

# President's Message

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One of my goals when I became President was to attempt to awaken the latent potential and talent in the ASHI membership, and provide a vision that might challenge each of us to consider and participate in new possibilities and new opportunities. It was important to me, having grown up in this society, that ASHI not become a "trade" society with a narrow focus, but rather, a visionary, vibrant and vital organization, essential to both the national and international transplant communities/ policy groups and to the clinical/basic science communities. As you know, one of my emphases has been on redefining ASHI as a group of immunogeneticists rather than simply a group of histocompatibility experts, or tissue typers. While we are, indeed, experts in histocompatibility, that represents only a small area of immunogenetics, or of our expertise. We clearly need to broaden our horizons and take advantage of our unique opportunities!

As I mentioned to you in a previous newsletter, the January strategic planning session focused our attention on some critical areas. I'd like to bring you up to date on what is happening in some of the areas that I did not address in my presidential newsletter.

It has become clear that the ASHI Council, in its present form, is not ideal for our society any longer. Too much responsibility falls to the president to keep things moving forward (and the president has at least one full-time job already). While I have kept Dr. Bray in the loop at all times, so there will not be any transition pains, and while he has helped me enormously, as have the other members of Council and the committees, the structure still is not ideal. There is no mechanism for fostering new leaders in the society, nor is there sufficient recognition of the non-doctoral members at the officer level of the ASHI Council. A task force, equally consisting of doctoral and non-doctoral individuals, was appointed to address this issue. They were charged with devising an alternate plan that would be more responsive to the membership, spread the responsibility for the running of the society among more Council members, and bring more prestige to the non-doctoral members. Their innovative plan has been revised twice and Council has had long and thoughtful discussions about how this might work.

In addition, the current committee structure is too unwieldy. Committees with overlapping interests, or obvious collaborative projects, don't know what the other committees are doing. There is either no attention paid to a critical area because one group thinks another is doing it, or there is duplication of effort. The members present at the strategic planning session considered the benefits of grouping committees under umbrella divisions (where the chairs of the various committees in a group become the members of a "super-committee"), and the ASHI Council has approved this concept for presentation to the membership. We are planning to discuss these novel concepts at the annual meeting (they would require bylaws changes) and solicit your input at that time. I think you will like what you hear.

In another arena, Council, as well as various committees, have been very concerned with member benefits. We want you to feel that there is a unique value to being an ASHI member. While this may take many forms, we are exploring tailoring member benefits to different groups in the society. Some of the things under consideration are offering a cafe-teria style menu of benefits, such as Human Immunology, digitized lectures on the internet (for continuing education), and/or a centralized library of journal subscriptions, just to name a few. To provide opportunities for partnering with basic science groups, the Director's Affairs, Scientific Affairs, and Education Committees have been working on the new concept of having director level workshops. These would be focused on a single timely topic, which might form the basis of developing/implementing new testing methodologies, or partnering in clinical trials. Tentatively, there are plans to have such a workshop in partnership with the NIH in early 2002.

I am also pleased to tell you that the International Affairs Committee has been active and has offered some wonderful and novel ideas for more globalization and collaboration between ASHI and its sister societies, such as EFI, BSHI, and ASEATTA. I have received letters from these groups indicating that they are equally excited about what we can achieve working together. Moreover, the ASHI Accreditation Program (together with some of you) has been actively mentoring labs and accreditation programs around the globe to foster high standards for accreditation. As members of an international consortium, we should be able to achieve amazing results.

Changing to a very pragmatic note, I need to convey to you the importance of changing our bylaws structure. Too many details exist in the bylaws that hamstring the society from making innovative changes. I do not mean to imply that anything should be done to eliminate the membership being the final approval for substantive policy changes. However, when committees cannot be rearranged until we have a discussion about it at the annual meeting, and then a review of the proposed bylaws change prior to a vote on the bylaws change, the society is slowed to less than a crawl. In order to meet the new challenges of the fast paced field in which we work, we must have a more responsive structure. This year we have bylaws changes going out for the second year in a row because last year we did not get sufficient ballots returned (as required by the bylaws) for the vote to be valid, even though the vote was overwhelmingly in favor of each of the changes. In addition, we cannot include other bylaws changes on this ballot, which are badly needed, because they haven't yet been discussed at the annual meeting. These kinds of strictures waste your time, and the society's financial resources, in duplicate meetings, mail ballots, postage, etc. We need to have bylaws that give us the framework to work within and make decisions, without making it impossible to move forward. Details need to be in the policy manual or standing rules. There will be a discussion regarding this at the annual meeting, but please think about this issue ahead of time, so that our discussions can be productive.

Finally, on a positive note, let me say that each of you has something to offer this society. We need your ideas and your participation. One suggestion is to have a database of each member's area of expertise and interest. That way, when moderators or speakers are needed, we could query the database for the appropriate member. You will need to respond to the questionnaire in the annual meeting evaluation booklet to let us know if you are interested.

It is also time for committee sign-ups. In this issue of the *Quarterly* you will find an application form. Sign up! Get involved! Even if the committees become full, there are task forces needed to get things done...but we have to know your interests.

Lastly, if you do nothing else, please VOTE! We can get nothing done in this society without your vote. It takes just a minute or two, and it's very important. My final request is: GET INVOLVED! You have something unique to offer this society. Please don't keep your unique talent/perspective to yourself!

I wish you every success as we move forward together on a bold new plan!

Sincere and warm regards,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Dolly".

Dolly B. Tyan, PhD  
President