

Report to the WSSA Board of Directors:

WSSA On-line Annual Meeting Survey: a summary of responses

The WSSA Membership and Affiliations Committee was charged to develop a survey to assess the satisfaction of the WSSA members with the Annual meetings. To that end, the committee, with assistance from Allen Press and several members of the WSSA Board of Directors developed a survey of 17 questions that were presented in an on-line survey through the WSSA web page. Participation by the WSSA membership was not particularly high with only 273 of approximately 1300 members (21%) responding to the survey. Responses to questions ranged from 99.6% to 46.7% by the WSSA members who chose to participate in the survey. The average response for the survey was 87.9%. Importantly, WSSA members who participated in the survey provided 452 comments for the nine questions that provided an opportunity for specific comments and suggestions. The number of responses ranged from 29 responses to question concerning member satisfaction with meeting symposia to 83 suggestions for increasing WSSA membership. An average 50 of comments for the nine questions where members had the opportunity to comment which, on the average, indicated that 18.4% of the members who participated in the survey provided comments for each of the nine questions where comments accepted. While the overall participation in the Annual meeting survey was not outstanding relative to the overall membership of the society, those members who chose to participate provided considerable thought to their responses and thus have given the society excellent information as to how the annual meetings can be improved. A summary of the survey responses follows:

The highest response was for the question about the frequency of annual meeting attendance. Members indicated that they typically attend the WSSA annual meeting either every other year (19%) or less frequently (40%). Members who attend the annual meeting every year represented 31% of the members who participated in the survey and 10% who responded to the survey indicated that they had never attended an annual meeting. The reasons why members do not attend the meeting annually were cost (47%), other meetings (40%), schedule conflicts (35%) and location (30%). There were 51 comments submitted to this question and the primary consideration for the Board of Directors, based on the comments, is the cost of the meeting as previously suggested. The factors that were deemed moderately and very important in members' decision to attend the annual meeting were cost of travel (83% who answered the question) and price of lodging (71% who answered the question). Restaurants and local activities and attractions were not deemed overly important and interestingly, climate of the location was unimportant or of little importance by 45% of the members who responded to the question compared to 51% of the members who suggested climate was moderately or very important. This response about climate was reinforced by the question that specifically requested a preference for the type (cold, warm or does not matter) of climate; 56% specified a warm climate, 42% specified no opinion and not surprisingly, only 2% of the membership preferred a cold climate (Canadian or North Dakotan membership?).

Members who responded to the survey were ambivalent about tours and break length, but strongly favored receptions and other social activities at the annual meetings. Member receptions were favored by 80% of the members who participated in the survey while spouses programs were favored by only

20% of the respondents. Local tours were supported by 56% of the survey respondents and 40 specific comments were provided about these activities.

When asked about holding other society annual meetings in conjunction with the WSSA annual meeting, 82% of the members who responded to the survey were in favor. Importantly, more comments about this question were received than the 41 (18%) members who did not favor joint meetings. The comments were diverse and no central theme was discerned.

Several questions about specific components of the annual meeting were included in the survey. Generally the poster sessions were reported to be acceptable by most of the members who participate in the survey and 38 specific comments were offered. Similar responses were provided with regard to the paper sessions, and symposia. Instructional workshops held in conjunction with the annual meeting were supported by 65% of the members who responded to the survey and there a split response as to when the workshops should be held; 48% suggested workshops should be held during the annual meeting, 40% suggested before the meeting and 12% suggested after the meeting. The current WSSA publications were strongly supported by the members who participated in the survey (93% indicated the current publications met their professional needs). Thirty-eight specific comments were submitted and there was a mixed response to the new journal. Other comments concerning the turnaround time for papers, impact factor, and type of research that is included.

When queried about membership fees, survey respondents favored (48%) slightly reduced fees with online journals only. Increasing fees for membership with print publications was favored by 20% of the members who responded to the survey.

Eighty-three comments were received for the question about increasing WSSA membership however; there was no central theme other than to look for other professions that might find value in weed science (i.e. ecologists). It is strongly suggested that the Board of Directors review the comments prior to any discussion about this report. The survey respondent demographics come as no great surprise; 52% were from Universities, 22% from companies and 16% from Federal agencies. Graduate student members comprised 4% of the respondents, nonprofit organizations represented 3% of the respondents, consultants were 3% and State agencies were represented 4% of the survey responses.