



2024 Councilor-at-Large Candidate



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Leadership Experience

I lead an applied research and Extension program focused on diseases of fruits and vegetable crops, with emphasis on viruses and virus-like agents, and provide leadership and coordination for Extension education in plant disease diagnosis and management for South Texas. I have been a member of APS since 2007 and a member of the APS Pacific Division (2007–2012) and am currently a member of the APS Southern Division (since 2013). I am also a founding member of the APS African Division (APS-AD) and served as its inaugural president (2022–2023) after its creation. I served as the immediate past chair of the APS Virology Committee (2023–2024) and am currently a member of four other subject matter committees. Besides committee service, I currently serve as a senior editor for *Phytopathology* (2024-to date) and previously served as an associate editor (2016–2017) and senior editor (2017–2021) for *Plant Disease*. I am an advisory board member of the journal *Archives of Virology* (2021-to date) and an associate editor for the journal *Phytoparasitica* (2023-to date). I am also a member of the Technical Advisory Committee of the Texas Citrus Pest & Disease Management Corporation, the Outreach & Extension Committee of the National Clean Plant Program, the Steering Committee of the Emerging Viruses in Cucurbits Working Group, and the International Council for the Study of Viruses and Virus-like Diseases of the Grapevine (ICVG). In these roles, I contribute my expertise to advance the science of plant pathology and ensure that APS remains globally relevant and responsive to issues relating to plant health. I strongly believe in the concept of servant leadership and view my leadership role as helping the group to achieve its goals, while ensuring that future leaders are identified and effectively mentored to tackle future plant health challenges. My willingness to volunteer in various capacities within APS stems from my resolve to give back to the society that has helped shaped my career as a plant pathologist.

Statement of Vision for APS

One of the most rewarding aspects of my career as a plant pathologist is my membership in APS. As a student and, subsequently, a regular member of APS, I owe my career progress to the opportunities provided to me by the society to network with a global community of

plant pathologists. Such opportunities include formal and informal leadership training, avenues to present my research to my peers and receive invaluable feedback from the community of experts, enriching educational programs, development of skills in program development and delivery, professional skills development, career advising, mentorship of local and international students, collaborative endeavors, and serving on grant review panels and expert groups. Notably, the committee structure of the APS has been the vehicle for members like me to tap into these opportunities due to their smaller sizes, cohesive nature, and more focused/shared interests. I strongly believe that this structure of willing volunteers will continue to play a significant role in guiding our society to attain the three strategic goals, since experts in the various committees are better suited to 1) identify critical knowledge gaps in their respective fields (Goal A); 2) recommend desired skills and competences needed to equip current and future plant pathologists to address these gaps (Goal B); 3) draft strategies on how our science and the society can help shape governmental policies and, in so doing, contribute to feeding the rising global population sustainably (Goal C). My vision is that in pursuing these goals APS will continue to be relevant to modern phytopathology needs, while not abandoning the culture of excellence through which the society has thrived for more than a century. I strongly believe that the continued relevance and success of APS as the go-to society for addressing global plant health challenges is tied to the continued relevance and success of our subject matter and professional committees. Hence, as a councilor-at-large, my primary goal will be to ensure that the committees that I am assigned to remain vibrant and responsive to the needs of their members and the society, while doing so with a sense of purpose. I will work toward ensuring regular and bidirectional communication between committee leadership and the APS Council to achieve the strategic goals of the society.