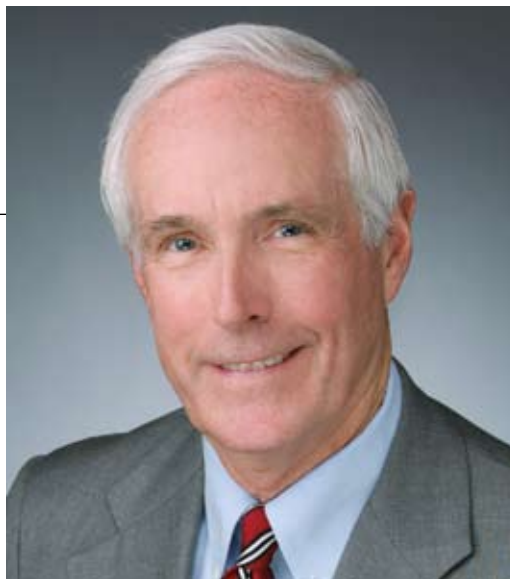


From my perspective



Many of you share your views with me on the College's response to your evolving needs through e-mails, letters, phone calls, or face-to-face contact at meetings. While you sometimes disagree with the organization's position on certain issues, the general consensus is that we are moving forward, and overall, the College does an admirable job of providing appropriate services to surgeons.

The staff's role

The reality of how the College works is that all of you suggest through your representatives on the Board of Governors how we can improve our programs and services, and, as our policymaking body, the Board of Regents determines which of your ideas should be implemented. It is my responsibility, then, to ensure that the Regents' directives are carried out. Ultimately, though, it is the staff of the College who do much of the actual work in terms of developing advocacy strategies, communicating with the public, planning educational programs, processing membership applications, and carrying out the policies established by the Board.

The College is structured around four key divisions—Education, Advocacy and Health Policy, Member Services, and Research and Optimal Care—as well as several support areas, including Communications, Executive Services, Convention and Meetings, Finance and Facilities, Human Resources, and Information Technology. Each of these areas comprises individuals who are highly competent in fulfilling their responsibilities and dedicated to this organization. Many of our nearly 200 employees have sought further education and training in their fields to help them do their jobs better. Some are willing to work late into the night or on the weekends to complete an assignment. Their commitment to a job well done is unquestionable.

Dedication

Quite a few of the College's employees have devoted most of their careers to serving this organization's members and to carrying out our mission of improving care for the surgical patient. In fact, several staff members have been here for more than a quarter of a century. Even so, the College continues to develop new positions that appeal to young people. Hence, we have a

“Ultimately, it is the staff of the College who [carry] out the policies established by the Board.”

nice balance of employees who have an in-depth familiarity with the organization and of new staff who can provide a fresh perspective.

Fortunately, the College has developed a track record of staff stability. In the last year, we hired 30 new employees and had 17 terminations, making the turnover rate about 8 percent.

Morale appears to be high, with employees expressing enthusiasm about their work and their environment. And what amazes and pleases me most is that this staff exhibits an esprit de corps not found in many workplaces. Although each area has its own projects and expertise, there is considerable overlap, and our employees demonstrate remarkable cooperation in getting the job done. Many of our employees don't just “do a job”—they embrace and believe in the programs they work to support, such as the Advanced Trauma Life Support® course and the National Cancer Data Base, among others, because they believe they are contributing to improvements in patient care.

Compassion

The individuals who work for the American College of Surgeons are committed to doing good deeds not only for the College but for other not-for-profit organizations as well. We have had food and clothing drives as well as collections of eyeglasses for the Lions Club and cell phones for victims of

domestic violence. Several employees have participated in walks, runs, and bicycle rides to raise money for medical research programs.

Our employees have continually shown compassion for their colleagues and associates, as well. For example, when one of our employees became quite ill last year, some of his coworkers coordinated a raffle to raise money to cover some of his expenses. When he lost his fight against cancer, this young man's family was overwhelmed with the outpouring of support the staff offered.

Likewise, many of the College employees were saddened to learn of the devastating effects of Hurricane Katrina on New Orleans, LA—a city they've enjoyed visiting and working in during Clinical Congresses. To help with relief efforts, the College's employee organization, the Career and Personal Development Program (CPDP), decided to donate some of the funds that are normally used for the annual employee holiday luncheon to the New Orleans Convention Bureau and Habitat for Humanity.

Enriching their lives

In addition to expecting our staff to be knowledgeable about their own areas of expertise here at the College, we also want them to be familiar with all the programs the College has in place for its members and the public. We also encourage our employees to expand their own personal knowledge base on topics that will assist them in their jobs and personal lives. As a result, CPDP sponsors a number of educational programs on topics such as financial management, working with others, and the arts, to name just a few, and also plans some social events for staff during the year.

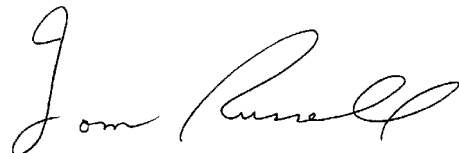
To remain viable in the Chicago and Washington, DC, marketplace, the College offers our employees competitive salaries and retirement savings plans, and strong medical, dental, and life insurance policies. In addition, we encourage the staff to lead healthy lifestyles by offering them the opportunity to participate in nutrition, Weight Watchers, and other physical fitness programs sponsored at nearby facilities. And, we have instituted an Employee Recognition Award program to recognize those individuals who go above and beyond the call of duty to complete a task or to develop a more efficient or cost-effective way of handling a project.

A great team

Over the course of my six-plus years as Executive Director of the College, it has been my great pleasure to work with the staff, and I wanted to take this opportunity to let all of you know about the fine individuals who work for this organization. They make my job so much easier. We should all take great pride in their efforts and their willingness to come together as a team to help provide us with the services we need to better care for our patients. They are the reason why the College works and works well.

As we look to the future, it is important to note that our job is not done. The surgical profession and the American College of Surgeons are facing incredible challenges. We must continue to change with the times and to implement new programs, interact with new groups, and participate in the process of assessing and evaluating the quality of care. In other words, the College must continue to evolve and change so that we as an organization can continue to better serve our members and their patients. A recent example of a new and important endeavor the College is undertaking is the development of a building in Washington, DC, so that a united physical presence for all of surgery can be established near Capitol Hill. A related activity will be the creation of a Health Policy Institute in cooperation with all of the surgical specialty societies that will endeavor to proactively and positively address the many perplexing issues facing the surgical profession today.

We are fortunate indeed that as we move into the future, our strong staff of dedicated professionals will ensure that we will be able to succeed in achieving our goals. If you have comments about our staff or the work they are doing on your behalf, please don't hesitate to let me know.



Thomas R. Russell, MD, FACS

If you have comments or suggestions about this or other issues, please send them to Dr. Russell at fmp@facs.org.