

Message from the President

John C. Wingfield

I hope you all had a productive and enjoyable summer. As many of you may have heard, a long time member of the Society, Aubrey Gorbman, passed away on September 21. Aubrey was unique in many ways, having been a cofounder of one of our divisions (comparative endocrinology) and a Past President. He also set a standard insofar as he only missed one SICB (ASZ) meeting in almost 40 years! There will be a presentation by Howard Bern before the invited speaker session on January 5 in New Orleans. For further information see the [DCE newsletter](#).

Now that the fall semester/quarter is well under way, it is time to look forward to the annual meeting in New Orleans. This looks to be an outstanding affair with over 1,100 abstracts submitted! The symposia and other sessions are extremely diverse and I look forward to many inspiring presentations and stimulating dialog. This is also a good opportunity to thank Stacia Sower for her hard work and leadership as Program Officer. Stacia has brought together all the Division Program Officers as well as Sue Burk and others in BAI for a two day meeting to put the program together. This meeting of the Program Committee has worked extremely well over the past two years. It has been particularly useful to have all the Division Program Officers together to talk and plan in ways not possible over electronic mail and the telephone. Stacia has also made some very important suggestions for future meeting organization that I am sure incoming Program Officer Kate Loudon, and all of us, will find to be extremely useful in the coming years. So, many thanks indeed Stacia for an outstanding job as Program Officer, and for your initiative, creativity, and patience, not to mention diplomacy in dealing with difficult scheduling problems. As I write, incoming Program Officer Kate Loudon is working hard on symposia for the 2005 meeting in San Diego. Let us hope that meeting will be as well attended as the New Orleans one promises to be.

There is one very important matter of business that all of us must attend to this fall. Two years ago, Past President Marvalee Wake, asked then SICB Secretary Penny Hopkins to form a committee and begin revising the society constitution and bylaws. This committee included Vic Hutchison, Kathy Packard, and Sue Herring. The changes that are proposed are major and will help us operate far more efficiently and effectively. Drafts of the revisions have been pored over by core officers, and at the Toronto meeting earlier this year the Executive Committee as a whole approved the changes for vote by the membership. By the time you read this, the voting period will be coming to an end so if you have not voted yet, please do so now. This is a very important issue for us and governs how we operate. Many thanks indeed to Penny Hopkins and her committee for the incredible amount of work and thought they put into these revisions. The Society as a whole is greatly indebted to them.

Once the voting for revisions to the constitution and bylaws are over, I shall be introducing a strategic plan for the future. I know many you may think that "strategic plan" is jargon introduced by administrators of universities, but I feel strongly that it will be useful and we have many exciting areas to develop over the next few years. We have been discussing the plan for the past two years and I will bring a draft of it to the Executive Committee in New Orleans. If nothing else I hope it will trigger new ideas in education and research from the membership at large. Some major areas include development of endowments and other funding for the society, so that we can offer more travel grants, research support (especially for students) and fund initiatives in education, outreach etc. There is also great interest in how to extend to other nations in the new world – and bring faculty and their students to our meeting. What new areas in biology we should be nurturing particularly in relation to major problems that society faces in the next few decades? Conservation biology is already re-emerging in the society and has the potential to involve every division. Other areas include bioinformatics. We are in a unique position to begin assembling a web site to include data bases truly characteristic of our diverse society. These would be a valuable asset to global knowledge and probably would not be assembled anywhere else. We need input from you, and as I said in my spring message, please do not

hesitate to send me ideas etc. that you may have (some of you have done so already and I thank you very much!).

Exciting times are ahead and I welcome your input. I especially look forward to seeing many of you in New Orleans in the New Year. In the meantime enjoy the fall!