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We are well into 2005, and we are already realizing many of the benefits of the strategic plan that was implemented in late 2004. Our Strategic Performance Teams are working on a variety of projects to benefit the membership. I'd like to highlight a few of the many projects that are underway.

The Professional Development Team offered "Principles and Practices of Biosafety" in Tampa, Florida in January 2005. With 47 attendees from all over the world, this week-long course is the premier comprehensive biosafety course. I had the pleasure to attend for part of the week and had the opportunity to welcome the attendees and provide information on ABSA, as many attendees were not yet ABSA members. Plans are being made for this course to be offered in Cambridge, Massachusetts in August 2005. The Professional Development Team is also busy at work planning the annual Summer Seminar Series and preconference courses for the 2005 Conference in Vancouver. Check the ABSA web site for details.

When it comes to planning the annual Conference, the Conference Services Team is the key player. Within a month of formation, this Team provided the ABSA Council with the information needed to select a conference site for 2008. I am happy to report that we will be holding the 2008 Conference in Reno, Nevada. The Team is also hard at work on a written ABSA Conference Management Guide, which will be a key resource for the successful development and execution of future annual ABSA conferences. The Scientific Program Committee is assembling another fine Conference program for Vancouver in October 2005. To facilitate the submission of abstracts for the Conference Scientific Program, we will be using an electronic

submission format this year.

Are you a new ABSA member or new to the profession of biosafety? If so, stay tuned for a mentoring program to be offered by the Mentoring Committee in the Defining the Profession Team. I personally benefited from having a number of mentors provide me with valuable assistance and advice when I was new to the profession, so I know how important this mentoring program will be in assisting members who are new to the profession.

The Technical and Regulatory Affairs Team plays an important role in advising our membership of regulatory and technical issues, and interfacing with regulatory agencies. It has been a big help to me in recommending ABSA members who are technical experts in specific areas of biosafety. Recently, in light of laboratory-acquired infections reported in Boston, I asked the Team to consider developing a resource paper to address the need for validating the identity of attenuated pathogens. I look forward to its input on this timely subject.

Our Alliance Team is busy cultivating new alliances with organizations and continuing the excellent work with our current alliances. The alliance with the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) was renewed in October 2004 and continues to benefit both ABSA and OSHA. In 2003, ABSA and the Campus Safety, Health and Environmental Management Association (CSHEMA) initiated an alliance. Both groups are working together on common goals involving biological safety. During 2004, ABSA began a wonderful working relationship with the Elizabeth Griffin Foundation. We are grateful for the Foundation's continued support of ABSA, and we look forward to working together in 2005 and beyond. These are just

a few of the dozen or so formal and informal alliances ABSA has with other groups.

I am pleased to announce that in February 2005, ABSA welcomed two new affiliates—the Northeast Biological Safety Association (NBSA) and the Midwest Area Biosafety Network (MABioN). We send both groups best wishes for success and look forward to welcoming more affiliates in the future. During the upcoming 2005 Conference in Vancouver, the Affiliate Relations Committee, part of our Management Team, will be holding a meeting for representatives of all ABSA affiliates and chapters.

As 2005 progresses, I urge each ABSA member to think about nominating a fellow ABSA member for one of the 2005 ABSA Honor Awards. This year, nominations are being sought for the Arnold G.

Wedum Distinguished Achievement Award, the Everett Hanel Jr. Presidential Award, and the John H. Richardson Special Recognition Award. Think about ABSA members you know who have made outstanding contributions to biological safety or to ABSA, and consider nominating them for one of these awards. To facilitate the nominating process, the Awards Committee that is part of our Management Team will accept award nominations electronically. Check the ABSA web site (www.absa.org) for more details on the criteria for nomination and the electronic submission process.

As always, don't hesitate to contact me at egilman@absa.org if you have any suggestions or comments.

**2005 Biological Weapons Convention (BWC) Experts Meeting
June 13-24, 2005**

The 2005 Biological Weapons Convention (BWC) Experts Meeting in Geneva, Switzerland will focus on scientific professional responsibility with regard to scientific codes of conduct. There will be a number of public sessions and informal presentations given by academia, industry, and professional scientific societies. For more information, please visit the web site at www.state.gov/t/ac/bw/.