

**S8400 SSSA-SSSC Working Group on
Cooperative Efforts between
the Soil Science Society of America and the Soil Science Society of China**

Background

Recognizing the value of international perspectives and activities for the society, SSSA has recently joined with ASA, CSSA, and ASF to establish an International Activities Task Force. The goal of the task force is to identify and evaluate opportunities for international activities that can advance our science and science communication to meet global challenges of food security, environmental sustainability, education, and mutual understanding of cultures – problems that require international science and advisory consortia – and that can engage and serve an international audience. Exploring possible collaborations between SSSA and the Soil Science Society of China (SSSC) is part of SSSA's commitment to the efforts of this task force. Michael Thompson and Wei Zhang have been appointed as SSSA representatives to the ACS International Task Force.

In March 2021, SSSC invited SSSA to support its application to the China Association for Science and Technology for funding to support a joint meeting between SSSA and SSSC to exchange current research and identify specific ideas for collaboration. The SSSA Board voted in favor of this exploratory meeting. Recognizing that we do not need to wait for funding for person-to-person meetings (or for pandemic-related travel concerns to abate) to begin these discussions, here we outline some plans to build and expand already existing collaborations between members of SSSA and SSSC.

Scientific cooperation is essential as we face global issues of food security, climate change, environmental restoration, and education. In many ways, members of both societies will appreciate new opportunities to benefit from collaboration, and our efforts will be stronger if we are working together to pursue answers to soil science questions.

Objectives

This working group will explore potential benefits for members of both SSSA and SSSC resulting from collaboration. The goals of these efforts could include: expanding membership and its diversity, offering access to our journals, increasing opportunities for students and professionals to learn about agricultural and environmental issues from a multicultural perspective, and establishing certifications at international levels. In the long run, the effort will serve as a model for bilateral SSSA collaborations with soil science societies in other countries, too.

Approach

The presidents of the two societies (SSSA and SSSC) will appoint eight members from each society to serve in this working group. The group will be divided into five subgroups, each charged to explore how their specific collaborative efforts can be developed, including identifying potential sources of funding and support:

- (1) joint meetings, symposia, or workshops (including potential topics);
- (2) joint membership in the societies;
- (3) exchange of students and scholars;
- (4) access to society publications, and
- (5) opportunities for federal funding of joint international research projects.

Using email communication and online meeting platforms, each of the four working groups will develop one or two specific ideas that will be brought to the two societies for further consideration by Presidents, Boards, and staff, depending on governance requirements. Each working group will develop a report to identify the objectives, required funding, timelines, and how to promote the plan to members, decision points for each kind of collaboration as well as provide solutions for potential implementation problems.

Next steps

1. Communication between the SSSA president (Prof. Ulery) and SSSC president (Prof. Zhang) and with Prof. Wang (in charge of international collaborations for SSSC) of goals and first steps:
 - a. Share news of the A-C-S International Initiatives Task Force formation
 - b. Send CSA News SSSA President's Message (SSSA – An International Society)
 - c. Share a copy of this report to indicate our progress to date.
2. Identify and recruit SSSA members who would be asked to represent SSSA in the five subgroups named above. (Thompson, Zhang)
3. Draft initial questions to explore for each of the working groups. Feedback on the initial topics and questions will be requested from Matt Wascavage (publications), Susan Chapman (membership), Aaron Daigh (meeting planning; Jeanne Plummer, annual meetings and other programs), Samantha Miller (ASF), and Luther Smith (certification). These leaders will be asked what issues will need to be addressed in their respective areas. (Thompson, Zhang)
4. Draft charges for the working subgroups will be sent to SSSA President Ulery and to SSSC (Prof. Wang and Prof. Zhang) for review. Once the charges are approved by the leadership of both societies, they will be put into one document to be distributed to all the participants

as one summary page plus one page per working subgroup with the participants, charges and topics to explore, and deadline for an interim report. (Thompson, Zhang)

Reports

Co-Chairs of the Working Group (one on each side of the ocean) will be responsible for keeping the subgroups on track and for collating their reports into a document for SSSA and SSSC Presidents. The reporting document will be sent to the SSSA Board and to SSSC, with recommendations for next steps, within six months of the establishment of the working group.

Report subsections will be submitted to key committees in SSSA (such as the program planning committee, the editorial committee, ASC International Task Force, and others).