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### **An Interview with Women Leaders Across Domains**

As part of our 2018 ASA and CSSA meeting on “Enhancing Productivity in a Changing Climate,” your Women in Science Community is excited to bring to our tri-society members an opportunity to hear from women leaders across industry, government, and academia domains. This year’s workshop and reception at our Baltimore meeting, held on Tuesday, November 6<sup>th</sup>, will focus on “Perspectives on Leadership Development for Women as Change Agents.” Your community members chose three outstanding speakers to share their journeys.



[Dr. Shannon Hauf](#) serves as the Crop Technology Lead for Soybeans for the Crop Science division of Bayer, where she is part of the Research & Development Leadership Team. Based in St. Louis, Missouri, Shannon is responsible for the development of integrated soybean technology strategy, leading a global team to launch new technologies to improve soybean farming practices worldwide.

[Dr. Nora Lapitan](#) is the Division Chief of Research in the Bureau for Food Security at the U.S. Agency for International Development. She provides leadership in the development of strategies for prioritizing research investments in agricultural research for development toward reduction of poverty, improved resilience of vulnerable populations, and improved nutrition especially of women and children.



[Dr. Mary Stromberger](#) is the Associate Dean of the Graduate School at Colorado State University, and a Professor of Soil Microbiology in the Department of Soil and Crop Sciences. She is nationally and internationally recognized for her research in soil ecosystem services and soil-plant microbiomes, particularly in plant-microbial interactions for improved drought tolerance of winter wheat.

At the workshop, each speaker will present their perspectives for women in agriculture as agents of change. Following their presentations, the speakers will participate in a panel discussion and field questions from you, our community members. I had the honor to spend some time with each of these outstanding women. A few highlights from what I learned are listed below. I hope these discussions inspire you as much as they did me.

**If you were to talk to a female high school student entering a career choice, what would you tell her?**

MS: We enter our careers with certain values for ourselves, what we expect from our colleagues, and how we want to be treated. As we move through our careers and grow as leaders, we do change, and it's important that we remember the values we entered with, and to check ourselves and whether we are living up to those core values.

**What are the greatest opportunities for women in leadership roles?**

SH: Leadership in Research & Development is about driving innovation. When there are diverse minds at the table, the research shows, and I have seen firsthand, that we bring better products to the market place. This is the type of leadership I want to have on my team, and there's a lot of room for women in leadership.

NL: Looking from my background, it is possible to take non-traditional pathways. For example, you can start in academia and go into industry or government. There are more options now than we've had before. I think that this is due to the greater open mindedness regarding the role of women.

MS: My observation is that women are not afraid to be collaborative, not afraid to tackle a major challenge through a team-based approach. There are difficult challenges facing us in agriculture. To solve these challenges, we need teams whose members are diverse in expertise (sciences and social science), as well as thought. This means bringing people together from different backgrounds, experiences, and skills. We need to get women involved early: from K-12 to undergraduate and graduate programs. As leaders, we need to ensure a diverse pipeline to have the diversity we need to solve the tough problems.

**What are the biggest challenges that we are facing?**

NL: There are still challenges that women encounter, particularly in my case as a woman of color. Being a woman is still a challenge, we already are dealing with implicit biases that sometimes people are not even aware of. That is one thing to really be cognizant about, sometimes people are not doing it intentionally and it's unspoken. The bias is there, you can see it in terms of salaries and opportunities. Women also tend to not advocate for themselves.

SH: We haven't moved the diversity mark that far. In the 70s and 80s, there was a lot of work being done around the feminist movement. Look at senior leadership: we still have the same number of senior leaders that we did then, despite the fact that people are trying really hard, and some are doing a really good job. Those companies that are putting a focus on inclusion and diversity are distinguishing themselves as great companies to work. The biggest challenge is that we, as women, have to get other women leaders to the table. We have to help each other, and we have to get our male colleagues to see the value of getting females colleagues to the table. We see the most success when we're surrounded by diverse teams, not just women, but also people of color, first-generation immigrants and people that come from other regions.

### **What is your “go-to” leadership advice?**

MS: Have confidence in yourself, learn to trust yourself and your ability to make wise decisions. One of the biggest challenges I had to face was getting over the idea that I needed everyone to be happy and like me. I need to make decisions that are best for my organization, and I realize now that this means making some tough decisions that not everyone will like. However, I've learned that I can still get buy-in and respect by sharing my decision-making process with others. Be transparent and explain the process you will use to make a particular decision. And then communicate how this decision is best for the organization.

SH: Be willing to take risks. The reluctance to take the risk and reluctance to fail has stopped women from becoming great leaders. If we can encourage women to take risks, there will be a huge opportunity. I've been in an environment where it is safe to take risks. When you deliver on very difficult challenges, you see that you can do the job, and that helps you gain confidence.

NL: The key is always to focus on a higher purpose. You need to know what your strengths are. Always find where you can channel your skills to contribute to something bigger than yourself. Balance your compassion and your time to take care of yourself as a whole person, knowing what's important for you and making choices accordingly.

Please join us for this special workshop and networking reception. Come and meet these amazing women in agriculture and help grow our community of change agents. Registration is required. Sign up today.