



# Leadership Handbook

2025

Divisions



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# Introduction and Overview

**Vision:** The Crop Science Society of America encompasses a global community of crop scientists, educators, and practitioners with a common goal of improving plants and their production in a scientifically sound and environmentally responsible manner.

**Mission:** Discover and apply plant science solutions to improve the human condition and protect the planet.

## Core Values:

- Crops that sustain society
- Honesty and integrity
- Ethical behavior with people and data
- Science-based decision making
- Embracing diversity and inclusivity
- Economic, social, and environmental sustainability
- Life-long professional growth
- Cooperation and collaboration





# Leadership of CSSA

Established in 1956, the Crop Science Society of America is the professional home for 4,000+ members dedicated to discovering and applying plant science solutions to improve the human condition and protect the planet.

Achieving the mission of CSSA is only possible through the dedicated leadership of our divisions, committees, editorial boards, and board of directors.

**Divisions** are the building blocks of CSSA. Divisions allow CSSA members opportunities to collaborate and educate while focusing on key technical and discipline-oriented topics.

**Division Chairs** provide direction and purpose for and are a direct point of contact and guidance for many CSSA members—they play a critical role in the success of CSSA.

**The Board of Directors** provides the vision and strategic direction for CSSA. The American Society of Agronomy, Soil Science Society of America, and CSSA are the charter member organizations of the Alliance of Crop, Soil, and Environmental Science Societies.

**The ACSESS Board of Directors** is comprised of the ASA, CSSA, and SSSA president, past-president, and president elect, the ASA, CSSA, and SSSA CEO as an ex-officio, nonvoting member, and other ex-officio, nonvoting members as needed.

**Committees and task forces** provide recommendations and guidance to the Board of Directors. These groups focus on membership perspectives and work to provide memorable member experiences.

**Headquarters staff** keep the trains running. They monitor performance of Society programs, work with leadership from committees and task forces, and liaise with the Board of Directors to provide member programs. They are here to guide and serve the membership of CSSA.

*Crops produce feed, fiber, food, and fuel!*



# Organizational Overview

The Crop Science Society of America (CSSA) is a progressive international scientific society that fosters the mission of plant science for a better world. Based in Madison, WI and founded in 1956, CSSA is the professional home for 4,000+ members dedicated to advancing the field of crop science. Society members seek the conservation and wise use of natural resources to produce food, feed, fiber, fuel, and pharmaceutical crops while maintaining and improving the environment. CSSA supports its members by providing peer-reviewed publications through the Digital Library, educational programs, scientific meetings, recognition and awards, career services, student activities, certifications, and science policy initiatives.

## Headquarters Staff

The ASA, CSSA, and SSSA staff members work to better serve and manage the three Societies. Headquarters staff seek to innovate our member and stakeholder experience, develop the workforce in agronomic, crop, soil, and environmental fields, and elevate the status of our members and sciences.

Headquarters staff number between 43-48 employees, with the majority working from the Madison, WI office and others distributed remotely across the United States. Employees work in the departments of the administrative/executive office, Agronomic Science Foundation, certifications, support center, finance, IT/operations, marketing, meetings, member & stakeholder programs, publications, and special projects. View the “Contact Us” page on the CSSA site for a current list of staff, titles, and contact information ([www.crops.org/contact](http://www.crops.org/contact)).





# Chapter 1: CSSA Divisions

## C01 **Crop Breeding and Genetics**

Discovery, maintenance, and modification of germplasm, biometrical and biochemical genetics, cytogenetics, crop evolution, morphology, and related studies.

## C02 **Crop Physiology and Metabolism**

Plant physiology, pathology, mineral uptake and nutrition, photosynthesis, translocation, source-sink relations, and plant responses to the environment.

## C03 **Crop Ecology, Management & Quality**

Establishment, management, and environmental biology of species and systems of mixtures used for field crops, forages, and grazing lands.

## C04 **Seed Physiology, Production, & Technology**

Seed development, maturation, germination, and metabolism; preparation of useful plant types through foundation, registered, and certified seed; preservation of viability.

## C05 **Turfgrass Science**

Development, evaluation, establishment, and maintenance of turfgrass for multiple uses.

## C06 **Forage & Grazinglands**

Conservation and utilization in grazing systems, forage and grazing utilization, forage nutrition value and management, forage and grazing interactions with the environment, forage growth and development.

## C07 **Genomics, Molecular Genetics, and Biotechnology**

Focuses upon investigations of structural and functional genomics; mapping and cloning of genes controlling economically important plant traits; molecular breeding technology; gene structure, expression and function; plant cell and tissue culture; and development and use of transgenic crops and microorganisms.

## C08 **Plant Genetic Resources**

Programs associated with conservation, use, distribution, accessibility, documentation, ownership, and intellectual property rights issues of plant genetic resources.

## C09 **Crops for Nutrition and Health**

Focuses on plants as food or feed, and on the development and evaluation of novel characteristics and compositional quality traits in crops that are important to the health, wellbeing, and nutritional requirements of humans.



# Purpose of CSSA Divisions

The CSSA created “divisions of interest” as a way for Society members to find and interact with other members with similar interests.

Divisions facilitate planning for our annual meeting, CANVAS, and help coordinate programs and services. Divisions also provide a voice in Society governance, with each of the nine divisions represented on the CSSA Board of Directors.







## Chapter 1: CSSA Divisions

# Division Membership and Recruiting

As a benefit of membership, members may join any/all CSSA Divisions. Division membership is easily modified online through a member's account by visiting the "My Account" feature online: [www.crops.org/my-account/divisions/cssa](http://www.crops.org/my-account/divisions/cssa).

Division chairs are encouraged to review their list of members on their division webpage (View the "Members" link in the upper right corner) and invite others to join their division, especially CSSA students and early career members. Chairs should also encourage students and early career members to participate in leadership.



# Services for CSSA Divisions

CSSA is committed to creating and improving opportunities for divisions. As such, services will be provided to the division leadership through the chair and chair-elect officers. These will generally be managed by CSSA staff. These services include:

- Support to meet at CANVAS (meeting space for Business Meetings, as requested)
- Program Enhancement Funds
- General elections for division chairs
- Other services as approved by the CSSA Board





# Division Chairs

Division chairs must be members of CSSA and members of the CSSA division that they wish to represent. Division chairs serve three-year terms, with the first year as division chair-elect, the second year as division chair, and the third year as past division chair. Chairs are elected as part of the general election by the CSSA membership. Elections are held each year for a new chair-elect.





### Roles of Division Chairs

The chair of each division shall be responsible for division operations. The division chair-elect, chair, and past chair will do the following:

1. Provide leadership for the division they serve. This includes conducting the annual division meeting. The division chair schedules a meeting time, notifies members, and holds the meeting.
2. Identify oral and poster sessions, develop symposia, plan field trips, workshops, or develop other activities for CANVAS. Details of all activities will be forwarded to the CSSA program planning officer.
3. Provide nominees for division chair-elect, board of director representative, and CSSA president-elect.
4. Develop and implement plans that maintain or enhance the viability of the division and support the needs of division members.
5. Implement actions approved by division members.
6. Communicate and report information of the division and submit the division's annual report to the CSSA Board of Directors.

### Division Annual Report

The division chair will submit an annual report, summarizing division activities for the CSSA Board of Directors. Headquarters staff will email a call for annual reports to all chairs. Instructions for preparing the report and the deadline for receipt are all included in the call. If the report carries definite recommendations or requires special discussion or treatment, it will be added to the agenda of a future CSSA Board or Executive Committee meeting.





### Best Practices for CSSA Divisions

Promoting inclusion within our CSSA divisions is a top priority. We asked current leaders about their tactics to increase diversity and improve inclusion in their divisions and developed this list of best practices. We hope you initiate these ideas into your division in the coming year!

#### Year Round-Engagement and Inclusion

- Recruit future leadership through personal interactions and encourage diversity. Put diverse leaders in place. If members see diversity they will also participate.
- Recruit new members to join CSSA with personal invitations to students.
- Involve chair-elects in scheduling and planning for CANVAS.
- Use the circle discussion threads for brief division updates. Use bullet points to highlight important items.
- Emphasize the benefits of CSSA to new members and students.
- Consider hot topics or issues in the news to gain traction and interest when developing session ideas.
- Nominate members from your division for Society awards.

#### Involve students:

- Highlight student competition opportunities at CANVAS.
- Recognize student winners at your division business meeting and offer monetary awards/certificates.
- Inform students about contests, SASES involvement for undergrads, and CANVAS social events.
- Invite grad students to participate as session moderators.
- Encourage faculty and advisors to promote student involvement.
- Reach out to students at CANVAS for participation in division sessions the following year.

#### CANVAS Planning and On-Site Ideas

- Schedule an annual division business meeting, which allows the opportunity for division members to identify leadership and develop activities for the coming year.
- Identify and schedule presidors or moderators for all symposia, sessions, panels, and contests.
- Announce division events on your Member Hub circle or through a CSA News article.
- Use program enhancement funds (PEF) or other funding sources to meet your division's goals and objectives.
- Schedule downtime during your sessions for collaboration, networking, and social moments.

#### Collaboration and Networking

- Use mentoring programs to connect members.
- Set up a social event for mentor and mentee pairs and acknowledge pairs at the division's business meeting.
- Promote attendance at your business meetings by providing lunch or scheduling your business meeting between a session and a mixer.
- Organize a five-minute oral and/or poster presentation session and award certificates and cash prizes.
- Have students (and all members) introduce themselves at business meetings.
- Use targeted emails and connections from CANVAS to develop cross-division/community/Society symposia.
- Call or email other division or community leaders and pitch ideas for these sessions.
- Promote attendance at your business meetings by sending out reminders on the morning of the event.
- Evaluate invited speakers to ensure diversity.
- Solicit session ideas from your members in person at the business meetings.
- Develop a tour at CANVAS to help members get involved, develop new connections, and foster friendships.



# Member Hub Circles

All CSSA Divisions now have a corresponding circle in the Member Hub. Visit the Member Hub [Learn More page](#) for more details.

- Network, connect, and stay informed.
- Send emails to your division roster.
- Communicate with your division members
- Sign up for a daily or weekly digest of new circle posts across all divisions and other groups of which you are a member
- Start and follow discussions
- House documents or other resources in the circle library.

Join the discussion: <https://memberhub.sciencesocieties.org/circles/mycircles>





# Chapter 2: CANVAS

## Annual Meetings and Beyond

Division activities focus on members' program and service needs. Activities may include CANVAS activities such as symposia, oral sessions, meetings, workshops, tours, and social functions. Divisions may conduct or sponsor activities that go beyond CANVAS, such as virtual meetings, workshops, smaller conferences, publications, awards, leadership development, white papers, books, grants, and many others, depending on member feedback and interest.







## Chapter 2: CANVAS

### CANVAS Programming

Divisions are an important part of CANVAS programming. Divisions play a primary role in developing symposia, oral and poster sessions, student activities and contests, workshops, tours, and more. Solicit program ideas from division members.

Division chairs:

1. Communicate ideas for the above programming, as well as other activities, to the CSSA Program Planning Chair, and keep them informed of the scheduling of sessions, symposia, events.
2. Add events (such as oral or poster sessions, events, and annual division business meetings) to CANVAS program through our web-based scheduling software.

### CANVAS Program Planning Guide

Every year, the meetings department at headquarters publishes a program planning manual to help division chairs and other meeting organizers. You can view the program planning guide on the ASA, CSSA, and SSSA Meetings website: [www.sciencesocieties.org/canvas/planning?q=canvas/planning/](http://www.sciencesocieties.org/canvas/planning?q=canvas/planning/).



### **Division Business Meeting**

Division business meetings will be held at CANVAS. The division business meeting is chaired and conducted by the division chair with minutes kept by the chair elect. Notes from the division business meeting are submitted to CSSA headquarters as part of the division's annual report. Division chairs can send notice of the division business meeting's time and place to members through the division's Member Hub.





## Chapter 2: CANVAS

### **Sample business meeting format:**

- Message from one of the Presidents.
- Board representative report: Division board reps provide an update on Society activities. This may include a CANVAS report, budget and finance summary, and/or a membership update.
- Review division activity.
- Open discussion for division symposia ideas for the following year's CANVAS program.
- Explanation of program enhancement fund policy and status.
- Election nominations: Division chairs discuss and identify candidates for chair-elect and division board representative when the positions become vacant. Division chairs also discuss/identify candidates for CSSA president-elect. Division chairs will provide candidate names of division officers and CSSA president-elect to their division board rep during CANVAS.





# Chapter 3: CSSA Board of Directors and Other Leadership Service

## Purpose of the CSSA Board

The CSSA Board of Directors serves several purposes, including:

1. To serve as the policy-making arm of CSSA as directed by the CSSA bylaws, except for those matters which the bylaws specify are under direct authority of society membership or are specifically designated responsibilities of stated CSSA officers. The CSSA Board of Directors establishes policies and revises them when deemed advisable.
2. To have, hold, and administer all property and funds of CSSA, in conformity with the CSSA Articles of Incorporation and Bylaws.
3. To engage the CSSA Chief Executive Officer and other employees as needed. However, CSSA does

not directly employ personnel, but has an agreement with the Alliance of Crop, Soil, and Environmental Science Societies (ACSESS) to handle its operational activities on a cost-input basis.

4. To continually reassess the current operations and future role of CSSA and of agronomy and crop science as a profession. This includes updating the society's strategic plan regularly and monitoring the plan's progress.
5. To meet monthly to conduct society business. The presence of 50% of the voting members of the board shall constitute a quorum. Official action by the board is based on a majority vote. Agendas and board materials are emailed by the Director of Governance prior to the monthly Board Meetings. Resources such as bylaws, strategic plans, rosters, and board minutes are posted online at: [www.crops.org/about-society](http://www.crops.org/about-society).

**Fiscal Decisions:** The CSSA Board of Directors has a Budget and Finance Committee (B&F Committee) that reports financial results during monthly board meetings. The board of directors approves the annual operating budget that is recommended by the B&F Committee (prepared in collaboration with headquarters staff), generally at CANVAS. If CSSA receives special requests for funding not in the approved budget, the B&F Committee may review the request and make a recommendation for the board to approve the new funding requests.

**Special Board Committees:** Several subcommittees tackle tasks for the CSSA Board of Directors. These committees include:

- CSSA Organization, Policy, and Bylaws Committee
- CSSA Budget and Finance Committee
- CSSA Nominations Committee
- CSSA Science Policy Committee
- Reinvest CSSA Committee



# Board Memberships and Responsibilities

Individuals serving on the CSSA Board of Directors must have an active membership. The term of office for members of the board begins on January 1 and ends on December 31. The CSSA Board of Directors includes the following members who serve for the terms indicated.

**Executive Board Members:** The CSSA executive board members are the president, president-elect, and past president of CSSA. The CSSA President serves as the presiding officer of the board.

**Section Board Members:** These board members include one elected member representing each of the sections of CSSA, each serving a three-year term. Section nominations committees prepare the slate of candidates. If a section board representative is unable to attend a board meeting, they may request that the section presiding chair or vice chair represent the section at the meeting and serve as a voting member.





## Other Leadership Opportunities

### Society Committees

Committees help maintain effective operation of the Crop Science Society of America. The committees are given authority to act in the CSSA bylaws. Standing committees are those established by the CSSA bylaws or by actions of the CSSA Board of Directors. Other committees are established through actions of the CSSA Board of Directors or by the executive committee. These are usually called special committees.

People appointed to Society committees must be members of the Society. Exceptions to the requirement for membership for service on committees can be made by the current CSSA President when a committee needs special expertise from a nonmember.

**Committee appointments:** Committees are a wonderful opportunity for members to volunteer their time and talents in service of specific goals, like student programs, event creation, or strategic plans. Committees are filled by appointment by the president-elect of the Society, including appointing new members and selecting committee chairs.

**Committee chairs:** The chair of a committee is responsible for scheduling committee meetings. At the

end of their term, the current chair should invite the new chair and committee members to attend the last committee meeting of the year. They should coordinate introductions, review the past year's activities, assist the new chair in developing an activity plan for the coming year, and pass on any committee files to the new chair. Committee business and activity is often accomplished through virtual meetings and email throughout the year.

**Annual reports:** All CSSA Committees are required to submit annual summary reports for consideration by the CSSA Board of Directors, headquarters staff, and the CSSA Executive Committee. Headquarters staff will send required forms and instructions to the committee chair. The report should detail accomplishments throughout the year and any considerations that should go before the board.

If you are interested in volunteering for committee service, visit [www.crops.org/membership/committees/volunteer/](http://www.crops.org/membership/committees/volunteer/).

A list of all CSSA committees can be found at [www.crops.org/membership/committees/view](http://www.crops.org/membership/committees/view).





## Task Forces

A task force may be appointed by the President to examine certain issues or topics. They may research a certain area and provide a report with recommendations to the CSSA Board of Directors or CSSA Executive Committee with suggested actions to take. A task force may recommend changes to Society structure, governance, activities, or services to meet strategic goals.





# Our Commitment

ASA, CSSA, and SSSA are committed to encouraging a culture of diversity, equity, and inclusivity that ensures:

- All members and staff are valued, belong, and can have their voices heard.
- Staff and leaders are able to clearly articulate and reflect our commitment to diversity, equity, and inclusion. They are aware of social context, create positive inclusive environments, eliminate microaggressions, and help each other build genuine relationships and networks.
- All are treated collegially in all communications, public or private.
- Pathways are promoted for students to transition into agricultural and natural science careers that maximize their unique perspectives, competencies, and abilities.
- Leadership understands and works to change the conditions needed to create an environment where everybody can thrive and grow personally, academically, and professionally.
- Scientific career and professional development opportunities are available to support life-long growth, and by extension, promote inclusion for all society members.
- Leadership represents the diversity of our Societies - including the diverse perspectives and beliefs of our members.
- An environment that is safe and free from harassment and other negative behaviors.
- Society policies and activities support diversity, equity, and inclusion.
- Our efforts act as an example for other organizations.

