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**President's Report**

Submitted by Peter M. Monti, PhD  
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It has been an honor for me to serve as RSA President for the past year. The year has been very eventful starting in the first week of July with controversy regarding the MLDA 21 issue, running right up to last week when we were confronted with the prospect of a contentious labor dispute that threatened our very meeting! These events and a host of others that I will outline below notwithstanding, the state of our society is healthy and dynamic. Our members are getting younger (on average) and are growing in numbers (up by nearly 4% this year), just as more challenges are emerging in our field. I am optimistic that our Society will meet the challenges, as I sense a deep and sustained commitment to alcohol research and to the next generation of researchers.

While the past 12 months seem to have flown by, several issues and initiatives have emerged that clearly warrant mention here. I am certain that many of these will be the topics of serious deliberation during our meeting and for some time to come thereafter.

- Perhaps the most significant issue ever to confront our Society resurfaced several months ago. The Scientific Management Review Board (SMRB) of the National Institutes of Health made a decision in April to consider the possible merger of NIAAA and NIDA, despite our best efforts. Three committees and workgroups have been constituted by the SMRB. One committee is charged with "Deliberating Organizational Change," the DOC Workgroup. A second has been labeled the SUAA Workgroup, and its task is to "evaluate the current scientific opportunities and public health needs in the fields served by NIDA and NIAAA". A third committee is to evaluate the NIH Clinical Center-Intramural Research Program (the CCIRP). The DOC and SUAA Workgroups are of most importance to RSA.

Issues for the DOC Workgroup include:

- ✓ Principles for optimal design of a biomedical research enterprise
- ✓ Attributes of such an enterprise
- ✓ Criteria for contemplating changes in the organization and management of NIH
- ✓ Strategies for implementing changes in the organization and management of NIH
- ✓ Metrics/methodologies that should be used for evaluating consequences of changes

Issues for the SUAA Workgroup include:

- ✓ An assessment of whether any organizational and/or management change is warranted
- ✓ Consideration of options for organizational and/or management change – pros and cons

- ✓ Formulation of specific recommendation(s) for or against particular option(s)
- ✓ Recommendation of implementation strategies for changes, if any
- ✓ Development of metrics for evaluating the success of any organizational changes

I have been to Washington/NIH on four occasions regarding this important matter, once to testify before the SMRB against the NIH Merger, once to meet with Representative Kennedy's Staff, and twice to meet with our lobbyist, George Olsen, of the law firm of Williams and Jensen. I have been in regular contact with the leadership of NIAAA and have been a regular participant in our monthly GAAC teleconferencing. To facilitate communication between the leadership of NIAAA and that of RSA, I have invited Ken Warren, Acting Director of NIAAA, to join us for dinner at the Board Meeting on Friday evening. Ken will provide us with an update on the proposed Merger from his perspective. Sara Jo Nixon has agreed to be the point person for the Merger issue, and between the two of us, plus the help of several key members of the organization (including members of the Executive Committee, Michael Charness and Mack Mitchell), I believe that RSA is doing all it can at present. We have had several E-alerts over the course of these events and will continue to keep the membership abreast of this important situation as things unfold.

One important task before us is to come up with a list of experts who might testify before the SUAA. As we learn more about exactly what the task will be (i.e., 5 minute testimony vs. participation in more extended deliberations) RSA will make recommendations as to appropriate individuals. I welcome any recommendations that you may have.

- Somewhat less burdensome, though important nevertheless, were the priorities surrounding our annual meeting. Early on I advocated strongly for a meeting that encouraged translational and/or integrated research. In my selection of the program co-chairs (Nancy Barnett and Linda Spear) I believe I found the perfect pair to accomplish this goal. Our program features many symposia that integrate basic and applied scientists and our plenary speakers pretty much cover the full spectrum from evolutionary medicine (Rudolph Nesse) to alcohol epidemiology and the global burden of disease for alcohol-related mortality and morbidity (Jurgen Rehm). Furthermore, this year's recipient of the Young Investigator Award, Sherry McKee, truly embodies the translational science spirit of this year's program. Special thanks go to Rueben Gonzales who volunteered and then wrote the Conference Grant to NIAAA for travel funds to this year's meeting, enabling 140 students and 46 junior scientists to attend.
- As we have known for some time, a transition plan is in place for the selection, organization and on-site management of our annual meeting starting next year in San Antonio. With assistance from our office personnel, Debby Sharp will assume the role of total meeting management. Anna Taylor, our veteran meeting planner will be available for questions, as Debby takes the helm. The 2011 meeting will be held in Atlanta and the 2012 meeting in San Francisco. Competitive contracts have been executed. Future cities and venues will be explored during this summer with hopes of securing a three year contract with a hotel organization. I am sure that you share my enthusiasm for Debby's expanded role and join with me in wishing her well.
- As has been done in the past, early in the year I had a telephone conversation with each of the current committee chairs to review goals and needs and to set priorities for the year. This was a helpful exercise for me, and I trust for them as well. Some changes were discussed, as were plans for the future. Two chairs reminded me of their plans to step down at the end of this year. I have accepted their resignations and would like to thank them publicly for their many years of service:

Cindy Ehlers, for her work on the Awards Committee and Hank Kranzler for his work on the Fundraising Committee. In both cases, these chairs are stepping down after delivering a particularly stellar performance this year. Our selections for distinguished scientists are outstanding, and our fundraising was up by 15%!

- I spent a considerable amount of time working with the GAAC and with our Washington representative over the past year. Sara Jo Nixon, Victor Hesselbrock, and I interviewed another firm so that we could compare and contrast our present deal with what they might offer. After this due diligence and in consultation with the Executive Committee, it was decided that it made sense to stay with Williams and Jensen. In retrospect, I believe that we made the right decision. In addition to the Merger issue, which I mentioned above, the other major legislative issue was Parity. As you know we were successful on the Parity issue and Williams and Jensen was very helpful in the process. Nevertheless, their firm provides a service which is offered by many excellent firms, and I suggest that the Executive Committee continue to evaluate on an annual basis the quality of the product that we pay very good money for.
- As a follow up to my suggestion at our Board meeting last year, and given the downturn in the market, we have looked into alternative investments for RSA's nest egg. An RFP was prepared and I appointed Ed Riley to chair an ad hoc Financial Advisory Committee and to report alternative investment arrangements back to the Executive Committee. The relative inactivity of this committee during the first part of the year turned out to be a stroke of genius, as we all saw the markets reach new lows several months ago. We have since engaged Fidelity Investments to service our investment needs and have recently signed all necessary paperwork. The in brief, we will invest \$350,000: 20% in equities, 50% in bonds and 30% in short-term investments. Further details will be available as part of Kathy Buchholz's Financial Report.
- Nearly as consuming as legislative matters, the RSA website has occupied a significant portion of the Executive Committee's energy. (Not really, just seems like it!) Mary Larimer has dedicated significant effort to contractual matters including design, functionality, etc., and we have a contract in place. With any luck we will have a mock-up of our home page showing possible menu items in time for Mary to show and tell at the Board Meeting.
- Finally, "The Friends of NIAAA", a group that had its initial meeting with us in Washington, DC last year, has been very active. Approximately 20 organizations were present at that meeting and discussion was lively. The "Friends" has helped co-sponsor several legislative briefings, which have been quite informative and well attended. Geoff Mumford of the American Psychological Association has been very active in the group – especially regarding matters pertaining to the possible Merger. Carlo DiClemente has served as the RSA representative to this group and has reported to me on a regular basis. RSA is one of several sponsors of "The Friends," and I suspect that it has been a good investment – especially in these times when NIAAA can use every friend that it can get!

- On a more serious note, I would like to end this report with my sincere thanks to a fantastic Board and an especially fantastic Executive Committee. Debby, of course, is pretty phenomenal, in and of herself! This has been a challenging year for all of us dedicated to alcohol research, and we have worked well together. We have fought several battles and have had some successes. Parity and MLDA 21 stand out in particular, and I believe that we held our own at the initial SMRB hearing. The possible Merger is very much a work in progress and will require careful monitoring and strategic thought. I have every confidence that Sara Jo Nixon will lead us effectively and I offer her my continued support as Past President. I am optimistic that a combination of good science and policy matters will prevail, and that NIAAA will emerge an even stronger entity with the help of a vibrant RSA.

Thank you for your confidence, and for giving me the opportunity to serve the Society.