



# 2024 Councilor-at-Large Candidate



Cruz Avila-Adame | Corteva Agriscience

## Leadership Experience

Effective leadership is a crucial quality that I have been working on throughout my professional career. Over the years, I have had the privilege to guide and influence individuals and groups while working first in academia and later in industry in two neighboring countries with clear social and economic differences: Mexico and the United States. In Mexico, I was the academic subdirector of an experiment station located in the tropical area for more than four years. I supervised more than 40 researchers and oversaw their respective projects focused on different areas of crop production. During this period, I was an active member of the Mexican Society of Phytopathology, where I was recognized as a distinguished member for my leadership in organizing an annual international workshop on tropical plant diseases.

Later, after completion of my Ph.D. degree at Cornell University, I transitioned from academia to industry. I first worked as a sales manager and in research and development for a Mexican company dedicated to the formulation and distribution of agrochemicals in the central part of Mexico. In this two-year role, I supervised a sales team of six members and coordinated the field biology program needed to support our sales strategic plan. This opportunity allowed me to interact with many people, including farm technicians, Extension agents, and farmers.

In the United States, my industry career has been building for more than 17 years while serving as a project leader for various areas of chemistry: first with Marrone Bioinnovations and later with Dow AgroSciences now Corteva Agriscience. My current role at Corteva as the global technology characterization leader for early-stage fungicides requires me to partner with discovery chemists and biology project leaders. Together, we prepare and execute global field biology testing programs to support characterization and advancement of discovery fungicide molecules within our pipeline.

While acting in leadership positions within APS, I will say with certainty that my most significant contribution and challenge has been participating in the Annual Meeting Board (AMB) from 2014 to 2020. When invited to join the Committee by **Amy Charkowski**, I should confess, it was intimidating. To my knowledge, I was one of the few industry members, if not the first one, directly involved with AMB. I cannot forget my first official

meeting at APS headquarters at St. Paul, MN, interacting with distinguished professors, such as **Sally Miller**, **Tim Murray**, and **Naidu Rayapati**, among other great faculty members. Now, I look back and recognize that this was a unique and very exciting opportunity to support the society. As a member of AMB, I helped organize the technical program of five annual meetings, including the joint meeting with ICPP in 2018. I also was directly responsible, as co-chair of the Biology and Disease Management Sections, for selecting the most appropriate proposals and topics of relevance that best fit the three to four sessions organized for each annual meeting. At the end of my tenure with AMB, I became part of the leadership team for the APS Industry Committee, which I currently lead as the chair. Finally, as an APS member, I have been providing informal coaching to students and early-career professionals when requested.

### **Statement of Vision for APS**

As a migrant professional within the United States, I see APS as an organization with a strong commitment to support its members irrespective of their background and cultural diversity. APS is a community with open doors to welcome anyone who truly believes in its mission and vision as a scientific organization. It offers the opportunity to share not only our scientific knowledge, but also to create a strong network with our colleagues, future employers, and friends. Since my very first meeting in 1997, I felt welcomed within a friendly environment to share my views and receive honest feedback. This sense of caring individuals has motivated me to do more for the society than just being a member. It is why I was actively involved with the Annual Meeting Board (AMB) and currently with the Industry Committee. The councilor-at-large position, if I am elected, will give me the opportunity to learn more about APS and its members and, thus, identify areas for improvement and prioritize the needs of our community and committees.

As an industry professional, I am a strong believer that academia and industry can work together, learn from each other, and achieve common strategic goals within the contours of the APS mission and vision. Customers are demanding more and more environmentally friendly solutions for crop protection that perhaps neither academia nor industry may be able to develop in an efficient way by working alone. Collaboration between faculty members from universities and colleges and researchers from industry can accomplish common goals faster and more efficiently in a world where resources become the primary limitation.

Focusing on the workforce, I have noticed over recent years that the new generations of students and young career individuals are eager to learn more about job opportunities beyond academia and governmental institutions. In this regard, the councilor-at-large

offers a unique opportunity to engage the interest of those members and help them to achieve their objectives by bringing their needs to the council and integrating them into the society's initiatives.

There is no doubt that the needs of a constantly growing population will demand more sustainable solutions, considering that land and water resources are becoming major limitations for food production. Concerns of greenhouse effects due to agriculture practices are urging the development of more environmentally friendly tools and technologies. Our science and the voice of our APS members on topics like these ones can make a difference, and here again, the councilor-at-large can serve as a liaison to bring suggestions from our members to the APS Council when appropriate.