

Our strategic plan addresses this need in the following two objectives: becoming (1) the essential resource for knowledge, networking, and services for non-member professionals engaged in the science of soil; and (2) an essential information source for anyone seeking soils information.

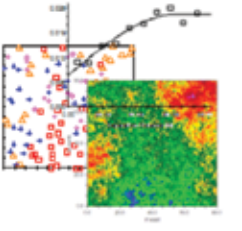
It is crucial to promote our educational and practicing professionals' efforts to address urban needs. Many soil concepts originate with individuals not specifically identified as soil scientists. As I have mentioned before, many followers on the SSSA Facebook and Twitter sites are gardeners and landscapers.

As an effort to address this changing audience, I will establish a committee to examine the needs of those living and working in the urban environment. It is an opportunity to engage new populations within landscape architecture, community gardens, water treatment facilities, recycling, composting, and other urban priorities. Whether it's in the field or on a city's busy streets, there is always a connection between healthy soil and healthy people.

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A Simple Twist of Fate

“One’s mind, once stretched by a new idea, never regains its original dimension.”

—**Oliver Wendall Holmes**



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The above quote became all too real when I was chatting recently with a young agronomist and alumni of the Golden Opportunity (GO) Scholars Institute named Seth Sherry. The purpose of the call was to conduct an outreach campaign to gather information on the status of the GO Scholars alumni and to invite them to San Antonio this October for the five-year reunion of the program.

For those of you who might not know, the GO Scholars Institute is a professional development program of the Agronomic Science Foundation (ASF), ASA, CSSA, and SSSA that was established to strengthen the future of the agronomic, crop, and soil sciences by encouraging undergraduate students to enter the profession.

ASF raises money to bring an average of 20 undergraduate students to the International Annual Meetings of ASA, CSSA and the SSSA each year. The objective is to select the most promising students from around the world who may not be considering agronomy, crop science, or soil science as a career path.

The students receive scholarships for travel expenses and are then matched with Society members at the Annual Meetings to participate in one-on-one activities. The Society members act as mentors for the scholars at the Annual Meetings and for an entire year afterwards to support their educational efforts.

The goal of the program is to increase the enrollment of students into agronomy, crop science, or soil science related programs at the college and university level where they will eventually become the next generation of leaders in the profession.

I am happy to report that this program is working as planned. One example of this success is Seth Sherry, who is now working as an agronomist based in Lusaka, Zambia. As you can imagine, he will not be able to make it to the reunion this year, but ASF is extremely proud of him.

Seth attributes much of his career success to his involvement as a GO Scholar in 2007, along with a crazy sequence of subsequent events that have provided him an incredible opportunity to be a part of the agricultural revolution taking place in Africa. The relationships he formed through the GO Scholars program at the Annual Meetings were invaluable to beginning a career as an agronomist.

He and his wife and two children are living in Zambia where he has a job as a senior agronomist for a high-efficiency fertilizer company. Since Zambia was previously a British Colony, the main language is English, which helps Seth communicate with the local growers. He is currently developing a model to help these smallholders gain access to inputs that can boost production dramatically, leading to financial security and stability for the surrounding communities.

At ASF, we have a focused mission to provide leadership and financial resources to further the role of the agronomic, crop, and soil sciences in global crop production and to promote human welfare within a sustainable environment. I'd say we are right on target!