

APS Ad Hoc Committee and Divisional Leadership Discuss Societal Governance – Dec. 2009

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An APS ad hoc committee chaired by Mike Boehm met with divisional leadership (Councilors and Presidents) on Dec. 14th at APS headquarters to discuss an ongoing proposal to re-organize the governance of the society with changes to council membership. Participants agreed that changes to council are needed as our society changes to allow for future membership growth from global and sub-disciplinary perspectives. Changes in council membership and the responsibilities of councilors will allow for greater membership participation and result in more rapid response time to urgent issues and showcase opportunities for all members. A summary of this ongoing process was published in the fall issue of the Pacific Division Newsletter (<http://www.apsnet.org/members/phyto/2009/10/090901.pdf>).

The two main branches of APS Council are the Executive Committee and Councilor's Forum. Council also consists of the Executive VP and the Financial Advisory Committee (FAC). The main changes proposed by the ad hoc committee at this meeting were to Councilor's Forum and included changes from the current three councilors-at-large and six divisional councilors to a new structure of six Elected (essentially councilors-at-large), three Appointed (one each from the president, president-elect, and vice president), and one Publication Board chair member as councilors. Although a Divisional Forum was proposed to interact with the new structured council membership, divisional representatives were very concerned with the proposed change from the current six seats to no representation on council from the divisions. Discussion continued on the role of the divisions in the society as: a structure to share in regional agricultural problems, an organization for providing leadership to the overall society, and an entity of elected representatives of a vast majority of the domestic society. Furthermore, with numerous elections of the six proposed Elected Councilors, divisional councilor elections to the Divisional Forum would be diminished overtime with the numerous election layers of the society and their potential limited role. Subsequently, an alternative proposal was recommended by divisional leaders following the proposal similar to the Publication Board having one representative on council (e.g., the PPB chair) then the Divisional Forum could have one representative on council (e.g., the DF chair). This alternative proposal would address concerns about uncoupling the divisions from council, losing representation, and de-emphasizing the role of elected officials from the divisions as reported by John Rupe and his sub-committee within the ad hoc committee.

In this alternative proposal, the Divisional Forum would have the flexibility to develop new geographical (i.e., international) and conceptual or subject divisions as they are needed and developed from the planned membership, subject, and societal development committees, as well as the Visioning Forum. These ad hoc committee proposed groups would allow greater participation of membership and access to council. Councilors-at-large will still go through a direct nomination and election, thus a division could band together and nominate and vote for a candidate of their choosing. The proposed changes would enhance our traditional leadership development while allowing participation of the newly created Leadership Institute to also develop future leaders of the society to fill elected councilors, appointed councilors, publication board positions, and other positions within the offices of the society.

Divisional leadership was very impressed with the effort of the ad hoc committee to develop such a comprehensive and cohesive proposal and in their efforts to get and address the concerns of divisional leadership. Our suggestions were well received and many of them will likely be apart of the final report to council. Thus, this update provides insight to the process of the huge under-taking of re-organization of governance within APS and informs our divisional membership of the issues at stake in the year ahead when proposed constitutional amendments may need to be ratified by our society. Since council still has to accept the proposal and constitutional amendments for membership ratification are still required to implement these changes, there is still time for discussion and input. Please contact myself (jjm.adaskaveg@ucr.edu) or Walt (walt.mahaffee@ars.usda.gov). There will also be more information coming from the ad hoc committee and council in the coming months.