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Russell Ritenour, Ph.D.
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Dear Russ,

This letter is my report of participation as the AAPM Delegate to the AIMBE meeting over the period March 1-3, 2006 at the Westin Grand Hotel, Washington, DC. The focus of the 2006 AIMBE was "Accelerating Society's Benefit from Innovations in Medical and Biological Engineering". It is interesting to note that "innovation" is the year-2006 buzz word in Washington and AIMBE caught the wave for the year. There were sessions on "Keeping America Competitive", "Advancing Women Bioengineers", "Fostering Innovation and Accelerating the Commercialization of Inventions" and "Biomarkers". The session on biomarkers was of especial interest to AAPM. There was a Keynote address from Janet Woodcock, Director of FDA's Center for Drug Evaluation and Research that highlighted FDA interest in using imaging biomarkers to speed the process of drug evaluation and approval. This is clearly an area where AAPM members could play an important role in the reshaping of drug testing.

The AIMBE embarked last year on a process to revitalize the organization and generate the funding necessary to support their functions. They have had significant success under the leadership of Thom Harris, AIMBE President 2005/2006 and the new Executive Director Pat Ford-Roegner. This process appears likely to continue under the new President, Herb Voigt, from Boston College.

There were representative from more than a dozen societies at the meeting of the Council of Societies meeting on March 3, 2006. One of the important COS decisions was to improve communications with society members. A new page has been drafted and now appears on the AIMBE web page and indicates the role of the COS is as follows:

AIMBE's Council of Societies: A Collective Voice for Action

As AIMBE's mechanism to coordinate and enhance interaction among 16 scientific organizations in medical and biological engineering, the Council of Societies:

- Provides a collaborative forum for the establishment of society member positions on issues affecting the field of medical and biological engineering;
- Fosters intersociety dialogue and cooperation, providing a cohesive public representation for medical and biological engineering, and;
- Provides a way to coordinate activities of member societies with the activities of academia, government, the health care sector, industry and the public and private biomedical communities.

The challenges facing medical and biological engineering grow more complex each year. The Council of Societies meets these challenges by assuring that resources from throughout the field – particularly the scientific and management talents of key individuals – are brought together most efficiently in pursuit of critical common goals. The Council, in fact, helps to set those goals by identifying and assessing important issues from within their own membership.

In recent years, the efforts of Council of Societies members have helped AIMBE:

- Assume a leading role in the formation, in 2000, of the National Institute of Biomedical Imaging and Bioengineering (NIBIB);
- Lead advocacy on behalf of The FDA Modernization Act of 1997;
- Press for passage of the Biomaterials Access Assurance Act of 1998; and
- Advocate creation of the National Institutes of Health Bioengineering Consortium (BECON).

Over the past year, Council of Societies members have represented AIMBE in policy-oriented discussions key with officials of:

- National Science Foundation;
- National Institutes of Health/National Institute of Biomedical Imaging and Bioengineering;
- Food and Drug Administration;
- Medical Technology Leadership Caucus;
- House of Representatives Appropriations Committee; and
- Senate Commerce, Science and Transportation Committee

Significantly, since its formation in 1991 the Council of Societies has limited itself to holding forums and conferences on policy matters. The Council of Societies is not involved in any technical conferences, production of journals or other activities that could be viewed as competition with the member organizations. Membership representation and dues for Council members are based on the size of the individual member society.

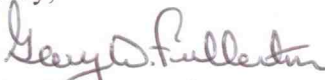
The Council of Societies meets each winter at AIMBE's Annual Event; however other meetings may be planned throughout the year at the discretion of the membership. Major initiatives undertaken at recent Annual Events have included the formulation of committees to address national workforce initiatives, implementing national innovation agendas, developing consensus statements regarding federal research funding levels and assessing the future of bioengineering through analyzing its economic impact.

The Council of Societies and its mission are designed to evolve over time, adjusting to the needs and interests of AIMBE members, and to challenges and changes at all levels in the world of bioengineering.

There was discussion of the AIMBE attempts to create a process similar to BIROW to establish "Priorities in Research in Medical and Biological Engineering (PRMBE). A tentative proposal on this topic was presented to Rod Pettigrew at NIBIB and rejected as Dr. Pettigrew did not wish to separate biomedical imaging and bioengineering. As AAPM representative, I proposed consideration of the prospect of morphing BIROW into a more inclusive biomedical imaging and bioengineering project as suggested by Dr. Pettigrew. This proposal did not gather support and the decision was made to continue with the PRMBE process proposed by Wolf von Maltzahn to set research priorities.

In summary, the AIMBE meeting is slowly transforming into new forms that appear to gather support from a growing range of sources. AAPM continues somewhat on the periphery of these efforts but is increasingly accepted as a key partner in important initiatives that involve imaging.

Sincerely,



Gary D. Fullerton, Ph.D.
AAPM Delegate to AIMBE