

## Report from Council

Melodie Putnam, Pacific Division Councilor

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The governing body of APS, Council, assembled for its mid-year meeting in St. Paul February 20-22<sup>nd</sup>. There are a number of issues before Council right now that bear watching, and member input will be important.

### Governance

Perhaps the biggest news is that Council is again considering reorganization, last tackled in 2001. At the time I was the Division President, and I thought the proposed structure was an ill conceived idea, due largely to what I saw as an inevitable result: the decline of the Divisions (see <http://www.apsnet.org/members/div/Pacdivfall01Nwsltr.pdf>).

This time around, Jim Moyer, the current President of APS, said up front that the Executive committee “gets it”: they understand the divisions are important to the membership and the health of the Society. They have heard that loud and clear. The current effort at reorganization is not intended to do away with the Divisions, but to improve the structure of the Society overall and address some long standing inequities.

Last year an ad hoc committee on governance was appointed by then-President Ray Martyn to imagine what sort of structure would best serve the needs of APS right now and in the future. An article in Phytopathology News announced this committee and its charge (page 159 at <http://www.apsnet.org/members/phyto/2008/11/081101.pdf>).

In February, the committee presented a *draft* structure, a bare bones skeleton of one way in which governance could be organized. It remains to be seen if the skeleton can bear the weight of the Society once it is fleshed out, and it may be there is a hand where a kneecap should be. But the draft proposal does provide a preliminary structure with which Council can start to work. Some of the issues under consideration, which shaped the skeletal structure, were:

- Plant pathology is becoming more global, diverse and interdisciplinary.
- Members associate more by discipline, sub-discipline or functional group more than by geography.
- The mean age of members in the society is increasing.
- Younger members are not seeing the same value in APS with regard to career preparation, advancement, or fellowship as was the case with previous generations.
- Global warming and bio-based economies will alter how and where crops are grown and the pests that affect them.
- APS needs to have a global perspective.
- APS needs to be able to respond promptly and efficiently to issues relevant to plant health and agriculture in the broadest sense.
- Council needs to be strategic in function.
- Representation on Council is lopsided, and does not represent the diversity of the membership adequately.

So what was the proposed structure? As I mentioned, the details have not been worked out yet, but the proposal includes the following.

- Restructuring of the Executive Committee (Exec) to consist of the four Presidents (past, current, Vice President, and President-elect), Treasurer, and Executive Vice President (an APS staff position) only, with removal of the Secretary (this position will be eliminated) and the Senior Councilor-at-Large from Exec.
- Council will be reduced from 21 members to 16, consisting of the Exec and six elected Councilors and five appointed Councilors.
  - The six elected Councilors will be elected by vote of the entire APS membership and will have assigned liaisons to specific boards and offices (to see the boards and offices of APS, see <http://www.apsnet.org/members/boards.asp>).
  - The five appointed Councilors will include one to represent the Publications Board, one to represent the Scientific Programs Board, and three assigned to represent specific boards/offices determined at the time of appointment based on current issues/needs.
  - The annual meeting will be used for Councilor liaison meetings with the boards and offices that Council Represents.
- A new Membership Committee will be established to address membership issues.
- A new Leadership Development Committee will identify and screen nominees to put forward for officers as well as elected and appointed Council positions.

There are other suggested changes, including increasing the frequency with which Council meets and changes in the duties of the officers.

The greatest change here is there will no longer be Councilors-at-Large and no Divisional Councilors.

The new structure is intended to allow a clear path for engagement of larger numbers of members, and more active engagement.

There are a lot of issues that need to be fleshed out here, including how will the Divisions interact with this new structure? Council is trying to support and redefine the divisional role in APS leadership, and an ad hoc committee was proposed to look at the role of the Divisions under this new structure.

Other questions were raised during the meeting, but most germane to the Divisions is, What do you as a member of the Pacific Division need from Council? What do you get now from representation on Council? What input do you want to give back to Council? What avenue do you need to do this?

This process of looking at reorganization is ongoing, and this will not be the last time the issue will be before you. It will be discussed at the national meeting in Portland, and any changes in structure will require a vote by the entire membership. However, Council wants to move forward quickly, and not drag out the process. I urge you to consider the issues and speak up if you have any concerns. You can address them to me ([putnamm@science.oregonstate.edu](mailto:putnamm@science.oregonstate.edu)), to any of the Councilors-at-Large, or to any of the officers of the Society (<http://www.apsnet.org/directories/council.cfm>.)

Other items discussed at the mid-year meeting:

## Finances

The current year ('09) budget is on track. In the longer term, there are concerns about the health of the society in face of the larger economic situation.

- Reserves are down about a million dollars from where they were in December, 2007 due to the downturn of the stock market.
- The proposed '10 budget is pretty flat – similar overall to the current year budget of \$4.5 million.
- Half of the Society's surplus still comes from the 3 journals. *Phytopathology* brings in more than *Plant Disease* and *MPMI* combined.
- The Plant Management Network is scheduled to break even in '10 for the first time.
- The Financial Advisory Committee had made a recommendation to the **look at the annual meeting to see if it could be done differently**. The charge was to see if the current annual meeting model meets member needs. Is there a way to reduce expense of the meeting while maintaining or enhancing scientific content and value to plant health professionals?
- The financial health of the Society is a concern: How do we prepare for the future, given the bleak economic prospects? One option is to reduce expenses by reducing discretionary spending. One suggestion was to stop providing drink tickets for the opening reception at the annual meeting. One concern with this approach is that members may feel they are getting less for their membership dollars.

## Publications

- Changes will be coming to the journals in an effort to attract more readers and authors.
- *Phytopathology* will increase the number of review articles published, and reduce the time the articles are available as open access from 24 to 12 months.
- Color page charges will be reduced (see <http://www.apsnet.org/journals/apsupdate/APSResearchUpdate15.htm>.)
- General society news will be moved from *Phytopathology* to *Phytopathology News*.

## Ad Hoc Committee on International Societal Relations

This group is exploring associations with sister societies, with the intention of focusing on societies in developed countries to establish mutually beneficial relationships.

If you have any questions about any of this, or wish to voice concerns or opinions on matters relevant to the Society, please feel free to contact me.

Respectfully submitted,  
Melodie Putnam  
Pacific Division Councilor