Betsy Gilman Duane
Cambridge, Massachusetts

It’s always a pleasure to update you on ABSA activities given the many and varied projects and events in which our members are involved. The Teams and Committees are successfully implementing the Strategic Plan and the Council is extremely pleased with the outcome thus far. I trust that the membership is as pleased as I am with the many membership service improvements, increased interaction with outside organizations, and other benefits that have resulted from the Strategic Plan.

I have had the pleasure in recent months to attend the MABSA and CHABSA Symposiums, and look forward to attending additional Affiliate meetings in the near future. It is rewarding to meet with so many ABSA members and nonmembers at these events and to be able to provide an update on ABSA’s many accomplishments and future activities. The Affiliates are a vital part of our organization and the Affiliate Relations Committee (ARC) is developing a booth to showcase our many affiliates at the October conference in Vancouver. ARC will also host the first Affiliates luncheon meeting during the conference to allow for networking opportunities among the representatives of the many Affiliates.

Bob Ellis, ABSA Councilor, is representing ABSA on the 2006 CDC Symposium Steering Committee. We thank CDC for inviting ABSA to participate and provide input into a program on animal biosafety that should be of interest to many of our members. The Symposium is scheduled for January 2006.

LouAnn Burnett and the Professional Development Team are busy as always developing and presenting high-quality courses and seminars for biosafety professionals. The second offering in 2005 of the highly successful “Principles and Practices of Biosafety” course will take place in Cambridge, Massachusetts during the week of August 8, 2005. We also have a record number of preconference courses slated for the annual conference in Vancouver. The Educational Operations Committee is planning 29 preconference courses on all areas of biosafety that will appeal to new and established biosafety professionals. The Scientific Program Committee, led by Barry Cohen and part of the Conference Services Team, is busy putting together another outstanding scientific program for the Vancouver conference.

Karen Byers and Barbara Johnson, Co-Editors of *Applied Biosafety*, are pleased to report that a number of International Assistant Editors have been recruited to enlarge the perspective of the Journal Editorial Board. Plans are in place to provide access to an electronic version of *Applied Biosafety* later this year. ABSA members will continue to receive the journal in hardcopy format, but will also have the ability to access past and current issues of *Applied Biosafety* in the “Member’s Only” section of the ABSA web site. In addition, electronic subscriptions for nonmembers will also be available. The Co-Editors are always interested in receiving material for potential publication, so don’t hesitate to contribute original research, best practices, and any other information that may be of interest to the biosafety community.

ABSA members and nonmembers have often commented on how often they refer to the Risk Group Tables that are posted on the ABSA web site. I am happy to report that these tables are being updated and will be posted as they are completed. This information will continue to be a valuable resource. Stefan Wagener and Diane Fleming directed these efforts and we thank them for their important con-
ABSA continues to have an international presence and recently received an invitation from the U.S. Department of State to attend and provide a presentation at the 2005 Biological Weapons Convention (BWC) Experts Meeting in Geneva in June 2005. The theme of the meeting is “Codes of Conduct for Scientists” as it relates to the professional responsibilities of scientists. ABSA responded by providing a presentation titled “Biosafety: A Vital and Growing Component of Scientific Responsibility.” The ABSA Council acknowledged that the safe conduct of work with biological materials is an important aspect of professional responsibility in science, and therefore welcomed the opportunity for ABSA to participate. As we are all well aware, institutional biosafety programs in academia, government, and industry are mandated by a variety of guidelines and regulations, as well as by institutional policies. The role of an institution’s Biological Safety Officer is important in promoting scientific responsibility. The Biological Safety Officer’s role is to provide biosafety program management, biosafety training, and expertise to scientific personnel prior to and during research involving biohazardous materials. This includes a thorough review and understanding by scientific personnel of institutional policies and procedures as well as local, state, and country-specific regulations. In addition, committees such as Institutional Biosafety Committees play a role in the review and monitoring of projects involving biohazardous materials. These and other efforts collectively promote “responsible people doing responsible science” and promote public trust. ABSA offers a variety of programs and membership expertise to assist institutions, Biological Safety Officers, other professional organizations, and scientists in fulfilling their obligations with respect to biosafety.

Constant efforts by ABSA and others to promote biosafety will increase awareness of the role that biosafety plays in professional responsibility in scientific research. ABSA continues to pursue other valuable programs for both members and nonmembers. These include an accreditation program for Institutional Biosafety Committees and a Laboratory Certification Program. Programs such as these will foster professional responsibility for institutions that desire to participate. The Institutional Biosafety Committee (IBC) Accreditation Task Force will develop the framework for this program, which will be managed by ABSA, whereby criteria are established that define a useful and responsible IBC. Presumably these requirements will be based on the NIH Guidelines but would broaden responsibilities beyond recombinant DNA studies. IBC’s that meet the requirements and desire to be accredited will apply to ABSA for review by an accreditation committee. If accreditation is granted, the IBC will be encouraged to participate in a periodic re-accreditation process to ensure that the highest standards are continually met. This is an exciting project for ABSA and I look forward to providing you with more information later this year.

The second project, to develop a Laboratory Certification Program, is being organized on an international level with ABSA participating in the development of the program. As of May 2005, the development group has met twice and is planning to meet again in June. Stay tuned!

As always, don’t hesitate to contact me via e-mail at egilman@absa.org if you have any suggestions or comments. I sincerely hope that you are benefiting from the many programs, courses, and networking opportunities that ABSA is offering this year. I greatly appreciate the efforts of our Teams and Committees and the input from the Council that has resulted in such a rewarding year. I look forward to seeing you at the Conference in Vancouver this October.

**Thanks to the Elizabeth R. Griffin Research Foundation**

Many thanks to the Elizabeth R. Griffin Research Foundation for their recent financial support to the American Biological Safety Association. The ABSA Council is grateful for their continued assistance and collaboration in support of biosafety.