

## Agronomic Science Foundation

# Soil is Something to Celebrate

Plans are currently being set for a party this fall. One of our favorite organizations turned 75 this year, and the only way to celebrate such an occasion is to throw a party



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for thousands of our closest friends and family. As we commemorate the 75th anniversary of SSSA, I would like to give you just three reasons to attend the Annual Meetings in San Antonio this October.

The first is **education**. Where else can you find more than 2,500 technical presentations focused on agronomic, crop, soil, and environmental sciences in less than four days? There are world-class lectureships such as the Leo M. Walsh Soil Fertility Distinguished Lectureship, which will feature a historical perspective on the all-important Haber–Bosch process presented by David E. Kissel from the University of Georgia. Then there is the Sergei A. Wilde Distinguished Lectureship on Forest Soils presented by SSSA Past President Nicholas Comerford from the University of Florida. The William H. Patrick, Jr. Memorial Lectureship on wetland soils will be presented by Roland J. Buresh from the International Rice Research Institute. This party is going to be filled with the smartest scientists the world has to offer—be part of the conversation.

The second reason to attend this year's Annual Meetings is **networking**. In the era of online social networking, I still believe the best way to build relationships is to press the flesh and share the same air with your peers. Twitter, LinkedIn, and Facebook work so much better after you have already established a human connection with someone. There are so many tangible things that cannot be replicated in cyberspace; like the look in someone's eye after a statement is made or the feel of someone's hand who has spent their life out in the field. These things are palpable and help to build connections so that we can help each other along the way. Don't miss out on this opportunity.

The third and final reason to attend the meetings is **fun**. San Antonio is rich in history—a short stroll along the River Walk to the convention center will tell the story. The sites are unique and world famous. The air smells fresh and is a combination of aromas such as southwestern spices, flowers in bloom, leather from the cowboy shops, and cervezas and margaritas from the riverside restaurants. The San Antonio River Walk has a unique feel that must be experienced in person.

Texas and especially San Antonio are places to be proud of and should be experienced by both national and international travelers alike. There is no better place to showcase an organization such as SSSA with its rich history and promising future. Ladies and gentlemen of SSSA, congratulations on turning 75, and here is a toast to at least 75 more!

## Private Sector *continued from page 39*

industry position heavily research a potential employer not just a possible position.

Once employed by a company, care must be taken to further understand that employer's history, culture, and identity. Learning how to operate within a company structure is crucial whether that company is relatively large or small. While onboarding and orientation activities are usually provided, it is very beneficial for new employees to independently and thoroughly investigate the *modus operandi* of their respective location, function, and general employer.

## Personal Initiative

As previously stated, working in the private sector involves a heavy daily dose of teamwork. However, as in the public sector, personal initiative and sheer hard work remain the ultimate keys to success in a private-sector job. Challenging, high-impact opportunities are often available regardless of the position, but it is up to the individual to identify and act upon them. Similar to a public-sector position, employees need to clearly identify and intensely research challenges facing their employers, the general industry, and society at large as they relate to the function and expertise of the employees. Proposals highlighting problems and solutions are often necessary to convince leadership that an idea or project is valuable. Employees must therefore be ready to champion their ideas. Thus, as with university faculty seeking funding, an industry scientist must be part salesperson.

A private-sector job in the crop, soil, or agronomic sciences is a challenging and rewarding opportunity, and I would encourage those finishing their graduate education to investigate industry positions. At the same time, continued support for public efforts in the crop, soil, and agronomic sciences is crucial as government funding declines. Industry R&D heavily depends on the education efforts of public and private colleges and universities, and the research and extension missions of U.S. land grant institutions are crucial to global food security. Also crucial are the efforts of ASA, CSSA, and SSSA. I therefore strongly encourage my early career colleagues to get involved in the Societies regardless of their sector of employment.