As I write this letter, the 47th Annual Biological Safety Conference in San Antonio, Texas is fast approaching and I am looking forward to seeing many of you again. Our annual conference has always been a highlight of our association and looking at the proposed agenda it will be no doubt another very successful conference. It is amazing to me to see and learn how many of our members are spending hours and hours to get a conference like this organized and I would like to use this opportunity to thank all of you for contributing in making our conferences as well as ABSA such a success.

Interestingly, it has become more and more evident to the ABSA Council that our volunteer time is one of our most precious resources and we need to utilize it efficiently and wisely. For that and other reasons, we have taken a closer look at how our association is operating and how we can manage our growth as well as our resources to maximize the return for our members and the biosafety community at large. The Council met again during the summer and has developed a new strategic plan for our association that we have posted on the ABSA web site (members’ area) for your information and feedback.

In order to successful manage the association and provide the best service to our members, we have established five key areas (strategic performance areas) on which we want to focus in the next several years. Although all of these areas are discussed and described on the web site I would like to focus on the following three areas and give you some additional information:

1. **Professional Development**
   
   It is very important for ABSA to provide our members and other biosafety practitioners with high quality and relevant education. In the past, this responsibility has been a primary focus of the Training and Education Committee and their effort and contribution have been outstanding. In order to meet our needs in the future this strategic performance area has been expanded and will include committees or task groups that will address topics like: “Educational Opportunities, Instructional Technology, Resources and Publications” to mention some.

2. **Defining the Profession**

   This performance area will address our need to define the essential body of knowledge and skill set for biosafety professionals and will for example include our Registration and Certification programs. As part of this area, we are planning to establish a new mentoring program for new members and individuals interested in the field of biosafety. A new task force will focus on the potential for the expansion of our biosafety profession, for example looking at other safety related areas.

3. **Alliances and Public Affairs**

   It has become evident that ABSA is considered more and more a key partner for regulators, organizations, and other groups. We want to make sure that we not only deliver excellent information to our partners, but also at the same time expand our influence and leverage our resources. We are looking into new alliances and partnerships where both sides bring their own unique expertise to the table and benefit through a mutual working relationship.

   In order to manage all of these new strategic performance areas, the President and President-Elect, with assistance from the Council, will identify key individuals within ABSA to function as team leaders...
in these areas.

As you can see there are some very exciting opportunities on the horizon for more of our members to get involved and shape this association for the future. However, as I mentioned in the beginning, our volunteer time is a precious resource and our members should be able to focus on the tasks that they are most familiar with. To greatly assist the volunteers, we are looking into adding another staff person to the ABSA National Office who will assist the committees, our task forces, and the leaders of our new performance areas in their day-to-day volunteer work.

I hope that this short introduction was informative and to learn more about these exiting opportunities, I highly encourage you to read the material that the Council developed and that we posted on our web site in the members area. I am looking forward to seeing and talking with you in San Antonio.