

AAI President's Message

Lewis L. Lanier, Ph.D.

It is quite an honor to serve as president of the AAI this year. I joined the AAI while a postdoctoral fellow in 1980, have greatly benefited in many ways from the AAI, and am glad to be able to "give back" by service to a truly outstanding organization.

Of its many contributions to science, I would like to highlight three key areas in which AAI excels - Education, Communication, and Public Advocacy - to promote scholarship and research in immunology.

Education – Most of you are aware of the immunology courses given every summer by the AAI. The Advanced Course in Immunology has been ongoing for at least 30 years. One of the highlights of my grad school education was attending the AAI Advanced Course in Immunology – then held at Hood College in Maryland. Putting faces and personalities to the authors of the papers I was reading really brought the science to life and having the opportunity to learn the latest advancements from the leaders in the field made quite an impression. It was also fun. More recently, the AAI Education Committee appreciated the need for an Introductory Course in Immunology, to complement the highly successful Advanced Course. I would like to take this opportunity to thank **Olivia Martinez**, organizer of the Advanced Course, and **Terri Laufer** and **John Monroe**, co-organizers of the Introductory Course, as well as members of the Education Committee, the teachers, and the outstanding AAI staff who made this year's courses happen. If you have suggestions for future courses or improvements in the format, please contact **Peter Jensen**, Chair of the **Education Committee**, or me with your ideas. And encourage your students, fellows, and lab members to attend these courses – I've been both a student and a teacher in the Advanced Course and it is a terrific experience.

Communication – Did you know that *The Journal of Immunology* ("The *Jl*") is the most cited journal in the field? – and the 15th most cited journal amongst all the 6088 biological journals tracked by the ISI! Indeed, my most highly cited primary paper was published in *The Jl*. **Bob Rich**, Editor-in-Chief of *The Jl*, initiated the "Pillars in Immunology" section of the journal, where landmark papers in the field are reprinted and accompanied by a commentary. Many of these papers first appeared in *The Jl*. Thanks to **Bob Rich**, **Michele Hogan** (Managing Editor), **Kaylene Kenyon** (Publications Director), **Judy Teale** (Publications Committee Chair) and the **Publications Committee**, the Deputy, Section, and Associate Editors, and *The Jl* professional staff for making this an outstanding journal – with a very rapid submission-to-publication time schedule.

The AAI annual meeting is also an important service to our scientific community. Unlike the specialized topics meetings, the AAI annual meeting provides a forum to showcase the breadth of our field. It is truly unique from all other meetings in that a major objective of this meeting is to provide the opportunity for young investigators to both present their own work and have an

opportunity to chair a scientific session. All oral presentations in the Block Symposia are selected from the abstracts – and if you submit an abstract there is an almost 1 in 3 chance that you will get to speak!

John Monroe, newly appointed chair of the Program Committee, and his colleagues are busy organizing our **IMMUNOLOGY 2007 meeting in Miami Beach**. I look forward to seeing you on the beach (and in the convention center!) next spring (May 18-22).



Public Affairs - I'm sure you are aware of the pending crisis in NIH funding for investigator-initiated research. The most recent (FY 2006) payline for R01 grants funded by NIAID is 14.0% (16.0% for new investigators) and by NCI is 11.0% – and that's for this year. Although the NIH budget was doubled from 1999 - 2003, with inflation (higher in science than in the general consumer market) and increased salaries and benefits, there is a real risk that NIH's purchasing power could be less than in the pre-doubling era - unless we all impress on Congress and the public the importance of immunology and basic biomedical research. I'm preaching to the choir here, but immunology is central to all aspects of human health – infectious disease, autoimmunity, inflammation, vaccination....

Many of the current and future therapies and medical diagnostics have resulted from basic immunology research – thus an effective decrease in the NIH budget will not only impact academic research, but also affect the future of biotechnology and pharma. The **AAI Public Affairs Committee**, chaired by **Ellen Kraig**, is working with **Lauren Gross**, AAI Director of Public Policy and Government Affairs, and her staff to keep on top of the NIH budget situation, as well as other legislation that affects our research environment.

What can you do? Your congressional representatives do realize that many of these NIH research dollars are coming into their states or districts – and they pay attention to voters' concerns. The AAI, working with the FASEB Office of Public Affairs, will send you e-mail alerts when legislation affecting your research is coming up for a vote. Read these alerts and contact your congressional representatives to convey your opinion.

Finally, when dealing with Congress – size matters. When the AAI interacts with Congress or the NIH on your behalf, we currently can inform them that our professional society represents about 6,500 immunologists. However, our membership has been at this level for the past three years, while the field of immunology continues to grow. During the next year, I challenge each of you to recruit just one additional member to the AAI! The application is on-line and user friendly – just go to www.aai.org and punch the "electronic application form".

See you in Miami Beach.