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Earlier this year, all ABSA members had the opportunity to complete a member survey. The purpose of this survey was to enable us as an organization to gauge how we are doing regarding the needs and wishes of our membership. In the member survey, we asked for feedback on how we are doing, how effective are the strategic performance areas that the Council established in 2004, and what members believe we should concentrate on in the future. Believe me—people gave us their opinions, positive and negative! Over 400 people completed the survey, which is a very good response. We thank all of you for your input! There were many good comments. We read them all, and the results of the survey were used in a strategic planning session held during our annual “winter” Council meeting in March.

At this Council meeting, in addition to our usual Council agenda, we had a 2-day strategic planning session. This was a follow-up to our original strategic planning sessions in 2004. We used the member survey results to help us evaluate how we are doing as an organization and the directions we should take as we grow. We were led through the process by a management consultant who specializes in strategy for organizations such as ours. We have just received the consultant's report, which summarizes all of our findings and action plans for the future.

We, your Council, pledge to make this the best organization it can be for you as biosafety professionals. We also intend for ABSA to be recognized as the expert voice of biosafety, and will continue our efforts to make our voice heard in Washington and in the international biosafety community.

Recently, we were invited to present ABSA's position at a meeting of the Trans-Federal Task Force on Optimizing Biosafety Oversight in Washington, DC. This task force has representatives from the whole alphabet soup of agencies: NIH, CDC, USDA, DOD, Department of the Army, and more. Also asked to present at this meeting were the American Society for Microbiology (ASM), the American Association for Laboratory Animal Science (AALAS), and the Association for Assessment and Accreditation of Laboratory Animal Care (AAALAC International).

ABSA's presentation included information on our programs for credentialing individuals (RBP and CBSP programs) and our position that accreditation of laboratories is a necessary next step. We emphasized that currently there is no standard for accreditation of laboratories. We believe that independent accreditation of labs is preferable to increased regulatory oversight, as it will be more efficient and less costly than government regulation. We cited AAALAC and the College of American Pathologists (CAP) as examples. We proposed that ABSA is uniquely positioned to lead the establishment of an accreditation program due to the expertise of our members, our involvement in the CEN Workshop Agreement *Laboratory Biorisk Management Standard*, and our members' involvement in writing recent editions of *Biosafety in Microbiological and Biomedical Laboratories* (BMBL). Further, our office, when it was Stygar Associates, led the process to establish the College of American Pathologists' accreditation program. We emphasized that we will engage partners from government agencies such as CDC, USDA, OSHA, and other professional associations such as ASM, AALAS, AAALAC, AIHA, etc. We recognize that this is a tremendous effort and that it will require funding. We would seek funding from the government initially, as there is precedence for that with other accreditation programs, but eventually such programs become self-sustaining. We proposed that participation in an accreditation program would be voluntary, just as participation in the CEN Workshop agreement is voluntary, and AAALAC accreditation is voluntary.

Mark your calendars...coming up soon are the Summer Seminar Series and Certification Review Course in Baltimore, Maryland, from June 23-26; The Principles and Practices of Biosafety in Rochester, New York, from August 4-8; and, of course, our annual conference in Reno, Nevada, from October 19-22 at John Ascuaga's Nugget. We think you will love this venue—we will have the hotel's meeting space all to ourselves and the room price is right!