

President's Column

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Dear Friends and Colleagues,

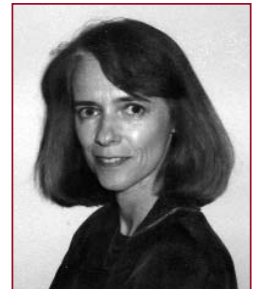
In my last letter, I shared with you information about ASHI's ongoing and evolving restructuring efforts. I also stated that a major concern of the Board of Directors is to ensure continuity of leadership and a renewable reserve of new leaders. Knowing that the best source of new leadership is our committees, we feel strongly that nurturing effective and motivated committees is the key to our success.

During the January 2004 board meeting, the Executive Committee presented to the Board of Directors a new plan for engaging new committee volunteers. The overall goal of the plan is for all ASHI members who volunteer for committees to be appointed to a committee. All new committee members, whether they have volunteered or have been recruited by the committee chair, will be appointed as "adjunct members" for a period of one year. After the first year, all new committee members and committee chairs will have the opportunity to decide whether they are a good match for the committee or whether their interests and talents might be better utilized by a different committee. If all agree, at the end of one year, adjunct committee members will be appointed to the committee for a three-year term. The intent of this process is to give all members the opportunity not only to explore their interests and discover their strengths, but to demonstrate a commitment and motivation to help ASHI grow and move forward as an organization.

During the first year of this new process, the Executive Committee reviewed all committee volunteer information forms and ensured that individuals were appointed to appropriate committees. In future years, it will be the responsibility of the Board's division heads, along with the committee chairs from their division, to review each committee's composition and ensure that new volunteer members are included or recruited as needed. Within flexible guidelines laid out by ASHI's bylaws and our standing policies and procedures, each committee chair will be encouraged to structure and organize their committee as they see fit, and to orchestrate the roles and responsibilities of individual committee members. It will be the responsibility of the committee chair to train, engage, and educate all of their committee members. One of the goals of ASHI's overall restructuring is to empower and enable our committees. In keeping with this, based on our strategic plan, committees will be charged with broad goals that fall within their focus area and asked to develop an action plan and timeline for accomplishing the goals. When questions arise or a committee needs guidance from the Board, the committee chairs have ongoing, ready access to their division heads, or if needed, the Vice-President of Operations and the President.

You may now be wondering what committee opportunities are available. First, it is important to understand that all committees are not the same in that the composition of some is automatically determined. For example, ASHI's Finance and Audit committee comprises the current Treasurer and all of the sitting chairs of ASHI committees or programs that generate revenue for the Society, such as the accreditation and PT programs, and the

Publications, Education, and Annual Meeting committees. Effective participation in some other committees may require an interest or aptitude in a specific area, such as the Publications and Web site committees. Nevertheless, the majority of ASHI's committees require no more than a sincere interest in, and commitment to, getting involved. You may remember from my last letter that our committees are now divided into divisions. The Science and Education Division includes the Scientific and Clinical Affairs committee, the Education committee, and the Focused Interest Groups (FIGS). The Professional Standards Division includes 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 the Membership Division includes the Membership, Director's Affairs, Technologist Affairs, International Affairs, and Awards committees. Details about each of ASHI's committees can be found on our Web site or, if you don't have easy access to the Internet, you can always call Kimberly Glenn or Larissa Cahill at ASHI headquarters.



You may be wondering just what you would be getting yourself into if you volunteered for a committee. You may be asking how much time is involved. The answer is that it varies from committee to committee. If you think you are interested in a specific committee, you may want to talk to the chair or a division head. Most effective committee members occasionally find themselves devoting time outside of their normal work hours to ASHI projects. In general, there is little or no travel required for members because most committee work is carried out using conference calls and e-mail. Now you may be thinking that this sounds like work; why should I get involved? The answer is, yes, being part of a committee can be a lot of work. But the benefits far outweigh the commitment. Joining a committee is not only the perfect way to network and make new friends, it can also be an educational opportunity to try your wings and prove yourself. In the end, however, the best reason to get involved is simply that you will get far more than you give, and ASHI cannot exist without volunteers.

Currently, it is important to keep in mind that this new committee process is a work in progress and may require adjustment and fine-tuning as we go forward. I am confident, however, that once the process matures, it will be invaluable for our success and longevity as a Society. Another key to facilitating this process, and other critical missions of ASHI, is the continuity of focus and organization that we now have through our ASHI staff at Association Headquarters. More and more, as we learn about each other and work together, ASHI and AH are building a true partnership. Our new committee process is just one of a growing number of examples where the Board has developed a concept or goal and our Executive Director, Steve Echard, and our Assistant Executive Director, Kim Glenn, along with other ASHI staff members, have been instrumental in turning concepts into reality.