



To: COMS

From: Mark Martin

Date: 16 June 2019

Subject: POM Retreat of 20-21 April 2019

This report is intended to summarize the Profession of Microbiology Retreat in April of 2019. There was excellent facilitation and support by ASM staff. In addition, volunteers Mary Allen, Enid Gonzalez-Orta, and Melanie Mormile acted as superb co-facilitators in various participant groups.

The purpose of the meeting was several-fold. First was an attempt to bring together a number of widely representative members (26, in fact) of ASM to discuss possible issues arising in the Profession of Microbiology, and how ASM membership might address those concerns in partnership with ASM. It was hoped that several areas of concern would coalesce, and themes emerge. Finally, benchmarked plans regarding POM concerns would be suggested and hopefully implementation plans developed.

The initial “brainstorming” session was interesting and led to the emergence of a variety of concerns. There existed concerns about diversity in membership and leadership, use of social media (including ASM podcasts) to promote different approaches to careers and microbiology, changing career pathways, fostering mentorship (and outreach of that mentorship), improved communication of job networking and employment opportunities, increasing membership and volunteerism, outreach to industry concerns, reinvigorating the fellowship program, increasing US membership (as international membership increases), and many other topics.

Overall, issues of communication in one form or another were raised multiple times, ranging from explaining to undergraduate students the value of ASM membership, to using the ASM website as a “hub” of easily accessible information (and challenges with the redesign), and better networking and interaction among the membership.

I. Overall the following central themes for POM (and ASM) developed by consensus and discussion:

Our goal is a robust, diverse network leading to:

1. Broader, consistent, and sustained engagement with ASM.
2. Engagement opportunities at all levels of the profession of microbiology (students, BS degree holders, graduate students, postdocs, biotech workers, professors, mid and late career microbiologists, and so forth).
3. Development of existing society leaders, volunteers, and membership at large to increase utilization (and better communication) of ASM benefits.
4. Building an effective grassroots volunteer network
5. ASM will provide branch leaders with a uniform and effective outreach guide, and encourage collaboration with other professional societies and volunteer opportunities.

As the workshop progressed, we moved from brainstorming ideas, to forming focus groups for discussion, and finally coalescing those focus groups into two common causes.

II. As the meeting and multiple discussions continued, issues were distilled into the following, with suggested benchmarks for progress:

1. Diversity and Related Issues: “ASM will uplift diversity as a benefit of membership through the development and implementation of best practice, leadership, and inclusion pathways.”

A. One year goals:

- i. There will be at least one diversity oriented committee representative on COMS
- ii. Development of a framework for leadership pathways for diverse members.
- iii. Development of best practice guidelines for all ASM meetings (including branch meetings)
- iv. Recruit/identify members who are from microbiology related careers but not identified as microbiologists (law, writing, etc) to bring other perspectives.

B. Two year goals:

- i. Implementation of a best practice guidelines for all ASM meetings.
- ii. Development of a functional database of people from microbiology-related careers.

C. Three year goals:

- i. Board and leadership composition to match the composition of the membership.
- ii. Implementation of leadership pathways for diverse members.
- iii. Assessment/refinement of the effectiveness of the “best practices” guidelines.
- iv. Promotion, assessment, and updating of the functional database for members of related careers.

2. Reach and Impact: “ASM will grow a robust, diverse, and growing membership into which all members at all levels can be fully engaged by accessing resources in leadership, mentoring, and career development.”

A. First year goals:

- i. Identify multiple strategies for communicating the benefits of ASM participation.
 - a. Develop branch leadership by building a uniform outreach guide for branches to use to foster volunteerism, membership, and collaborations with other scientific societies.
 - b. Develop an ASM unified strategy for using branding and social media presence and the communication of guidelines to all interest groups of ASM.

B. Third year goals:

- i. Increase ASM membership by 10%
- ii. Increase participation in branch meetings and activities by 10%
- iii. Increase diversity within branch meeting membership and activities.

C. Fifth year goals:

- i. Increase ASM membership by 20%
- ii. Sustained participation in branch meetings and activities by 20%
- iii. Identify and promote best practices in branch activities.