WSWS Officer and Committee Report
2019 Summer Board Meeting – Denver, CO

Office or Committee Name: Public Relations
Officer or Chairperson Name: Richard Zollinger, Co-Chair (2020); Joe Armstrong, Co-Chair (2020)
Date of Preparation (include year): July 30, 2019

Activities during the year:

Committee members (Kai Umeda, Richard Zollinger, Joe Armstrong, Brian Schulte-Education and Regulations Chair) met on March 13th during the 2019 annual meetings in Denver, Colorado.

Committee discussion items included:

- Brian Schulte, Education and Regulatory Chair, reported on the Board's discussion regarding the proposed "Social Media Administrator" (the original proposal is included at the end of this report). Brian said the Board is supportive of the role, but there are still several questions to consider and address before going forward. These include:
    - What is the target audience and purpose for the WSWS's social media presence? Is this for external outreach and promotion of the WSWS or to foster internal conversations?
    - How will the Social Media Administrator be selected?
    - Will the Society's social media presence be more informational or discussion-oriented? If it will be discussion-oriented, how will these discussions be moderated or monitored?
    - What is the ultimate measure of success for the WSWS's presence on social media platforms? Will it be the number of followers, number of posts, "quality" of posts and content, etc.?

Recommendations for Board Action: The Public Relations committee recommends the Board continue to discuss the Social Media Administrator role and work with the committee to further refine the role's purpose, scope, and desired output.

Budget Needs: $1500/year for stipend for Social Media Administrator

Name of Person Preparing This Report: Joe Armstrong

Western Society of Weed Science
Proposal for Social Media Administrator Role
Prepared by Joe Armstrong, 2/19/2019

Overview

Social media platforms have become one of the most useful and ubiquitous sources of news and information, allowing for instantaneous and direct communication to interested persons (i.e. "subscribers," "friends," or "followers") as well as the general public. Platforms such as YouTube, Instagram, Twitter, and Facebook allow for broad reach to anyone with a user account. Currently, many universities and state cooperative extension services generate educational and informational content for their stakeholders and distribute it through numerous channels. Likewise, many members of the WSWS maintain professional social media accounts to share news, research results, and recommendations with stakeholders and the public.

Currently, the WSWS has two affiliated Twitter accounts: @WSWeedSci (190 followers; managed by Andrew Kniss, @WyoWeeds) and @WSWSstudents (67 followers). Additionally within the WSWS, many individual members and member-organizations use social media for professional purposes.

Among other similar scientific societies, the North Central Weed Science Society (@NCWeedScience, >230 followers) and the Weed Science Society of America (@WorldofWeeds, >1,000 followers) also have Twitter accounts. The American Society of Agronomy/Crop Science Society of America/Soil Science Society of America (@ASA_CSSA_SSSA) has >17,400 followers on Twitter. Entomological Society of America @EntsocAmerica, >19,400 followers, American Phytopathological Society @plantdisease >8,300 followers). As of January 2019, none of the regional or national weed science professional societies have a presence on YouTube or Instagram.

Justification

The purpose of a social media presence for the WSWS will be to promote the society's activities, capture and share key events from the annual meetings, and share the contributions of its members to the discipline of weed science with the public. To develop and maintain a relevant and informational presence on social media, it will be necessary to have someone fill the role of Social Media Administrator (SMA). The SMA will be responsible for regular posting of pertinent information to the WSWS social media accounts.

The NCWSS has Kelley Mazur from IMI manage their Twitter account. Among their recent postings, the NCWSS Twitter account has posted information on their newsletter, information regarding the annual meeting (e.g. registration reminders and deadlines), and photos from the annual meeting. They have also re-tweeted photos and highlights from members that were at the meeting.

As the SMA role becomes more established, additional social media platforms can be used and more in-depth could be created. For example, the SMA could lead efforts with members to develop brief videos on topics such as "What is weed science?," "A day in the life of a weed scientist," or "Career opportunities in weed science." The SMA need not be directly involved in

the production of these videos, but could aggregate content that has already been created by WSWS members or organizations.

Budget

In its early stages, the role of SMA does not need to be a full-time position. The responsibilities of SMA could be fulfilled on an as-needed-basis by a current WSWS member. Since social media accounts are no-cost to establish, the only expense for this will be the stipend to compensate the SMA. I propose a $1500/year stipend for the SMA, with the expectation they provide regular posts and updates (1-3 posts per week, more prior to and during the WSWS annual meeting).

Potential obstacles

As with any social media exposure, there is potential for negative public opinions to be directed toward the WSWS and its members. Maintaining a neutral and professional position regarding potentially controversial topics will be necessary. If the WSWS decides to establish a social media presence, it will be necessary to establish guidelines for content. In general, announcements regarding upcoming WSWS activities, capturing key moments from the annual meeting, and re-posting information shard by WSWS members should be able to be posted without requiring approval the WSWS Board.