

WSSA NIFA Fellow Progress Report

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Major Activities Since 2022 Annual Meeting

Webinars. Two webinars were conducted on March 22 and March 29, focusing specifically on NIFA grant programs where proposals involving weeds could be competitive. A total of seven NIFA National Program Leaders and one National Science Liaison presented in the webinars. This was an in-depth discussion of both traditional weed science programs (the first two presenters each week) and funding programs where there are opportunities for weed scientists to get involved (such as climate, precision technologies, etc.). The presentations were excellent and the recordings are posted on the WSSA web site.

2022 WSSA Research Priorities Survey. I have been working with Dan Brainard and the WSSA Research Priorities Committee (E6) on the Research Priorities Survey. A manuscript on the survey results is currently under review for publication in WEED SCIENCE. The results of this survey will be extremely valuable in advocating for weed science priority research needs.

Symposium for the 2023 WSSA Annual Meeting. I would like to thank WSSA for approving the symposium entitled “WSSA Research Priorities Survey Results: 13 Federal Agency-Perspectives and -Funding Opportunities”. Insight from the 2022 WSSA Research Priorities Survey will be shared at the symposium, which will facilitate a discussion on the future of weed science in terms of research needs, program support, and national initiatives. The symposium will open with a comprehensive presentation on the results of the Research Priorities Survey by Dan Brainard, Chair of the WSSA Research Priorities Committee (E6). This will be followed by a Q&A and two 60-minute panel discussions, one focused on research and one focused on management. We have commitments from key representatives of eight federal agencies for the research panel and seven agencies for the management panel (two reps are serving on both panels). This will be the first time that leaders from each of these agencies have met together in the same room at a WSSA meeting. This is a unique and important opportunity for dialogue and exchange of information and ideas among these agencies and with members of WSSA.

Monthly Meetings. I meet by Zoom monthly with Vijay Nandula (NIFA), Steve Young (ARS), Cameron Douglas (USDA), Bill Chism (EPA-retired), Lee VanWychen, and Mark VanGessel. These discussions are highly informative and enlightening. Many creative ideas have emerged from these monthly meetings.

Future Priorities

Advocacy for WSSA Research Funding Priorities: I will continue to advocate for priority areas of research as identified by WSSA. Two priority areas that I have emphasized, based on the last WSSA member survey, have been 1) new technologies for precision mechanical weed control and 2) molecular biology and genomic tools to understand the biology of weeds. My future emphasis will be guided by the results of the 2022 WSSA Research Priorities Survey.

Communication with WSSA Members. I will continue to keep WSSA members informed of funding opportunities through the NIFA competitive grants programs along with other federal funding and career opportunities.

Recruitment of Volunteers to Serve on NIFA Panels. NIFA has a new database for scientists willing to serve on competitive grants panels. Our last call for volunteers led to a modest number of weed scientists included in this database. I hope to recruit more volunteers through email communication with WSSA members and a volunteer button on the WSSA web site. This is a key priority for 2023.

NIFA Fellow Model. Given the recent transition to remote work arrangements in NIFA and other federal agencies, I have been considering possible changes in the NIFA Fellow model. After discussions with key WSSA leaders, I recommend that this position continue to focus primarily on NIFA. I will likely be suggesting changes in the composition of the NIFA Fellow Advisory Committee, to reflect the priorities identified in the 2022 WSSA Research Priorities Survey.