

**ABSA**

American Biological Safety Association

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**ABSA Council Summary of Spring 2010 Membership Survey**

ABSA conducted a comprehensive member survey to determine customer satisfaction and member needs. Roughly 20% of the membership completed the survey, which could represent a response bias. However, this response rate is similar to previous survey response participation results and slightly lower than the percentage of members who participate in ABSA elections. Survey results are available on the ABSA website in the member's only section.

Survey responses were very favorable and confirm ABSA's value to our members. Pre-conference training courses remain the most highly rated value of membership, followed by the vendor exhibits and the scientific program at the annual ABSA conference. Stand alone training, seminars and webinars were of value but rated lower than those offered at the annual conference.

The open response portion of the survey also highlighted a few areas of potential improvement. Highly experienced and credentialed members seek more advanced courses to continue their education and also for completing required credit hours for re-credentialing. More networking opportunities and increased biosafety information on technical issues were also mentioned. Members also seek a prompt turnaround with the review and summary of new regulations for posting on the ABSA website. Responses for specific course needs included USP 797, Select Agent regulations and Responsible Official responsibilities, business skills for biosafety professionals, and training in non-biosafety disciplines. The survey results were also forwarded to Team and Committee leaders to help ensure that the needs of the members who responded are addressed.

Finally, a down U.S. economy was a factor as multiple comments were received about lowering conference costs and providing additional opportunities for distance learning and obtaining credits for continuing education for those who could not attend the annual conference due to budget cuts. Council did discuss the cost of holding our annual conference and our current conference formula has been based on member input from year to year. Members have let us know that poor quality hotels and conferences held at airports are no longer viable options. We learned that better venues equate to higher prices. The prices of a cup of coffee and a soda at any conference site are always higher than the cost that we pay for these items at home. In addition, the size of our organization works against us. We are a "tweener" group that doesn't fit perfectly in the world of large convention centers and not small enough to fit into less expensive hotels. We select the conference location 4 years in advance, with an eye towards both containing costs by locking in hotel rates as well as continued membership growth. The ABSA Office tries to build in a buffer in the event of a spike in the expected amount of attendance, so we secure more space than needed with lower attendance.

We are in agreement on elevated costs of doing business. The Finance Committee has communicated the need to critically watch budget needs to all Teams and Committees.

Finally, the study did confirm that ABSA's true power is in the quantity and quality of our volunteers at all levels of the organization. A tremendous amount of member involvement has been documented and members are actually seeking ways to get more involved. Council is very appreciative of this support and would like to thank our membership for such active service. Please don't hesitate to contact me or any of your Council members if you have any questions or suggestions. Thank you!

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Benjamin Fontes". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "B" and a stylized "F".

Benjamin Fontes, MPH, CBSP  
ABSA President