

Agronomic Science Foundation

An Appeal for Year-end Giving

A year-end gift to a 501c(3) organization such as the Agronomic Science Foundation (ASF) is a great way to make a positive difference in the world today and possibly get a break on taxes. ASF funds student programs, scholarships, lectureships, conferences, awards, international travel, and other programs not covered by Society membership dues. Your gift will have a major impact on the future of agronomy, crop science, and soil science.



Alexander Barton

Director of Business Development

abarton@sciencesocieties.org

608-273-8095

One of the three funds being highlighted for the 2011 annual appeal is the Golden Opportunity Scholars Institute, which is currently celebrating its five-year anniversary. Nearly 100 alumni have been through the program and are considered to be the best new talent available. The Golden Opportunity Scholars Institute trains undergraduate students so that they can stay on a successful career path in the agronomic, crop, or soil sciences. Undergraduates apply for travel support to the ASA, CSSA, and SSSA International Annual Meetings where they are matched with Society members who mentor them during the meetings and for a one-year period afterwards.

Gateway and Pathway Funds

The other two funds to highlight this year are the Gateway Fund and the Pathway Fund. The Gateway Fund will be used to inspire young students and guide them to a career in the agronomic, crop, or soil sciences. It will provide funding to those who propose using innovative methods to identify, inspire, and recruit high school, undergraduate, and graduate students to the profession. When fully funded, up to \$5,000 annually will be available per successful proposal with the option of renewal based on success. The Pathway Fund will provide travel support for inspired young, energized scientists and professionals, thus enabling them to share scientific expertise in struggling areas around the world. The Pathway Fund is available to ASA, CSSA, and SSSA members early in their careers. When fully funded, up to \$15,000 will be provided per successful proposal on a six-month basis with the option of renewal. The award will be available to members with a history of active membership in ASA, CSSA, or SSSA.

You might be thinking that the economy has been a challenge this year and that your budget is too tight to share, but I encourage you to at least give something. No amount is too small because if everyone gave just a little, there would be a lot to go around in terms of this much-needed support.

In fact, here is an opportunity that will make your dollar go farther. We currently have \$15,000 pledged to the Gateway Fund that needs to be matched before the end of the year. So for every dollar you contribute, your donation will be doubled by matching funds. Our goal is to top \$30,000 in support for a fund that will help seed our industry with new scientists and professionals that our planet so desperately needs.

Take a look in the mirror and realize that the person looking back at you really can make a difference in the lives of others. Every dollar, every kind act, and every positive initiative you commit to can help change the world for the better.

Problem-Based Learning

continued from page 38

project was significantly ($p < 0.05$) better for assessing what they had learned. Students felt that “the way the [computer] programming is assessed [in association with the PBL project] is fair” and that the triple jump assessment highlighted that “modeling concepts [were] more important” than getting the right answer. Interestingly, one student thought the PBL project created a classroom environment where students “[would] be more willing to help each other and in that way learn more without [an exam].” This opinion highlights the “competitive” aspects of traditional examinations that can limit peer-to-peer communication and negatively influence classroom atmosphere.

The findings of Lyon and Teutschbein indicate that students not only preferred, but also performed, better in a PBL environment with its non-traditional form of assessment. “This makes a strong case for incorporating both PBL and associated non-traditional forms of assessment into our teaching in hydrology and other applied or natural science courses,” Lyon says. PBL is extremely useful for covering the cross-disciplinary aspects of such courses, he says, and it is exactly these aspects that are aimed at educating the next generation of experts beyond just acquiring basic skills. They begin to consider integrating advanced quantitative and qualitative skills that better come into focus with PBL over traditional exam-based education.

Adapted from Lyon, S.W., and C. Teutschbein. 2011. Problem-based learning and assessment in hydrology courses: Can non-traditional assessment better reflect intended learning outcomes? J. Nat. Resour. Life Sci. Educ. 40:199–205. View online at www.jnrlse.org/issues