large international scientific society can sometimes feel overwhelming, particularly for graduate students and young researchers attending their first professional conference. Having a smaller community within larger societies

can make it easier to meet colleagues, identify mentors, understand opportunities for involvement, and build lasting professional relationships.

Scientists and Students of Nepali Origin emerged within the Societies' specialty group framework. By the 2017 Annual Meeting in Tampa, FL, the group had taken recognizable form. A meeting on Oct. 23, 2017, was described as the first official meeting of its kind for SSNO. The group continued gathering at subsequent Society meetings. Those early gatherings established something valuable: a place where scientists with shared connections to Nepal could meet within their primary scientific societies while remaining fully engaged with the broader agronomy, crop, and soil science communities.

Scientists and Students of Nepali Origin emerged within the Societies' specialty group framework and took recognizable form by the 2017 Annual Meeting (now known as CANVAS). This photo is from the 2024 CANVAS meeting and shows (from l to r): Dr. Dinesh Panday (2024 Chair), Dr. Upendra Sainju (Founding Member), Dr. Gautam Pradhan, Dr. Rajan Ghimire, and Dr. Deepak Ghimire (2025 Chair).

More than a networking group

Networking is an important part of SSNO, but it serves a much broader purpose. One of its most important roles is mentorship. A graduate student attending CANVAS for the first time may have questions about presenting research, applying for awards, publishing a manuscript, finding a postdoctoral position, developing a professional network, or becoming involved in Society leadership. Within SSNO, that student can interact with scientists who have already navigated many of those pathways.

At the same time, established scientists benefit from meeting talented students and early-career researchers working in emerging areas of agricultural science. These relationships can lead to research collaborations, graduate and postdoctoral opportunities, manuscript development, professional recommendations, and new scientific ideas.

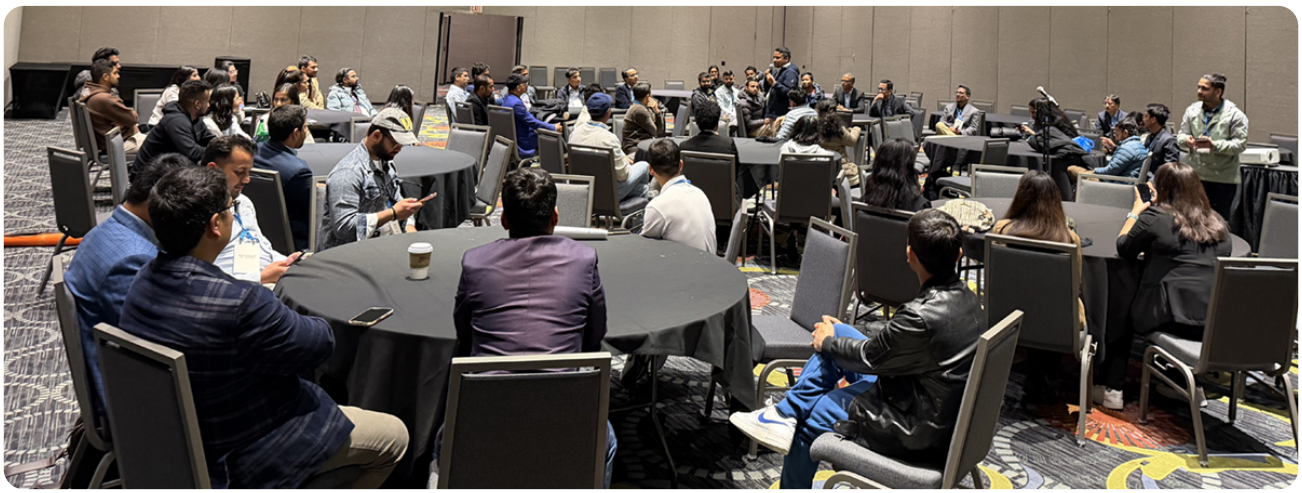
Scientists and Students of Nepali Origin also provides an opportunity to celebrate the achievements of its members. Nepali-origin scientists within the Societies work across a remarkable range of topics, including soil health, crop improvement, nutrient management, water resources, climate-smart agriculture, precision agriculture, remote sensing, weed science, environmental quality, and agricultural modeling. Bringing these scientists together allows members to learn about one another's work and recognize contributions that might otherwise remain scattered across different Society divisions and institutions.

CANVAS as a point of connection

The CANVAS meetings continue to be an important gathering point for SSNO. These meetings give members who may communicate only occasionally during the year an opportunity to meet face-to-face, welcome new students, reconnect with colleagues, discuss scientific interests, and consider future activities. Since its inception, Tuesday evening during the conferences has traditionally served as the official SSNO meeting day. During this annual gathering, attendees select a new chair and vice-chair, with the elected vice-chair automatically stepping into the role of chair the following year to ensure leadership continuity.

The 2025 CANVAS meeting in Salt Lake City brought together approximately 100 SSNO students and scientists at various stages of their careers and provided a forum for

discussing professional development, networking, Society participation, and the future direction of the group. Such gatherings are especially valuable because they connect individuals who may be working hundreds or thousands of miles apart but share both scientific interests and a desire to strengthen the professional community.



Dr. Madhav Dhakal, current Chair of the Scientists and Students of Nepali Origin specialty group, addresses attendees at CANVAS 2025.

Connecting Nepal and the global scientific community

Scientists and Students of Nepali Origin also has the potential to serve as an intellectual bridge between agricultural science in Nepal and the broader international research community. Nepal faces diverse agricultural challenges related to soil fertility, water availability, climate variability, crop productivity, land degradation, and sustainable intensification. Meanwhile, Nepali-origin scientists working across universities, government agencies, research institutions, and industry have developed expertise in many of these same areas.

Connecting these scientists creates opportunities for exchange of knowledge, collaborative research, student training, technology transfer, and partnerships with

institutions in Nepal. The value of SSNO therefore extends beyond creating a social network. It can help connect scientific expertise developed internationally with agricultural questions relevant both to Nepal and to farming systems around the world.

As SSNO continues to grow, its future should remain centered on connection, mentorship, scientific exchange, and service. Regular engagement through the Societies' Member Hub, gatherings during CANVAS, student mentoring, recognition of member accomplishments, professional development discussions, collaborative scientific activities, and increased participation in ASA, CSSA, and SSSA leadership can further strengthen the group. The strength of ASA, CSSA, and SSSA comes from the scientific expertise of their members and from the communities that allow those members to connect. This illustrates how a small specialty group like ours can contribute to that larger mission.

For Nepali-origin students and professionals already involved or considering becoming involved in ASA, CSSA, and SSSA, this specialty group offers an open door into that community. And as those relationships grow, their impact can extend far beyond CANVAS to laboratories, universities, farms, research collaborations, professional careers, and agricultural communities in the United States, Nepal, and around the world. New members can easily connect with this specialty group via the Member Hub and/or by emailing acs.ssno@gmail.com (email now).

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