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Lines from the Incoming President Two Down and One to Go—or—Two Down and 1...2...Go!

Is the multiyear path to becoming president of the Society of Nuclear Medicine (SNM) working? Is it too much of a commitment for otherwise busy and professionally preoccupied volunteers?

In a 1990 *Journal of Nuclear Medicine* editorial, Richard A. Holmes, MD, then SNM president, suggested that a 2-year term for the SNM president would be beneficial for the organization (*J Nucl Med* 1990;31(6):33A). As Dr. Holmes pointed out, "It's every president's desire to do something meaningful for the Society, but it's often difficult to accomplish much in a 1-year term." On the basis of that editorial, a desire to provide continuity in elected leadership, to streamline the decision-making authority of the organization and to improve constituent representation, SNM modified its governance structure and revised its bylaws in 1994 to create a 3-year continuity path to the office of president: 1 year as vice-president-elect, 1 year as president-elect and 1 year as president. Before this change, the term of office for both the president-elect and president was 1 year. A vice-president was elected and served a concurrent term with the president, but he or she was not a president-elect and did not automatically move to this office. In general, the roles and responsibilities of the vice-president were relatively limited.

I am now in a position to comment on the 3-year path commitment as I am the second person, after our current president, H. William Strauss, MD, to go through this process. I believe that the alternative that SNM developed in response to Dr. Holmes's suggestion is working extremely well. The 3-year path structure alone does not necessarily guarantee continuity, but the multiyear exposure to the issues and activities of SNM along with excellent communication and continuous dialogue between the vice-president-elect, president-elect and president, the SNM board of directors and senior staff provide a framework for smooth transitions and carryover of major SNM program direction and policy position. An excellent example of the success of this process has been the genesis of a strategic plan for SNM.

Groundwork for this endeavor was laid by Michael D. Devous, Sr., PhD, during his term as president and involved several retreatlike sessions of the board of directors and senior staff with an external facilitator during the first half of 1997. Under the leadership of Dr. Strauss, and with Dr. Devous's continued participation as immediate past president, my involvement and that of Robert F. Carretta, MD, vice-president-elect, SNM has initiated an 18-month strategic planning process with Tecker Consultants. This process will result in a strategic plan for SNM that will establish its direction and priorities over the next 3–5 years. The plan will continue to be developed through

the remainder of my term and will be submitted in final form to the House of Delegates for approval at the June 1999 Annual Meeting in Los Angeles—just in time for the incoming president, Dr. Carretta, to implement it.

The downside of the 3-year path relates to the availability of new leaders who are willing and able to dedicate 3 years of their time to an organization. This is paralleled by the difficulty in engaging individuals in any voluntary time commitment. However, SNM is not alone. Many professional organizations are experiencing a decline in membership as well as a decrease in members who are willing to provide volunteer time to the organization. As a result, many professional organizations are having considerable difficulty identifying individuals to serve as members of committees, task forces and decision-making bodies who will represent the future leadership of the organization. This is a major challenge.

As SNM moves toward becoming a successful knowledge-based association it will replace political concern about the internal distribution of power with concern about SNM's image and working environment. Belonging to and contributing time to such an organization will be fun and productive. It will satisfy a need to be part of something bigger—to belong to and be identified with a professional, scientific community. *Who* makes the decisions in a knowledge-based organization will not be nearly as important as the quality of the information on which decisions are made. Because one of the transactions in making decisions in a knowledge-based association requires exchanging knowledge and insights among volunteer members of study, decision and work groups, participants at all levels have the opportunity to contribute to the informed intuition that moves the association in the correct direction, with the proper priorities, toward successful outcomes that benefit the membership.

I believe there is very strong linkage between the successful recruitment of volunteers and leaders for SNM and its commitment to the strategic planning process. As we articulate the vision, goals and strategic objectives of our long-range strategic plan we need to incorporate how SNM's membership will be different in a better way as a result of what SNM does; that is, how we will benefit our membership. As we articulate our beliefs and values and execute these in SNM's operational activities and behavior we are establishing the culture of the enterprise. To the extent that SNM's culture is perceived by members and potential members as reflecting a set of beliefs and behaviors with which an individual would be proud to be associated we will be successful in encouraging volunteers who will give their time and later lead.

The clock is ticking and...it's two down and 1...2...let's GO!