

President's Column

Sandra Rosen-Bronson, PhD, D(ABHI)

Dear Friends and Colleagues,

The ASHI Board of Directors held their first full meeting of 2004 on January 24 & 25 in Philadelphia, Pa. The first morning of the meeting was devoted to an orientation session covering the roles and responsibilities of Board members, along with a review of the new operational organization. Time was spent discussing what aspects of the new structure are working well and addressing the areas where adjustments and improvements are needed. It was agreed that work is still needed in the area of effective and efficient communication between the Board and committee chairs, committees, and all ASHI members. With this in mind, I would like to take this opportunity to review the history and the rationale for the restructuring process initiated three years ago.

The process began in 2001 at a strategic planning meeting held prior to the January ASHI Council meeting. The meeting was organized by ASHI's 2000-2001 President, Dr. Dolly Tyan, in response to growing concerns that ASHI, as a professional society, was being increasingly excluded from critical forums and discussions relevant to histocompatibility and immunogenetics. The meeting was attended by ASHI Council members, committee chairs, and past ASHI presidents. At the conclusion of the planning session, five key focus areas, or strategic directions, had been identified with initial goals and time lines in place. The five key focus areas included: 1) membership issues; 2) making ourselves known; 3) scientific leadership; 4) re-engineering ourselves; and 5) restructuring laboratory practice.

The first steps toward the fourth key focus area, re-engineering ourselves, involved developing a more effective and efficient organizational structure for our leadership, along with revised, flexible bylaws that reflected the new structure. The guiding principles of the restructuring plan were to take advantage of the skills and talents of all our membership and to motivate and enable both individuals and committees by streamlining operations. In devising a restructuring plan, the task force acknowledged that because of the diverse nature of our membership and the wide scope of our scientific discipline, no one individual can truly be an expert in all critical areas. Also, as professionals who volunteer their efforts, no one individual can afford to take the time required to "do it all." Therefore, one of the primary goals of the restructuring plan was to divide the duties and responsibilities among more individuals so the burden of running the organization was not all on the president's shoulders. Another goal was to develop an effective system for ensuring continuity of leadership from year to year so the Society wasn't constantly "re-inventing the wheel" and would continue to move toward accomplishing the mission and goals of our strategic plan. Based on these principles, the new structure of the Board of Directors was proposed to the membership and ultimately incorporated into the revised

bylaws that were approved by the membership in the fall of 2002.



The Board of Directors comprises the Executive Committee, which includes the President, President-Elect, Vice-President of Operations (VPO), Immediate Past-President, Treasurer, and Secretary, and nine division heads with oversight responsibilities for four Divisions: Science and Education, Professional Standards, Communications, and Membership. Depending on the size and activities of the division, there are two or three board members assigned as division heads for each division. Assignments are based on individual experience and expertise, and there is at least one doctoral level and one non-doctoral level board member assigned to each division. The President, President-Elect, and Vice-President of Operations have direct oversight of a fifth division, Operations. As indicated by the organizational chart below, each division head has direct responsibility for several related committees or programs. The responsibility of the division heads is to regularly communicate with the committee chairs within their divisions to convey ASHI's strategic objectives and the divisional goals. It is the division head's role to facilitate and enable the committee's development of an action plan and realistic time line for meeting goals.

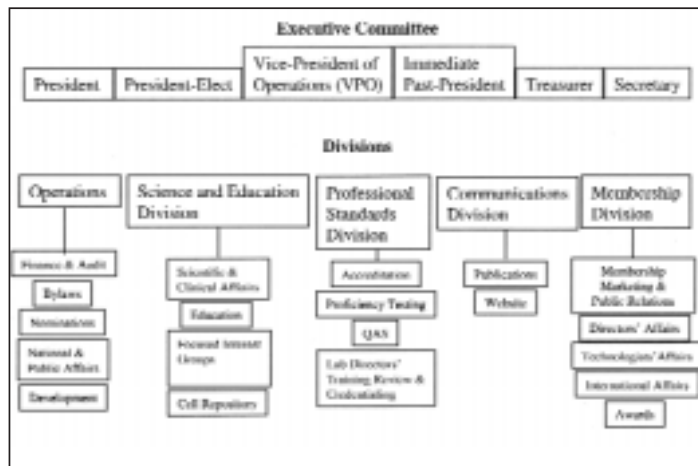


Figure 1
Organizational Chart

The Operations Division is currently headed by me, Donna Phelan, and Charley Orosz. The overall mission of the division is to ensure that the governance of ASHI is accomplished efficiently, responsibly, and with financial stability. The Operations Division has direct oversight of the Finance and Audit, Development, Bylaws, National and Public Affairs, and

Nominations committees and is responsible for setting the goals and prioritizing future activities of the Society.

The Science and Education Division is currently headed by Peter Nickerson and Doreen Jezek. The division's mission is to provide resources and education to our existing and new members, to form strategic alliances, and to be recognized as the scientific and clinical leaders in our specialty. Included in this division are the Scientific and Clinical Affairs committee, the Education committee, the Focused Interest Groups, and the Cell Repository.

The Professional Standards Division is currently headed by Lori Osowski, John Hart, and Vicky Turner. The overall mission of the division is to promote and ensure the highest quality practices of clinical histocompatibility and immunogenetics. Included in the division are the Accreditation program, the Laboratory Directors' Training Review and Credentialing committee, the Proficiency Testing committee, and the Quality Assurance and Standards committee.

The Communications Division includes the Publications committee and the Web site committee and is currently headed by Robert Lewis and Bill Ward. The division's mission is to provide the membership with the most efficient and cost-effective bidirectional means of communication, including both print and electronic formats.

The Membership Division is currently headed by Ann Begovich, Frans Claas, and Anajane Smith. The overall mission of this division is to raise the level of membership and awareness of ASHI in the scientific research and clinical laboratory community with the goal of increasing the strength of the Society and ensuring its survival. The committees included in the division are Membership Marketing and Public Relations, Directors' Affairs, Technologist Affairs, and International Affairs and Awards.

We began reinventing ourselves more than three years ago and with the expert help and guidance of the ASHI staff at our management company, Association Headquarters, we have come a very long way toward attaining our goal of becoming an efficient, effective, and flexible organization. Nevertheless, there is still work to be done. At our January Board meeting it was agreed that we need to continue fine-tuning our lines of communication and to better define the role and responsibilities of the division heads so they can better guide and direct the committee chairs within their divisions.

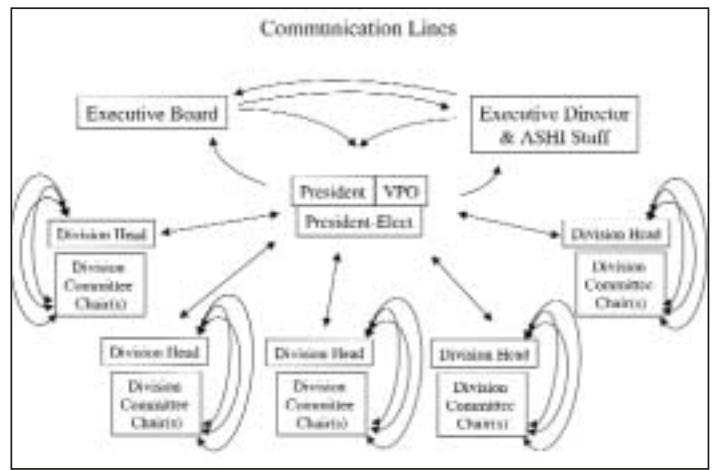


Figure 2
Communication Lines

The Board also agreed that an important aspect of effective communication is that it is ongoing and bidirectional. At the same time, in keeping with the concept of not overwhelming one individual with work, i.e., the President or the Executive Director, we have established guidelines for communication within ASHI with the goal of facilitating immediate feedback to committee chairs and members without the need to wait for a quarterly Board meeting to occur to get answers or approvals.

A major concern of the Board remains ensuring ongoing continuity of leadership for the organization. We feel strongly that the best source of new leadership is our committees. Therefore, nurturing effective and motivated committees is the key to our success. With this in mind, the Board is continuing to work on a plan for giving everyone who is interested an opportunity to get involved in committees. Our goal will be to provide the means to learn how ASHI's committees function, as well as for individuals to explore their own strengths and interests, demonstrate their abilities, and prove their commitment to ASHI.

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