ASHS posted an excellent discussion on the anticipated shortage of horticulture students to fill available positions on the ASHS Community Blogs, “Conversations for a Changing Future,” February 1, 2016. In 2016, ASHS President Curt Rom initiated a survey to, in part, determine current interests and topics of concern to ASHS members. Based on the survey results, President John Dole formed three Task Forces in 2017 to provide advice to the ASHS board on actions that should be taken to respond to changes in membership concerns. I have referred to this activity in previous Reflection columns and mention it again in this column as it relates to current activities of two of the new General Administration committees that were appointed in 2017 based on suggestions made by these Task Forces.

The ASHS Events and Education Planning Committee and the Media Communications Committee have been working to develop ideas for improving our society and making our activities more valuable to all members, including students. These committees include graduate student members to ensure student representation and perspective on future ASHS activities. One outcome of these committees and with additional input from other graduate students is that students expressed a strong desire for more information about career paths in academia, government, and industry. This is especially important given that the majority of ASHS student members will likely choose careers outside academia.

ASHS has developed several activities that are intended to enhance the value of membership for students. At the Southern Region ASHS meeting in Jacksonville last month, ASHS presented a program focused on graduate students. It included 1) the importance of membership in and participating in a professional association and how membership can enhance their career, led by Richelle Stafne (https://thegardenmaiden.com/2018/02/07/the-importance-of-staying-active-in-the-american-society-for-horticultural-science-and-ashs-southern-region/); 2) how to publish a scientific paper, led by Dean Kopsell; and 3) providing a graduate student perspective on ASHS membership, led by Hunter Hammock. A large number of students attended the program, asking excellent questions and providing important feedback. Those attending also enjoyed a pizza dinner which created a less formal setting and offered the students a further opportunity to socialize. These sessions may become regular events at regional and perhaps national meetings.

An exciting program for students is planned for the annual meeting this summer in Washington, DC. This program will be held on July 30, 2018, a day before the annual meeting begins. I would like to encourage all advisors to promote and support their students’ attendance at this special program. The program has been announced in the ASHS News blast, but I wanted to also include the program outline here hoping to persuade all students to attend. The Program is summarized below.
Title:
Creating Your Future - Strategic Career Planning Seminar.

12:00-12:45pm   Registration and Networking
12:45-1:00pm   Welcome and Introduction

Goals and Objectives for the Seminar

Session 1 – Choosing the Right Career Path

1:00-1:45pm   What Path do I Take? What can you do with a BS, Master’s, or a PhD degree?
1:45-2:30pm   What is the Difference in Career Opportunities? How are academic, agency, government, or commercial career paths different.
3:15-3:30pm   Break (Can also Network with Career Fair Representatives)

Session 2 – Making it Work for You

3:30-4:00pm   The Fishing Expedition: Strategies for Job Searches
4:00-4:30pm   Landing the “Big One”: Tips on Job Resumes, Applications, and Interviewing for Commercial or Academic Careers.
4:30-4:50pm   Hit the Ground Running! Getting a quick start in Your New Career Starting from Day One.
4:50-5:00pm   Wrap up and Certificate Presentations
5:00-6:30pm   Career and Graduate School Fair (beverages and snacks served)

For more details on the program please visit, 

Another new ASHS General Administrations committee, the Partnership Development & Sponsorship Committee, is also planning a special event for students to be held on Wednesday, August 1, from 4 pm to 6 pm. This industry sponsored session will focus on career opportunities in horticultural industries and will showcase current ASHS members who have successful careers in different industry sectors. During the first hour of the meeting several of these members will briefly describe their own academic programs, how they first became involved with industry and what is involved in their career as an industry professional. During the second hour there will be an industry hosted student reception at which students will have the
opportunity to interact with the speakers and other industry representatives who will respond to their questions and further discuss career opportunities in horticulturally related companies.

These special programs have been designed in response to requests from students and the fact that many of our students will find productive careers in a variety of job markets. We hope that ASHS will play a vital role in their careers and that they will find value in continuing their membership throughout their lives.

In addition, there will be resume review sessions, student interest group meetings, and networking prospects. Many great opportunities to gain more information and further develop career interests and knowledge will be available for students at the 2018 annual meeting. As always, please reach out to me (carlsams@utk.edu) or the ASHS headquarters with any ideas or suggestions. We are particularly interested in student opinions on these programs and are requesting and encouraging student input and ideas. If you prefer, please participate in the online discussion of these programs at http://www.ashs.org/?page=ASHSPresident.

Carl Sams