

# **R**eport of the Chair of the Board of Governors

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**I**t is my privilege to serve as the Chair of the Board of Governors (B/G). The B/G is the grass roots of the College. There are approximately 260 Governors selected from various organizations and from chapters across the U.S. and around the world.

A year ago, I took over this job from Barbara L. Bass, MD, FACS, and there were some important changes that we thought needed to be made. First we were going to make some minor changes in the way the Governors interacted with the Executive Committee of the B/G, the way B/G committees were formed, and the way we got the message from the Governors to the Board of Regents.

The goals that we established for ourselves were that the College would form an organization with 501(c)(6) tax status, which could encompass a political action committee (PAC). Since then, the Regents have approved this proposal, and the College has succeeded in the development of the American College of Surgeons Professional Association and the ACS-SurgeonsPAC.

We also wanted a better instrument for the Governors to use in reporting so that we might be able to quantify the results of their observations. It was also important, I thought, to try to accomplish this goal electronically. In addition, we wanted to streamline the Governors' committees and reorganize them. We wanted to produce a mission statement for each of the Governors' committees so that we could then determine our goals and vision of success for these committees, and the mission statement would be a part of that process.

Additionally, we wanted to develop guidelines for the chapters. The chapters do not have guidelines right now, and it would, I thought, be helpful to the chapters to know what the College expects of them.

Further, with the help of Edward M. Copeland, MD, FACS, newly elected Vice-Chair of the

Board of Regents, we are looking at ways to streamline our annual meeting.

With regard to the new reporting mechanism, we asked all Governors to respond based on the 19 most common concerns from the last two decades. We developed a survey instrument, which was Web-based. I filled it out several times myself. The first four or five times I filled it out, I hit the tab key and it sent; then it went back to the beginning—so I had a little trouble figuring out my own instrument. Nothing is perfect!

We asked the respondents to indicate their degree of concern about each issue on a scale of one to 10, with 10 having the greatest impact and one having the least. Responses were submitted both electronically and in hard copy, and we tried to determine those issues that are really, really, really important. And then we wanted to figure out how and whether the relevance of each topic had changed from the previous year.

We divided the responses. A response of one to four meant that the issue really wasn't terribly important, five would be neutral, and a response of six through 10 would indicate that the subject was a major concern for the Governor.

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Now what about change? A response of one to four in this area meant that the situation had gotten a little better, a five would mean that it hadn't really changed at all, and a response of six through 10 would indicate that the impact had really changed for the worse from last year.

We found that with regard to the issue of physician reimbursement, 88 percent of all Governors who responded rated this issue between six and 10. It is really bad out there, folks, and according to the responses we received, it is getting worse. So now we have been able to say that physician reimbursement is of great concern and the problem is getting worse.

With regard to professional liability, 80 percent of the respondents thought that this issue rated a six to a 10, and oh, by the way, it is getting worse.

Now, for reimbursement and malpractice, I will bet you that most of the people who responded with a one to a four either were in the

military or were from international chapters.

What about Medicare and Medicaid? They were ranked at number three as a concern and, again, 80 percent of the Governors felt that these issues rated between six and 10, and are also getting worse. Of particular concern, based on the respondents' comments, was the 5.4 percent decrease in reimbursement from Medicare this year.

Finally, tort reform closed out the top four issues of concerns, with about 74 percent of the respondents rating it between six and 10. The respondents reported that this problem is no better than it was last year, but it maybe a little bit worse.

So that is how I attempted to modify a little bit the way the Governors reports are submitted. This system, I think, gives us a little stronger handle on what the Governors really feel is having an impact on their practices. □

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hard-working staff, and I am most appreciative of them for helping to implement some of the actions our Fellows believe are necessary.

In this day and age, if I didn't say something about the fiscal affairs of the College, I would not be fulfilling my duties. I can assure you that from my viewpoint and based on my knowledge of our fiscal affairs, the finances of the College are on solid ground. For what it is worth, we have been audited, and we received a clean record from the auditors. Additionally, we retain ownership of four significant buildings, three in Chicago and the Washington Office. We also are well endowed through various activities of the past as well as philanthropic activities. Hence, the College is in a very solid financial position and hopefully will be able to respond to the challenges we will be facing in the future, many of which will be costly but necessary to keep the American College of Surgeons a relevant and pertinent organization.

In conclusion, I want to welcome the approxi-

mately 1,500 Initiates who became Fellows of the College in October and hope that you will have a lifelong relationship with the College. I anticipate that in your professional journey, one that will span more than 20 or 30 years, you will find the College to be a useful organization, one that will allow you to remain true to our patients, true to the Hippocratic Oath, and true to all the elements of professionalism that are so important in this day of great accountability. It will be the College that will have the longest relevance in your career—more than just four years of college and four years of medical school—in terms of enhancing your education, helping you to analyze your practice, and supporting you in changing the system in which we all have to practice.

Finally, I want to thank the Fellows for your participation in the activities of the American College of Surgeons. It is your ideas and your suggestions that provide the basis on which we design and implement our programs. □