

APS Mid-year Council Meeting, February 2010

Jim Adaskaveg, Pacific Division Councilor

The Council of the American Phytopathological Society assembled for its mid-year meeting in St. Paul, MN on February 18-21, 2010. The following is a summary of our society's current business and plans for the future.

Governance

The biggest news is that, after two years of careful consideration and interaction with numerous members, committees, boards, and offices, an ad hoc committee assigned to evaluate APS Governance submitted its final report to Council. The report thoroughly reviews the current organization and identifies societal needs, goals to enhance governance, and proposed plans outlining needed re-organization of the upper level administration of our society. Council unanimously accepted the plan after some discussion and minor adjustments for re-structuring the membership of council and increasing the number of support groups (e.g., offices and forums). Details of numerous previous communications and the proposed plan are available at APSnet.com. For the changes to occur, our constitution has to be modified and this means APS members will need to vote on the proposal in the near future (i.e., April/May 2010).

A major proposed change reduces council from 22 to 12 members. To accomplish this, the proposal reduces the number of Publications Board representatives from five to one (chair of PB); the number of Divisional Councilors from six to one Councilor who represents all Divisions from a Division Forum, and reduces Foundation representation from two to one person (the Treasurer). Additional changes include the formation of visioning, membership, and divisional forums, as well as creating a nominating committee. By reducing the number of councilors, council can be more efficient and responsive, can be better informed from increased interactions with membership, allow for more sources for input (from boards, forums, and committees), and can focus on strategic planning and decision making.

As Pacific Division Councilor, I worked closely with other divisional councilors to ensure that the divisions were represented on council in the proposed plan. As indicated in my last report on a summit meeting in Dec. 2009 between APS and Divisional leadership with the ad hoc committee, the plan is to create a Division Forum with one representative being on council. The basis of divisions will remain geographical and this section of the constitution will remain unchanged. The Division Forum will allow for divisional councilors to have more interactions between divisions, allow for interactions with the membership forum (an assigned councilor), and have a seat on the nominating committee. The visioning forum will help identify and communicate on key issues (scientific, societal, and technological) to APS leadership, whereas the membership forum will be formed to focus specifically on membership issues. Lastly, the nominating committee is formed to identify and foster new leaders, as well as develop and implement a new nomination process to increase membership involvement.

The proposal did not recommend changes to Divisions, presidential lineage, elected councilors-at-large, the Financial Advisory Committee, existing boards and offices, committees, and the Leadership Forum.

If you have any questions you may contact myself (jim.adaskaveg@ucr.edu) or one of the Councilors-at-Large (Mike Boehm, Carolee Bull, and Ann Dorrance), or any of the officers of the Society (<http://www.apsnet.org/directories/council.cfm>.)

Other items discussed at the mid-year meeting:

Initiatives Discussed

- Education and Industry – A shrinking supply of “Ag ready” students is increasing demand in industry and academia. Workshops have been organized and results presented at the 2009 Annual Meeting. Recently, Monsanto organized an AgSummit that resulted in the formation of a coalition between industry, APS, and other science societies. The mission is to generate federal support to train future generations of agricultural scientists who will be employed by universities, corporations, and government agencies. The main objective is to exhibit broad support for funding for competitive programs that will lead to a highly trained workforce ready to address issues related to providing a plentiful and safe food supply.
- Annual Meeting – Leadership
 1. Workshops planned for Career Development and Leadership for Early Career Professionals
- Annual Meeting - Registration
 1. A registration category for undergraduate students will be added to registration forms starting with the 2011 meeting;
 2. Discounted registration for undergraduates will be offered to students whose printed registration is accompanied by a letter on letterhead from a faculty member or supervisor who will be accompanying the student to the meeting;
 3. Registration for undergraduate students will be set by the meeting planner to be no more than the approximate cost of meals included in the registration (e.g., for a single-day registration with no meals, there will be no cost to the society);
 4. Annual meeting registration will include free membership in the society for one year for students who pay registration at the reduced cost for the entire meeting.

APSNet

The website of the society will go through a transformation this spring. A content management system was selected: Microsoft Share Point. Over 90,000 pages and 14,000 images will be moved into the new website. The new system will cover many new ideas and will be highly flexible and adaptable with users having the possibility to have authorized control of components of the site. An “in-house” store and a new membership database with compatibility to a multitude of platforms are just some of the changes.

Publications

- Changes will be coming to the journals in an effort to attract more readers and authors.
- All three journals have agreed to post online all accepted papers as a pre-print prior to publication with a DOI number

Finances

The current year (‘09/’10) budget is on track. The annual meetings and journal cost centers are currently profitable. The annual meetings go through profit and loss cycles based on the location and attendance. Last year, the Portland meeting was well attended and was an affordable site.

The three journals provide 85% of the net income of the society. The future will depend on the success of “open access” and library subscriptions. PMN was given a charge to be profit neutral or positive by the end of this fiscal year and it looks like this will happen. APS Press is investing in electronic publications but had a positive budget in recent years. Overall, the finances of the society are in reasonably good shape considering the losses in unrealized investments last year after nationwide economic problems with the stock market. These losses are slowly recovering as the economy returns. The financial health of the

Society is still a concern. The focus will have to be on diversifying into other financially profitable ventures.

Approved financial items by council:

1. The budget for FY11.
2. Executive Council's request for a \$5000 donation to the Biology Department, University of Alabama in memory of Drs. Gopi Podila and Maria Ragland-Davis, two plant pathologists who were murdered by a disgruntled faculty member.
3. Office of Public Relations and Outreach's (OPRO) request for waiving 1 day registration fee for undergraduate college/university students and their instructors attending the Annual Meeting (no affect on annual budget).

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.

Jim Adaskaveg
Pacific Division Councilor