

***State of the Association***

2014 has been a busy and productive year for AOSA. In January, Jess Peterson was selected as the Executive Director of AOSA. The process of determining a new executive director was not taken lightly; precision and input from our members was pivotal in making the final selection. Two members from each Board of Director (BOD) were selected to serve on a “search” task force; the task force drafted a job description and posted the position on several national sites.

Several proposals for services were received and considered. After deliberation, three finalists were selected for the interview round. The three finalists were interviewed via conference calls that were attended by both BODs. Candidates were then given the opportunity to offer counter proposals; these were again received and reviewed by the BODs.

The AOSA and SCST BODs met separately to discuss and decide on their candidate of choice, a joint board meeting was then held to announce the final decision. The selection was mutually agreed upon by all parties involved.

Upon completion of the search for a new executive director and association management firm, AOSA transitioned the administrative office from the temporary office in Moline, IL to Washington, DC.

On January 1, 2014, Jess Peterson and Western Skies Strategies (WSS) began in its official capacity in staffing AOSA with professional association management services. WSS is an experienced association management firm with a team of highly trained and talented professionals, specializing in agriculture-based associations and scientific societies.

Jess Peterson, President of WSS, serves as Executive Director of AOSA. As Executive Director of AOSA, Jess oversees the day-to-day operation of AOSA, promoting AOSA to industry leaders/stakeholders and represents AOSA at pertinent industry meetings.

Jess and his Western Skies Strategies (WSS) team, which includes Matt Moran (Association Manager), Christine Triantos (Director of Finance) and Kristen Albers (Account Manager), have enhanced administrative protocols since staffing the association. Some of the items addressed include the modernization of office operations, implementation of best business practices, expanding membership services and taking action on committee and task force items as directed by the board and membership.

**With a staffing structure dedicated to the needs of AOSA members, the future is looking bright to expand AOSA’s role and availability in providing member laboratories and their personnel with services to maximize their operations.**

**Streamlined Finance**

The AOSA administrative office has engaged multiple avenues by which to streamline and automate AOSA finances. The AOSA administrative office simplified the accounts payable and accounts receivable processes in order to process payments more efficiently. By implementing an electronic billing system, AOSA has provided members with more accessible payment options which allow members and affiliates to receive and track funds in a timelier manner.

These new financial protocols, from the billing system to the new merchant services accounts, save the AOSA management team time and money, and allows for more accurate and transparent generation of financials.

**AOSA & SCST Certifications/Exams**

AOSA worked with the SCST Board of Examiners and the AOSA Certification of Analysts Committee to streamline the exam grading process. Upon completion of the exams administered in April, the candidate’s exams were copied and shipped to the AOSA/SCST Administrative Office in Washington, DC.

Once received by the AOSA Administrative Office, the completed exams were scanned**, stored on the AOSA server, and shipped out to the graders.** Timeline for completion of the grading process is set for June 13, 2014.

**Creating a modernized and streamlined process of grading exams was a critical goal for the AOSA administrative office. 2015 will provide yet another year of opportunity to improve the exam grading process.**

**Industry Relations**

AOSA has worked to re-establish and reaffirm relationships and to maintain an open line of communication with stakeholders and industry leaders who support the goals and initiatives of AOSA.

**AOSA will present** at several key industry meetings in the coming months including, the ASTA 131st Annual Convention in Indianapolis, IN on June 11th – 14th 2014 and the 2014 AOSCA Annual Meeting in Asheville, NC on June 22nd – 25th 2014.

AOSA will continue to play an active role with industry partners and collaborate on items of similar interest.

**AOSA & SCST Laboratory Uniformity Task Force**

Under the leadership of AOSA President Susan Reed, an AOSA & SCST Lab Uniformity Task Force was created in response to ongoing issues related to uniformity amongst laboratories.

The task force is comprised of AOSA and SCST members and an advisory council, which will include government and industry leaders.

Issues to be discussed include: improved methods and strengthening of the analyst certification program, continuing education for analysts, determining a system for lab accreditation, standardized reporting of lab results, enhancing the communication between laboratories, industry and policy makers and a plan to address the anticipated future shortage of trained laboratory personnel.

**Improved Membership Communication**

AOSA continues to update the outlet by which members receive announcements, association updates, job postings, exam application deadlines and schedules, annual meeting announcements, etc.

Currently, AOSA utilizes an electronic messaging system to send out membership announcements and notifications. Although this is an improvement on past membership announcements and notifications, AOSA is constantly looking for new avenues to improve communication with the membership.

**AOSA & SCST Website**

AOSA remains active in updating the current website. While still far from perfect, we have worked to update the website to the best of our abilities given current budget constraints.

**The AOSA website is updated on a daily basis. The newly designed email updates are now directing members to the website for a more interactive and informative experience.**

**Updating the ASOA website remains a priority for the AOSA administrative office. While budget constraints have limited this process, the AOSA board is committed to achieving results.**

AOSA has begun the process of requesting proposals for a complete website redesign. AOSA is aiming to launch a redesigned website in the fall of 2014, stay tuned for updates!

**2015 AOSA – SCST Annual Meeting**

The 2015 AOSA – SCST Annual Meeting is tentatively scheduled to take place in Washington, DC during the summer of 2015.