

July 2009 Committee Report to WSSA Board of Directors

Committee Code and Name: W21 Professional Development

Committee Chair: Sarah Ward

Board Coordinator: President (David Shaw)

Activities of the WSSA Professional Development Committee for 2008 were described in the report submitted to the WSSA Board of Directors in January 2009 (copy attached below). Here is an update on activities of the Committee from January to June 2009:

1. In collaboration with the WSSA GSO, the Committee organized and presented the Symposium “Research Ethics and Mentoring in Weed Science” at the WSSA 2009 Annual Meeting. Keynote speaker was Dr. Gary Comstock of North Carolina State University; attendance was 51.
2. The Committee organized and presented the Symposium “Technology Innovations in Weed Science Communication” at the WSSA 2009 Annual Meeting. Keynote speaker was Chuck Zimmerman of ZimmComm New Media; attendance was 23.
3. The Committee submitted a proposal for a workshop "Technology and Communication Skills for the 21st Century Marketplace" for the 2010 WSSA/SRM meeting. This proposal was approved. The \$3600 cost of the workshop will be sponsored by Dow Agrochemical. Committee members Chad Brommer and Dave Horvath will present a mini-workshop on this topic for WSSA BOD members in Denver on July 24, 2009.
4. Committee member Chad Brommer has been working with David Krueger to add RSS feeds to the WSSA website (on the home page, jobs page, new release page and professional development page). The Committee also developed a HowTo Guide for WSSA members explaining the use of RSS feeds, podcasting and Facebook; this has been posted on the Professional Development Committee webpage.
5. The Committee has discussed the issue of declining graduate membership in WSSA. As an initial step to gathering information to address this, we developed an online survey for graduate students in weed science - this survey can be accessed at http://www.surveymonkey.com/s.aspx?sm=TM_2bvTE7r4ATTMo9ajIKAMw_3d_3d. So far response to this has been poor, and we are working to get more graduate students to participate.
6. The Committee has streamlined the screening procedure for the WSSA Annual Meeting Travel Awards for graduate students. We are waiting for BOD approval of funding before soliciting applications for these awards for the 2010 meeting.
7. Vince Davis (WSSA GSO President 2008-09) rotated off the Committee in February 2009 and was replaced by Jason Weirich (WSSA GSO President 2009-2010). Bobby Haygood (Dow AgroSciences) joined the Committee in February 2009.

2008 Summary of Activities

What were the committee's goals for 2008?

1. To establish the Professional Development Committee as a permanent WSSA committee with an approved constitution governing membership and scope of activities.
2. To work more closely with the WSSA Graduate Student Organization on ways to involve future weed scientists in WSSA (e.g. jointly organized symposia on professional development topics; national student paper/poster competitions).
3. Review existing WSSA online resources related to professional development (web site, WSSA-sponsored online courses) and identify areas for further development.

List the committee's accomplishments in 2008:

1. The Committee became a permanent WSSA Committee, and we developed a mission statement and MOP.
2. The Committee developed two successful proposals for symposia for the 2009 WSSA meeting: (1) Research Ethics and Mentoring in Weed Science, and (2) Technology Innovations in Weed Science Communication, and worked to organize these symposia.
3. In collaboration with the WSSA Graduate Student Organization, the Committee developed and obtained Board approval for a new WSSA Annual Meeting Graduate Student Grant to encourage participation in WSSA meetings by graduate students, especially those not in traditional weed science programs. We received 18 applications for this award, from which a screening panel of Committee members selected 6 successful applicants. These students will all be at the 2009 WSSA Annual Meeting as first time attendees.

What information was posted on the WSSA website?

The Committee has set up a "Professional Development" link from the home page. Currently this Professional Development page has information about the Committee mission and members.

How much funds were requested? How much was spent?

\$3,000 was requested to funding the symposia. This money will be spent in 2009.

What was the impact of the committee activities/accomplishments on the following: membership, publication, policy, legislation, and/or education?

We hope that the establishment of the WSSA Annual Meeting Graduate Student Grant is a first step to making graduate students in programs beyond traditional weed science aware of WSSA, and potentially expanding the WSSA membership pool.

What is the current state of the committee's projects and activities?

See 2009 Plan below.

2009 Plan for Committee Activities

Goals for 2009:

1. Develop report for the Board identifying reasons for decline in graduate student membership of WSSA and proposed actions to reverse this trend.
2. Develop affordable approaches to archiving WSSA meeting symposia and making them available via the WSSA website.
3. Work with the WSSA Graduate Student Organization to develop a symposium on a topic of mutual interest for the 2010 annual meeting.
4. Expand Professional Development resources on the WSSA website.

Plan of Action:

Goal 1: we will survey regional weed society graduate student members and graduate students in weed science and related programs to determine (a) whether students are aware of WSSA; (b) numbers of students who are actual vs. potential members; (c) reasons for joining or not joining WSSA; (d) student expectations of WSSA membership benefits. We will also examine membership benefits for graduate students in other professional societies in the applied biological sciences.

Goal 2: Chad Brommer will chair a sub-committee to develop recommendations.

Goal 3: As soon as the new Graduate Student Organization President is elected at the 2009 WSSA meeting we will start working with him/her to develop a symposium proposal.

Goal 4: Dave Horvath will head a working group of Committee members to pursue this.

What is needed to further the goals of the committee/project?

A couple of more interested and committed Committee members would be welcome. Currently we have a small number of people doing a lot of work.

Recommendations for Board/Society Action: A formal acknowledgement of the contributions of Vince Davis (2008-2009 WSSA GSO President) would be appropriate. Vince has been a great source of energy and ideas this past year and has worked hard to make things happen. He deserves recognition.

Funds requested for 2009: N/A

Other requests for the Board: N/A

Report prepared and submitted by Sarah Ward, Professional Development Committee Chair,
January 2009