

## BODY OF REPORT

### Summary

As in the past year, the Diversity in Agronomy, Crops, Soils and Environmental Sciences (ACS528) has made significant accomplishments in 2011. The 2011 report includes the committee's revised Mission Statement, Minutes of monthly teleconferences, Minutes of the 2011 annual business meeting, results of the Minority Student Poster Competition, Platinum Scholars activities and Motivational Program, 2011 Platinum Scholars brochure and 2011 agenda, information on high school students who participated in Platinum Scholars event, Survey Questionnaire, Student Responses and analysis, Platinum Scholars' links to the Tri-Societies's websites, Acknowledgment of donors and supporters, assistance to Central Texas STEM Cluster meeting, and new Partnership with the K-12 Education Committees. Suggestions to improve committee member participation are also presented.

#### 1. **1. New Diversity Committee's (ACS528) Mission Statement**

Diversity in Agronomy, Crops, Soils and Environmental Sciences Committee (ACS528), under the auspices of the American Society of Agronomy, Crop Science Society of America, and Soil Science Society of America, is committed to enhance participation of underrepresented students and professionals in the Tri-Societies, thereby strengthening and diversifying the potential workforce in agricultural and environmental sciences. The Diversity Committee endeavors to recruit students into careers in agriculture and environmental sciences through the Platinum Scholars Program, that sponsors the participation of local high school students and teachers at the ASA/CSSA/SSSA annual meetings, where they obtain first-hand experience on agricultural and environmental issues, cutting-edge scientific knowledge, and enhanced understanding of the role of the Tri-Societies in finding solutions to national and global problems concerning production of food, fiber, fuel, and the environment

#### 2. **2. Minutes of Teleconferences and Annual Business Meetings (Felicia Armstrong, Secretary)**

- a. **Teleconferences** - Monthly teleconferences were scheduled to keep active members abreast with committee activities. The minutes are presented in this report as an attachment (see below).
- b. **Annual Business Meeting** in 2011 (**Rufina Ward and Javier Gonzalez, presiders**) Minutes of the Business Meeting held on October 17 are presented as an attachment (see below).

#### 3. **3. Request for Endorsement from Societies' Presidents of New Chair, Chair-elect and Member-** ACS528 submits to the Societies' presidents the following names for endorsement:

2012 Chair: Harjit Rekhi

2012 Chair-elect and new member: Eton Codling (USDA-ARS)

Member (renewal): Maria Monteros (Noble Foundation)

#### **4. Poster Competition – ASA/CSSA/SSSA Annual International Meetings (Javier Gonzalez, Poster Subcommittee Chair)**

The ACS528 Diversity Committee implemented a Student Poster Competition to recognize outstanding ASA, CSSA, and SSSA posters presented at the 2011 Annual Meetings in San Antonio, Texas by graduate students from under-represented groups. Only seven poster submissions were received electronically. They were evaluated by a panel of judges from the ACS528 Diversity Committee using the following criteria: (1) originality and impact of the study, (2) content and clarity of information, and (3) quality of presentation. The posters included in the ACS528 competition were posted outside Room 214B in the Henry Gonzalez Convention Center on October 17, 2011 from 5:30 pm to 8:00 pm. The posters were presented as part of the scheduled general program in San Antonio. The winners were announced and recognized during the Diversity Committee Business meeting on Monday, October 17, 2011. Winners received monetary awards from ASA/CSSA/SSSA of \$300, \$250, and \$200 for first, second and third place, respectively. The winners were:

1<sup>st</sup> place: Phillip Defoe, Kansas State University; Title “Gardening on Arsenic and Lead-Contaminated Brown fields: Is It Safe?”

2<sup>nd</sup> place: Madahy Romero, Texas A&M University; Title “Degradation of Mesotrione and Its Impact on Soil Microbial Activity”

3<sup>rd</sup> place: Lina Bernaola, Louisiana State University; Title “Genetic Diversity of Smooth Cordgrass (*Spartina alterniflora* Loisel) Collections in Louisiana”

#### **5. Platinum Scholars Event and Motivational Program**

The Platinum Scholars program initiated in 2010 to sponsor selected high school students to attend the ASA/CSSA/SSSA International Annual Meetings and see first-hand the opportunities available in the agricultural sciences by attending science symposium while interacting directly with scientists who are changing the world through their research on global agriculture challenges, food production, human health and alternative energy sources. This year, ten students and two teachers from each of five local high schools in San Antonio, TX, were invited to attend and participate in a full day of activities on October 18 from 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 pm. Schools invited were: NEISD STEM RAM Academy, Harmony Science Academy, Toltech T-STEM Academy, Milton B. Lee Academy of Science and Engineering, and Sam Houston High School. Unfortunately, Sam Houston High School cancelled at the last minute (due to transportation issues), thus, a total of only 43 students and 6 teachers attended. Data on student and teacher participants are presented in the following table.

<b>Category</b>	<b>Number</b>	<b>Percent (%)</b>
Male	21	55
Female	17	45
Total students	38	
Teachers	6	

Total attendees	44	
Freshman	4	11
Sophomore	16	42
Junior	11	29
Senior	7	18
Hispanic	25	66
African-American	6	16
Asian	3	8
Caucasian	1	3
Middle-eastern	3	8

Our **Motivational Program** was held at 3:00 to 5:00 pm at the Hilton Palacio del Rio, Corte Real ABCH (see attached Agenda). A survey questionnaire was used to gather information on student preferences. Student responses to Survey Questionnaire were analyzed and interpreted (see attached Survey Questionnaire and Survey Results).

#### **6. Platinum Scholars website link**

Information on Platinum Scholars is available at [www.agronomy.org/platinum-scholars](http://www.agronomy.org/platinum-scholars), [www.crops.org/platinum-scholars](http://www.crops.org/platinum-scholars) and [www.soils.org/platinum-scholars](http://www.soils.org/platinum-scholars). The Platinum Scholars Brochure and 2011 Motivational Program will be posted on the website.

#### **7. Acknowledgment of Supporters and Donors**

The Diversity Committee would like to thank Noble Foundation and Monsanto for their monetary and in-kind contributions. Noble Foundation produced the 2010 and 2011 brochures (see attached) and 2011 Motivational Program (insert) at no cost to the committee and donated 60 tote bags containing promotional gift items for high school students and teachers. The committee is grateful to Monsanto for its monetary contribution in support of this event. The Committee would like to thank others who also provided promotional gift items: USDA-APHIS, USDA-ARS, Alabama A&M University, University of Arkansas –Fayetteville, Cornell University, University of Saskatchewan, Oregon State University, Texas A&M University, University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign, Penn State University, Iowa State University, Colorado State University, Youngstown State University and Tarleton University. In addition, we would like to thank Drs. Maria Gallo (2011 President, Crops Science Society of America; University of Florida), Manuel Piña, Jr. (Texas A&M University), and Maria Monteros (Noble Foundation) for their motivational presentations. We thank student volunteers from Iowa State University (Dedrick Davis, Eric Moore, Joyce Lok) and Savannah State University (Justin Price) who served as guides for high school students. We would like to acknowledge the able assistance of Ms. Joules Webb; she served as the Diversity Committee’s link to the various high schools that participated in the Platinum Scholars program. We also thank Keith Schlesinger for his help and guidance; he served as the Committee’s liaison with the Societies. We also thank everybody in the

headquarters for providing assistance to the Diversity Committee; the Committee is deeply grateful to the ASA/CSSA/SSSA for supporting all our events.

**8. Central Texas STEM Educators' Cluster Meeting** (Joules Webb- organizer and presider; Rufina Ward and Keith Schlesinger, co-organizers)

Drs. Maria Gallo and Emilio Oyarzabal representing the societies provided the academic and industry perspectives; they emphasized the importance of agricultural and environmental sciences in STEM education in secondary schools. Members of the Diversity Committee and student volunteers served as guides for teacher participants visiting various booths in the Exhibit Hall.

#### **9. New Partnership between ACS528 and K-12 Education Committees**

Through the Platinum Scholars initiative, ACS528 is engaged in providing experiential learning to area high school students and teachers through participation in the annual ASA/CSSA/SSSA meetings. The K-12 Education Committees share the goals of ACS528 and support the Platinum Scholars program. To solidify this partnership, Clay Robinson, a member of the K-12 Education Committees, was invited to join ACS528 in 2011 to assist in initiating contact with high schools in San Antonio, TX.

### **ITEMS REQUIRING BOARD ATTENTION**

#### ***Committee membership and Nomination***

The Tri-Societies' Guidelines stipulate that only nine (9) official members make up the Committee. We would like to keep the number of official members at 18 considering the many activities of the committee. Because the committee serves under all three Societies, larger membership, we believe, is warranted.

We would like to nominate Eton Codling (2012 Chair-elect) as new member and the reinstatement of Maria Monteros as committee member. Dr. Monteros was recommended with two other members last year but her name did not show up on the updated official list of members. We also would like to announce that Harjit Rekhi is Committee Chair for 2012.

#### ***Committee notification of new members***

All Society Presidents must notify ACS528 Committee Chair of each new appointment. New member must be required to establish contact with the committee (and vice versa) within a month of the appointment.

#### ***Non-participation of members***

In case of extended non-activity (e.g., no contact or zero participation in any form for more than six months in one year), the Committee Chair should have the option of submitting a nominee to the Societies to replace inactive member.

***Enhanced Graduate Student Leadership in Diversity Committee***

To improve graduate student involvement in ACS528, active participation in committee activities by graduate students particularly from underrepresented groups must be enhanced.