

Report of the Chair of the Board of Regents

by Edward R. Laws, MD, FACS,
Charlottesville, VA

It is a great pleasure for me to address you and particularly to welcome the new Initiates—to tell you a little bit about the College and the Board of Regents and what we have been doing over the past year.

First I would like to acknowledge the superb leadership that we have had at the American College of Surgeons with R. Scott Jones, MD, FACS, as our President, Thomas R. Russell, MD, FACS, as our Executive Director, and J. Patrick O'Leary, MD, FACS, as the Chair of the Board of Governors. All of these people are just superb individuals and all are dedicated to two objectives that I want to talk about. The first is reassembling and reinventing the House of Surgery so that all branches of the profession may speak together, and the second is keeping as our primary focus the welfare of the surgical patient.

I think we are making strides in achieving these goals, and I would just give you a few examples. One is the American College of Surgeons Oncology Group (ACOSOG), a very exciting project, which was put together by Samuel A. Wells, Jr., MD, FACS, and which is now thriving under a rather large grant from the National Cancer Institute. This oncology group, run by surgeons for surgical patients, is open to every Fellow of the College who wants to help conduct clinical trials that will benefit our patients with neoplastic disease.

Some wonderful news is that Dr. Jones has been hired to serve as the Director of the Division of Research and Optimal Patient Care. He will take the ACOSOG concept and spread it to other surgical patients, not only those who have neoplastic disease, but those who suffer from stroma and other conditions, such as hernia or vascular disease. These are exciting projects and plans that allow any surgeon, whether in academic or private practice, to enter his or her patient into a monumental trial that will give us answers to important questions in a short period of time.

Additionally, the College is trying to address problems common to all of surgery, including the issues of getting medical students to choose a surgical career, maintaining diversity within our surgical family, and somehow dealing with the duty hours restrictions that seem such a thorn in the side of effective surgical education. The Regents have listened carefully to the grass roots of surgery and have responded by helping to create what is called a 501(c)(6) organization. The American College of Surgeons Professional Association (ACSPA) will allow the College—which initially was formulated as a not-for-profit, tax-exempt organization without a business or political arm—to carry out appropriate political activities. The creation of the ACSPA is a monumental change in the philosophy of the College. It is a response to the desires of the Fellowship, and it is one that I think will help all surgeons deal with the very difficult problems we have in delivering effective service to our patients.

With that I will close and encourage you to read the reports of our other leaders, including one by Dr. O'Leary on page 28, and the other by Dr. Russell on page 29. □

Dr. Laws is professor of neurosurgery and medicine, University of Virginia Health Sciences Center, Charlottesville, VA.

