

Membership and Communications Report

2024 June Board Meeting

Amelia Neely – Membership & Communications Manager

As of May 31, 2024, membership totals are strong with almost 100 more members than this time last year (a 3.3% increase). Looking at end-of-May numbers since 2021, we have about 120 more members than 2022 and about 20 more than 2021. You may recall that in 2021 we had our highest number of members since 2015 due to the very successful virtual conference during the pandemic, so the fact that we are slightly ahead of that year is promising. As you will see in the data, student membership totals were unaffected by the \$5 increase to student membership dues.

Membership Overview

	2024 through May 31		2023 through May 31		All of 2023		All of 2022		All of 2021		All of 2020	
	<u>2024</u>	% of Total	<u>2023</u>	% of Total	<u>2023</u>	% of Total	<u>2022</u>	% of Total	<u>2021</u>	% of Total	<u>2020</u>	% of Total
Corresponding	73	2.5%	72	2.6%	73	2.4%	72	2.3%	72	2.2%	69	2.2%
Life	125	4.4%	117	4.2%	122	3.9%	112	3.6%	102	3.2%	94	3.0%
Emeritus	351	12.2%	340	12.3%	349	11.3%	335	10.9%	310	9.6%	299	9.5%
E Family	42	1.5%	46	1.7%	42	1.4%	47	1.5%	42	1.3%	43	1.4%
Retired	70	2.4%	70	2.5%	80	2.6%	72	2.3%	75	2.3%	73	2.3%
R Family	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	2	0.1%	4	0.1%	2	0.1%	3	0.1%
3 Yr Professional	233	8.1%	222	8.0%	238	7.7%	251	8.1%	286	8.9%	289	9.2%
3 Yr Prof Family	20	0.7%	19	0.7%	20	0.6%	19	0.6%	20	0.6%	22	0.7%
Professional	640	22.3%	633	22.8%	701	22.6%	751	24.4%	809	25.2%	857	27.3%
P Family	89	3.1%	81	2.9%	89	2.9%	88	2.9%	100	3.1%	103	3.3%
CC Professional	24	0.8%	26	0.9%	28	0.9%	37	1.2%	36	1.1%	41	1.3%
CC Family	5	0.2%	4	0.1%	4	0.1%	4	0.1%	2	0.1%	3	0.1%
3 Yr Postdoc*	56	2.0%	72	2.6%	70	2.3%	61	2.0%	35	1.1%	15	0.5%
PostDoc	94	3.3%	80	2.9%	103	3.3%	113	3.7%	140	4.4%	158	5.0%
PD Family	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	3	0.1%
3 Yr Student	328	11.4%	268	9.7%	322	10.4%	311	10.1%	219	6.8%	144	4.6%
Student	484	16.9%	521	18.8%	598	19.3%	610	19.8%	753	23.4%	713	22.7%
S Family	0	0.0%	2	0.1%	3	0.1%	3	0.1%	2	0.1%	0	0.0%
S Chapter	42	1.5%	40	1.4%	49	1.6%	24	0.8%	15	0.5%	21	0.7%
K-12 Teachers	5	0.2%	5	0.2%	7	0.2%	7	0.2%	9	0.3%	14	0.4%
Affiliate	11	0.4%	20	0.7%	23	0.7%	23	0.7%	23	0.7%	30	1.0%
Associate	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%
Amateur	43	1.5%	37	1.3%	50	1.6%	39	1.3%	54	1.7%	59	1.9%
3 Yr Dev Nations	59	2.1%	39	1.4%	46	1.5%	26	0.8%	12	0.4%		
Developing Nations	73	2.5%	61	2.2%	81	2.6%	73	2.4%	96	3.0%	89	2.8%
	2867		2775		3100		3082		3214		3142	
	<u>2024</u>		<u>2023</u>		<u>2023</u>		<u>2022</u>		<u>2021</u>		<u>2020</u>	% of Total
Professional	1954	68.2%	1882	67.8%	2048	66.1%	2065	67.0%	2139	66.6%	2161	68.8%
Student	854	29.8%	831	29.9%	972	31.4%	948	30.8%	989	30.8%	878	27.9%
Other	59	2.1%	62	2.2%	80	2.6%	69	2.2%	86	2.7%	103	3.3%
<i>Total</i>	2867		2775		3100		3082		3214		3142	

New 25% Discount Campaign Update

This year during renewal season we ran a lapsed member discount campaign. We offered 25% off all memberships, excluding Lifetime memberships, to those who were lapsed with an expiration date range of 2015 to 2022. This campaign lasted from December 2023 through January 2024. 41 members took advantage of this discount opportunity and rejoined the Society. 28 were Professional members, 3 Retired, 3 Student, 3 Developing Nations, 2 Amateur, 1 Community College Professional, and 1 Postdoc. The results showed that this was a viable way to increase the Professional membership numbers and reengage this group.

Membership Category Highlights May 2024 vs 2023:

- We saw an increase of 1 new **Life member** who took advantage of our one-time cost to stay members in perpetuity.
- In the 2022 renewal cycle (which began in October 2021) we started both the **3-Year Developing Nations gift membership** as well as **3-Year Developing Nations membership** options. In its third year, 59 Developing Nations members have now taken advantage of the multi-year option, up from the 39 members last year (a 51% increase). The Developing Nations' membership categories include over 130 members, which is 32 members (or 32%) more than last year at this time, already more than the 2023 year-end total. This coming fall will be the first time that multi-year Developing Nations members will be asked to renew, so special effort will be made with this group to help continue their memberships for another 3 years. Please note that gift memberships are very important to this group. **41 of the 130 members were given gift memberships or provided donated gift memberships. Please consider donating gift memberships so we can continue to support this demographic.**
- Overall, **Postdoc Member** totals are stable this year, with a small drop of 2 members. There was a shift from multi-year to single year memberships this year, with a 16 member drop of multi-year members compared to last year at this time (~22%). Most of those lost memberships were made up for with one-year postdoc memberships. It could be that some of the change was due to this group moving on to a professional membership, they could have been closer to the end of their studies, or they simply wanted to save funds by choosing the one-year level. We will be sending a Postdoc survey this year (see the Membership Ad-Hoc Committee report for details), so we are hopeful we can glean some of this information via that effort.
- Looking at the end of May 2024, the **Student membership** total was 854 members and has increased by 23 members (~2.8%) compared to the end of May 2023. There was a shift toward multi-year memberships this year.
 - There are 328 **3-Year Student members** so far this year, compared to 268 in the same time period in 2023, which shows an increase of 60 members (~22.4%). Three-year student memberships significantly help us retain those student members, so efforts during the renewal cycle to promote multi-year memberships will continue this fall.
 - There have been 288 **new Student members** so far this renewal season, which is a decrease of 13.8% compared to last year when there were 334. New student

members comprise 33.7% of our current student member total (compared to 40.2% last year). While we are not worried about the percentage of new students being lower (showing that this group is renewing at a higher level), ideally, we would want that new member total to stay the same or increase. Potential reasons for this drop in new student members could include the increase in student member rates, the increase in gift membership costs, or the smaller Botany Conference this year, which means fewer student attendees starting memberships.

- Since the renewal season started in the Fall of 2023, **26 donated gift memberships were used by students and to colleagues from developing nations' countries that have requested financial aid to join the Society.** If you would like to donate one- or three-year gift memberships, visit: <https://crm.botany.org/giftmemberships> and put an "X" in the recipient fields or contact me if you have any questions (aneely@botany.org).
- **Professional Members** (Professional, 3-Year Professional, and Professional Family) increased by 27 members (about a 2.8% increase) in 2024 compared to 2023 YTD. **This is the first time in 3 years that this number has had an upward trajectory.** As seen in past years, this category renews at a very high rate but we do not have the new members needed to keep this category growing (only 6.1% were new members so far this year, slightly less than this time last year, which was 6.7%). This slight increase in Professional members may be due in part to the lapsed campaign referenced at the beginning of this report, which brought in 28 lapsed Professional members.
 - Professional members are asked each year to consider **a membership fee increase of \$25 per year.** This additional amount goes toward the **Graduate Student Research Award fund.** So far, this fiscal year (Oct 1, 2023 through May 31, 2024) \$13,400 was raised by Professional members opting-in to this membership fee increase including 377 1-Year and 53 3-Year Professional members. Through these dues, and other available funds, we were very excited to be able to give out **25 Grad Student Research Awards** for 2024.

BSA eCommunications

The first five 2024 *Membership Matters* eNewsletters had an **average open rate of 69.9% open rate, up 17.4% over this time last year.** This high interest indicates that the monthly eNewsletter is seen as a great benefit to our members and has consistently included relevant and useful information to our member base. *Please note that in September 2021 Apple instituted the "Mail Privacy Protection" protocol that pre-opened emails when using their mail app. Due to this protocol, percentages can be considered inflated to a degree. None-the-less the open rate of almost 70% is outstanding even if considered inflated.*

In 2024 we continue to send **monthly eTocs for AJB and eTocs for APPS every two months.** *AJB* eTocs had an average open rate 73% and *APPS* eTocs had an average open rate of 67%. Special issues garnered even more attention. The spring **eToc for the *Plant Science Bulletin*** was also well received garnering an impressive 72% open rate. Again, these rates are inflated due to the Apple protocol, but none-the-less are impressive.

Other types of emails sent include: Botany Conference updates, BSA awards notifications, BSA officer nominations and elections, Botany360 advertisements, PlantingScience and education announcement, #PlantJoy campaign emails, emails to specific BSA sections, renewals, and publications call for papers/reviewers/editors.

Botany360

[Botany360](#) is a series of programming that connects our botanical community during the 360 days outside of Botany Conferences. The Botany360 event calendar is a tool to highlight those events. The goal of this program is to connect the plant science community throughout the year with professional development, discussion sessions, and networking and social opportunities.

So far this year there have been 6 events, 3 of which have recordings made available for the public. If you have ideas for Botany360 events, or you want to coordinate an event, please contact me at aneely@botany.org.

Event Recordings:

- [Getting Involved in Service to BSA and Beyond](#) (January 8, 2024)
- [Fulbright US Scholar Program: Insights from an Alumni Ambassador](#) (April 29, 2024)
- [Now You're a New PI, What's Next?](#) (May 28, 2024)

Social Media Report

It has been 6 months since we launched the BSA account on Bluesky as an alternative for our members who wanted to try something new or move away from X (previously Twitter)! Today we have 436 Bluesky followers and post equally on this platform as the other social media accounts we use. For now, BSA has no plans to stop using X for social media, but we will continue to listen to the BSA community and are prepared to cease using the platform at a future date if needed.

It is also exciting to announce that the BSA's Social Media Platforms have **64,718 followers combined**! Posts have included BSA publications highlights, Botany Conference updates, award notifications, award winners, Botany360 advertisements, BSA Spotlights, the #PlantJoy Campaign, BSA Sponsor Ads, Society updates and news. Don't forget that you can also join the conversation on **BSA Slack**! To learn more, [click here](#).

We ask that you please continue to use BSA's hashtags when you post on social media.
#BSAmembers #BSAstudents #BSAawards #PlantJoy

Instagram - 5,464 followers (up 368 since the March report)

X (formally Twitter) - 22,569 (up 616 since the March report)

Facebook - 36,259 followers (up 448 from the March report)

BlueSky - 426 (up 68 since the March report)

Other Updates

- This year we have combined the Professional Highlight program with the Spotlight Series and now accept all BSA members to nominate themselves or other BSA members to be part of the [Spotlight program](#). The Spotlight program serves to highlight our members and the variety of careers and research topics in our community. If you know someone to include as a Spotlight, email me at aneely@botany.org.
- This year we formalized sponsorship opportunities at BSA as a whole. I was part of the team that organized the details and then I was in charge of working with our first sponsor, Longwood Gardens, on 3 Social Media Ads, 3 Newsletter sponsorship articles/ads, a BSA homepage banner ad, and a Botany360 event. We are going to continue to streamline this process to hopefully engage new sponsors in the near future. If you know of an organization that would benefit from being a BSA sponsor, please let me know!
- This last winter I created a lapsed member survey that was sent to all BSA lapsed members who expired between 2015 and 2023. This program included an opportunity to be in a drawing for a \$20 Starbucks gift card. Two winners were chosen. The report for this survey will be shared with the Board at a future meeting.
- I was the chair of the BSA Membership Ad-Hoc Committee (see report in agenda). I want to thank the hardworking members of this committee who showed up with great ideas, and spent their own time working on assignments outside of the meeting. This committee will adjourn at the end of July and there will be at least a year break so some of the initiatives can be planned and launched before another Ad-Hoc committee is created.
- I worked with BSA President, Brenda Molano-Flores, on the #PlantJoy campaign including creating the landing page, working with Brenda and Richard Hund on the overall idea of the campaign, creating the logo and social media graphics and emails, and promoting it on social media and through email/newsletters. A big thank you to Brenda for making wonderful videos and letting me put her “jump” on everything!
- I spent a significant amount of time working with Heather on the awards for BSA this award season including organizing the shared doc to assist Tricia with payments, updating awards in the awards portal, assisting applicants, gathering photos, updating the award pages on the BSA website, and helping with the awards slideshow that will be presented at Botany 2024.
- This was a particularly heavy year working with SEB due to their many virtual events, which required a lot of management from the BSA office from graphic design to landing pages on the SEB website to social media and emails, and finally to uploading any recordings and promoting those after the event was completed. We also housed many of the SEB events via the BSA Zoom account, which required me to be present at any of those events to hand over hosting and to manage the registration.
- As usual I help SEB and SSE with their email campaigns and their renewal efforts.
- Finally, I am in charge, with Richard Hund, of creating an inviting booth for Botany 2024 so this year we are having a photo booth, coloring bookmarks, fun buttons, BSA publications for viewing, and a new way to donate to the Society via a QR code where you receive a special

gift (come by and donate to receive one!). I am also in charge of making sure the SEB booth at Botany 2024 is set up and ready.