

## Engaging the ASHG Membership

### ASHG Is Your Society

As a professional membership organization, the goal of ASHG is to serve its members. Continuous effort is expended to improve the level at which the professional needs of members are met. The most traditional and critical activities of the Society have been production of the Annual Meeting and publication of the *American Journal of Human Genetics*. Through organization of the annual meeting and publication of the *Journal*, ASHG provides venues for investigators to share their research findings.

The Society leadership endeavors to engage the membership in all aspects of Society business and activities, using as many means as possible to reach out to members and to invite member input and involvement in all processes and activities. ASHG is enhancing the information available to members through quarterly publication of the online newsletter *SNP-IT*. In addition, initiation of the Web-based Forums (<http://www.ashg.org/forum/>) on several topics is providing the opportunity for members to engage in online discussions about topics of particular professional interest.

### Committees

The committees of ASHG address issues and activities of importance in informing the membership, health professionals in general, health policy makers, legislators, and the public about human genetics research and its implications. Any member interested in participating in committee activities should ask to be nominated for consideration for appointment to a committee by e-mailing Joann Boughman, Ph.D., Executive Vice President, [jboughman@ashg.org](mailto:jboughman@ashg.org). All ASHG committees are appointed by the President, in accordance with the ASHG bylaws (see "About ASHG" at <http://www.ashg.org/genetics/ashg/ashgmenu.htm>).

### Awards

ASHG presents several annual awards to outstanding scientists, educators, and leaders in human genetics. The nomination process for the awards (William Allan, Curt Stern, Excellence in Education, and Leadership) is announced each spring via e-mail, and nomination forms are made available at the ASHG Web site. All members are encouraged to nominate worthy individuals for consideration for these prestigious awards.

### Information and Education

Known as the "I&E Committee," this committee has the reputation of being one of the most active and important in the Society, especially since the creation of the Director of Education position in the administrative office. The committee's work focuses primarily on high school and undergraduate genetics education. ASHG members interested in actively contributing to either of these areas can contact the I&E Committee Chair, Neil Lamb ([nlamb@haib.org](mailto:nlamb@haib.org)), to be placed in a working group.

The ASHG Web site will undergo further enhancements, with a focus on the development of additional genetics education re-

sources at <http://genednet.org/>. High school and undergraduate teaching workshops will be planned for 2008, with hope for a high degree of success, as in past years. We will continue to maintain the Genetics Education and Outreach Network (previously known as the "Mentor Network") and to collaborate with others, including National Human Genome Research Institute for DNA Day activities. ASHG will again sponsor the DNA Day Essay Contest and will solicit members to serve as judges to assist with the selection of the winning essays.

The NSF-sponsored GENA (Geneticist-Educator Network of Alliances) grant will also be continued, and additional members will be sought to participate in the scientist-educator pairs throughout the United States. Participation requires attendance at a 3-d workshop, partnership with a local high school teacher, and then working with that partner to develop an inquiry-focused intervention for educators to implement in their classrooms. More information on this grant can be found at [http://www.genednet.org/pages/GENA\\_about.shtml](http://www.genednet.org/pages/GENA_about.shtml).

### Professional Development

This ad hoc committee has been established to focus on issues faced by trainees and professionals early in their careers. To date, special sessions at the last two annual meetings have been organized, and sections in the newsletter, portions of the <http://genednet.org/> Web site, and online member forums have been established as means to share useful ideas and to develop a network of professionals interested in these topics. The ASHG Board spends considerable effort discussing these issues and is anxious to develop yet additional ways to be responsive to the needs of young professionals. Trainees are encouraged to participate in all available programs, including the Trainee Awards program at the Annual Meeting.

### Nominating

This committee plays a critical role in identifying leaders in ASHG. As such, there are numerous ongoing conversations about how to improve and expand these processes. The committee welcomes all suggestions from members.

Although the nominations process may appear to some to be insular, the committee welcomes nominations from all sources. Additionally, there have been considerable discussion and support for the idea that more than one name should appear on the ballot for the Presidential election, and we plan to implement this idea. Six individuals are proposed on the ballot for election to the three Director positions open each year on the Board. Unlike some organizations (e.g., ACMG and ABMG), the Board is not elected to represent specific areas of specialization or groups. Rather, the Nominating Committee strives to present a slate of excellent candidates that provides as much balance and diversity of interests as possible.

All members are encouraged to participate in this process, first and foremost by voting in the annual election! In addition, suggestions for nominations to the Board or the Presidency may be sent to the administrative office and will be collated for consid-

eration by the Nominating Committee during the annual nominations process, which takes place every March and April.

### *Annual Meeting Program*

The Annual Meeting Program Committee is one of the most important groups in the entire Society. Very careful consideration is made for appointment to the Program Committee, making sure that there is appropriate coverage of all areas of expertise for the development and selection of the final program for the Annual Meeting. Replacements for committee members are suggested by the retiring committee members (who have full knowledge and understanding of the expectations regarding the workload), members of the Board, and the general membership.

The Annual Program results from a careful and collaborative evaluation process of submitted abstracts and proposed scientific, education, and social issues sessions. The Committee relies on the submission of excellent proposals and abstracts for the construction of the outstanding meeting content each year. Therefore, it is critical that the membership continue to step forward and participate in the process. Only through submission of abstracts, proposals, and nominations of outstanding awardees will the content of the program continue to meet and exceed the expectations of all who attend. Each submission is reviewed (by

three reviewers for abstracts), and proposals are discussed and decided upon by the Program Committee. However, the process for participation is open and inclusive.

### **Participate**

ASHG is a large, far-reaching, and growing scientific organization that works to meet the needs and expectations of a diverse and exceptional group of scientists. To meet those needs and expectations, the leadership and administration of ASHG relies on input and participation of the membership. Each member will find satisfaction and fulfillment from the organization and will help influence the future of the Society by investing some time and energy and by providing input through any of the many means available.

All these important activities require the generous commitment of time and energy of many ASHG members, including trainees, and we hope that many will continue to demonstrate their commitment through volunteering to participate in some of these endeavors.

PLEASE PARTICIPATE!!

JOANN BOUGHMAN, Ph.D.  
Executive Vice President