



### Making the Society Go

In the spring of this year, as I prepared for my year as president of ECS, I called about thirty people and asked them to serve on the Society's various committees. I must admit that I had conflicting feelings going into the process. On the one hand, I was asking colleagues and friends to donate their time and effort—and I'm aware that for many of us spare time has become almost an oxymoron. On the other hand, I was offering a group of Society members the opportunity to become involved in governing and operating an organization to which many of us feel a deep attachment and commitment.

You might be interested to know how people responded. First, let me say that the positive response rate was very high. Several members wanted to know more about the role of their particular committee assignment right away. Many not only said yes, they thanked me for asking them. Others said they'd be glad to serve after talking with me at some length to satisfy themselves that committee service was really important to ECS and would be truly useful. (It is.) Several said yes after asking if not being able to attend every meeting was a barrier. (It isn't—more on that below.) A few said no, for very understandable reasons: recent job changes or heavy commitments in other areas, leading to a concern that they couldn't give ECS the time and effort required. As I put down the telephone after my last call, I had a heightened awareness of the quality of our members and their strong interest in the Society and its business. I want to thank all of you whom I contacted for your serious consideration of service to the Society, and for those of you who accepted, for the good work that you'll do during your committee terms.

Over the years, the Society has changed and grown, and the work of various committees has changed as well. Some committees have grown relatively more important, while others may face the challenge of redefining themselves. Our last ECS long-range planning committee recommended a process for examining and enhancing our committee structure. I'm pleased to announce that Ingrid Fritsch and Tony Ricco, who led the development of the plan, will also lead its implementation. They'll begin by working with the Society's standing committees to assess their roles, improve communications, and identify obstacles that impede the committees' business. After many years of service on Society committees, I've concluded that sometimes, committees get "stuck;" that is, they embark on an ambitious plan and find that further progress requires resources, decisions by the Society leadership, or collaboration with other committees. It is not always clear how they should proceed. We intend to help committees in this situation get "unstuck," and the first step in doing that is making sure that lines of communication are open. As Frasier Crane often says, "I'm listening."

Another issue we intend to address is how committees can conduct business outside of our semi-annual meetings. I believe that many of our members might enjoy working on committees, but the need to attend ECS meetings regularly may be a barrier to them. We can solve this problem by using modern methods of communication to conduct committee business. Still another issue is identifying and involving ECS members outside of North America in committee work. We've made

excellent international appointments in the last few years, thanks to a determined effort. However, we need more candidates and look to our Sections and Divisions to help us with good recommendations.

If you're a committee member, I hope that you'll find these developments encouraging and that you will help us to improve the Society's governance with your comments and suggestions as we undertake our assessment. If you're not a committee member but would like to be, please let us know. Tell your Division or Section officers, a Society officer, an ECS committee member, or notify Society head-

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quarters about your interest. Look at the ECS By-laws on our web page for descriptions of the committees and what they do. ECS is an organization governed by volunteers, with the able assistance of our staff, and good people are always in demand. ■

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