



# American Chemical Society

## Division of Biological Chemistry

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### Minutes of the Spring 2007 Business Meeting of the Division of Biological Chemistry - Monday, March 26, 2007, 12:00 pm Lao Szechuan Resaurant, Chicago, Ill.

**Attended by:** Tadhg Begley, John Blanchard, Mark Distefano, Carol Fierke, Gary Glick, Anna Mapp, Eugene Mueller, John Richard and Wilfred van der Donk.

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**(1) Reading of minutes.** The secretary and the chair failed to bring copies of these minutes for all of the members of the meeting. The minutes were approved, tentatively, with the understanding that they would be distributed to those attending this meeting, who could then suggest corrections and amendments.

**(2) Report of the Secretary Presented by John Richard.** The Newsletter was distributed electronically by EMAIL for the first time this winter. Only a small fraction of EMAIL messages that contained the Newsletter was opened. The following statistics were provided by the website operator, Uli Iserloh.

Total messages sent: 5925. Total received: 5397. Total read: 1267. Total bounced: 528.

It is not clear how these compare with the statistics for the printed copies of the Newsletters in previous years. The large majority of the officers in attendance at this meeting did open and read the EMAIL message with their copy of the Newsletter. There are considerable savings associated with the electronic mailing, and it was decided that the Summer Newsletter should also be distributed in this way.

The distribution and counting of ballots for the Division's yearly election was discussed. This is currently handled by regular mail. There are savings associated with conducting the election over the web, but there is a considerable barrier to implementation of a web-based election. The ACS will provide assistance in ensuring that an "electronic" election is conducted according to their guidelines, but will not help with setting up this election. It was suggested that it is not practical for the ACS to work individually with the Society's many divisions, but that they might provide collective assistance to enable a large number of divisions to conduct their individual elections through some sort of centralized service. The Chair and/or the Chair-elect may contact their counterparts in other divisions in order to determine the level of interest in cooperating to work with the ACS to implement web-based elections.

The Secretary of the Division is very interested in hearing suggestions on how to make the Division's website [<http://www.biochemdivision.org>] more useful to our members, and to improve its effectiveness as a tool for the recruitment of new members. There have been only a relatively small number of postings so far on the Website's hiring bulletin board.

William Jencks passed away during the week of the Winter Enzyme Mechanisms Conference. Jencks was one of the three cofounders of this Conference. John Richard suggested that establishing travel awards in his name to allow students and/or postdocs to attend the conference might preserve his memory. The Executive committee was receptive to

the idea that the DBC administer these travel awards. Strategies for fundraising were discussed. One idea is to solicit large contributions from corporations, who might then attach their name to the award. A second strategy is to solicit contributions from individuals. John Blanchard suggested that one or two of Bill Jencks' coworkers might provide relatively large contributions that would be used as matching funds to attract smaller donations. This idea was generally endorsed. Carol Fierke and John Richard will discuss strategies for fund raising in the coming months.

It was proposed that the DBC should encourage Journals to publish special issues to honor the memory of Bill Jencks. Gary Glick suggested that such an issue would be appropriate for *Biopolymers*. *Bioorganic Chemistry* was also mentioned, and the sentiment was that research published in this Journal closely matches the interests of Bill Jencks. John Richard will contact the editor of *Bioorganic Chemistry* to see if the Journal is willing to sponsor an issue dedicated to Bill Jencks.

**(3) Report of the Treasurer Presented by Eugene Mueller.** The treasurer reported that the DBC ran a deficit in 2006, because the costs of new outreach activities designed to support the interests of its members were underestimated. The assets of the DBC are still sizeable, and the expenditures in 2006 were not unreasonable. The Treasurer has developed a strategy to reduce spending for 2007 in order to balance the budget for this year. This strategy includes: (a) A reduction in the level of reimbursements of officers' expenses for attending the Division's two Business meetings. (b) A reduction in mailing costs due to the change to electronic mailing of the Division's Newsletter. (c) Strongly encouraging the organizers of symposia for the Fall 2007 ACS meeting to keep to their assigned budgets. (d) Decreasing the amount budgeted for Travel Awards for students and postdocs to attend the Fall ACS meeting from \$15,000 to \$10,000. (e) Decreasing the amount budgeted to support Conferences and symposia from \$15,000 to \$10,000.

**(4) Financial Issues Presented by Carol Fierke and Eugene Mueller.** The DBC continues a conservative investment strategy, in which nearly \$297,000 in long-term funds in invested almost exclusively in Certificates of Deposit. As of December 31, 2006, 96% of the division's assets were in CDs, earning 3.1–4.9% interest and with maturity dates ranging from 9/07 through 9/13. The income on these investments in 2006, \$11,406, was used to support the Division's many activities.

The Division's investment strategy was discussed. The general sentiment was that it is too conservative. The treasurer presented information about the ACS investment pool. This is a broadly diversified, balanced investment portfolio that was established in 1968 to provide the Society, including ACS local sections and divisions, with a vehicle to invest long-term reserves. The return on this fund is much better than the return on the Division's CDs. Other investment options were presented. The treasurer suggested that we initially move 1/3 of the Division's assets into the ACS investment pool, and then investigate options for investment of a second 1/3 of the assets, with the final 1/3 being maintained as CDs.

John Blanchard moved that the committee authorize the treasurer to proceed with the initial transfer of \$100,000 to the ACS investment pool. The motion passed unanimously.

The question of whether to increase the Division's dues from \$10.00/year was raised and discussed. This suggestion for an increase in dues was prompted by the Division's possible need to finance a program at the Spring ACS meeting. The sentiment of the Executive committee was that these two issues should not be linked, as there are many other worthy uses for additional revenue. An increase in dues to either to \$12.50 or to \$15.00 was discussed, with

the committee settling on \$12.50. These dues are similar to the dues requested by other divisions.

A motion to increase the dues from \$10.00 to \$12.50 passed unanimously. The proposed dues increase will be submitted to our members for approval on the ballot for the Division's fall election of new officers.

#### **(5) ACS Meetings Issues Presented by Tadgh Begley.**

The planning for the Fall program is nearly complete. This program includes an impressive list of symposia to honor the recipients of the Repligen (Mike Marletta), Lilly (Anna Mapp), Goodman (Chris Walsh) and Pfizer (Neil Kelleher) awards and on topics that range from "Molecular imaging" to "Antibiotics: biosynthesis and resistance".

The funding for the 2007 Travel awards to attend the Fall ACS meeting has been decreased from \$15,000 to \$10,000. The current budget of \$10,000 will be used to cover 20 awards of \$500 each. The procedure for the selection of awardees was discussed and concluded to be satisfactory.

The pros and cons for initiating a program at the Spring ACS meeting were discussed.

The advantage of holding a program at the Spring meeting is that this would serve the interests of our members by providing: (a) Increased flexibility in the timing of the presentation of their work to the ACS. (b) Increased options on how their work might be presented, by providing a forum for graduate students, postdocs and young faculty to present shorter 20-minute talks. (c) A signal to the members of the Chemical Biology community that the DBC is interested in becoming more fully integrated into the activities of the ACS.

The disadvantages of this expansion are that: (a) Many members may not be able to attend still another conference. (b) The Spring ACS meeting may conflict with the ASBMB meeting that is attended by many of our members (c) The Spring program will provide an additional financial burden for the Division, and additional work for the program committee. Finally, no one on the Executive committee is familiar with ACS mandates on the length of divisional programs. Tadgh Begley said that it would be difficult for him to organize a full four-day program at the next Spring meeting

Three of the current members of the program committee, Tadgh Begley, Karen Allen and Suzanne Walker, are strongly supportive of this change in programming. The fourth, Jim Stivers, expressed some reservations. Tadgh Begley volunteered to serve as Chair for the Spring program in 2008 (and potentially 2009 as well). This may evolve into a system where the Chair of the Fall program extends his service to organize the program at the following Spring ASC meeting. Tadgh Begley will check with the ACS about their programming mandates, and decide whether it is practical for the division to hold a program in the Spring of 2008.

The support for the Spring program on the committee was not unanimous. However, it was decided that if it is possible to set-up a significantly attenuated schedule, the committee endorsed starting programming at the Spring, 2008 meeting for a three-year trial period. At this time a decision will be made on whether to continue programming at the Spring meeting.

## **(5) Funding and Co-sponsorship Requests for Other Meetings (Carol Fierke)**

The following requests for meeting support were considered and acted upon.

(1) 2007 Gordon Research Conference on Enzymes, Coenzymes and Metabolic Pathways. Organizers Nigel Richards and Squire J. Booker

Amount requested: \$2,000

Amount funded: \$1,500

In the past the Division has provided \$2000 for this conference. The DBC does not have funds to maintain this level of support.

(2) 2007 Gordon Research Conference on Vitamin B<sub>12</sub> and Corphins. Organizer, Wilfred van der Donk.

Amount requested: \$2,000

Amount funded: \$ 500

This was funded at a lower level than the Enzymes GRC, because a smaller fraction of the program was judged to be of immediate interests to our members.

(3) 2007 Gordon Research Conference on Photosensory Receptors and Signal Transduction. Organizer, Kevin Gardner.

Amount requested: No specific dollar amount requested

Amount funded: 0

It was decided that the DBC does not have sufficient funds to support very specialized GRCs of this type.

(4) Central Regional ACS Meeting. Two half day sessions on Biological NMR. May 20 - 23, 2007. Organizer, Pearl Tsang

Amount requested: \$1,500

Amount funded: \$ 500

Worthy symposium at an ACS Regional Meeting.

(5) Second International Interdisciplinary Conference on Vitamins, Coenzymes and Biofactors, October 26-31, 2008. Organizer, Robert Philips.

A decision on this request was delayed, until such time as the organizer provides the Executive committee with a conference program.

(6) 234th ACS National Meeting. Two day symposium on "Strategies in Enzymatic Oxidation Catalysis". Organizers, Giovanni Gadda and Justine Roth.

Amount requested: \$2,000

Amount funded: \$1,000

(7) 2007 Nucleic Acids Gordon Research Conference. Organizers Joseph (Jody) D. Puglisi & Cynthia J. Burrows

Amount requested: \$2,000

Amount funded: \$0

It was decided that the DBC does not have sufficient funds to support specialized GRCs of this type.

(8) An application for support of the Bioorganic Gordon Research Conference is anticipated. Should an application be received, it was decided that the DBC will provide \$1,500 to support this GRC.

**(7) Chemical Biology Secretariat (Tadhg Begley).** Tadhg Begley presented a proposal to work with several other divisions within the ACS to establish a Chemical Biology Secretariat. The purpose of this secretariat would be to foster interdivisional interactions in the emerging field of Chemical Biology. Such interactions would improve the coverage of this topic at future ACS meetings. The reaction to this proposal was mixed. There was support for the idea that the DBC should do more to encourage participation by scientists in the emerging field of Chemical Biology. It was suggested that the addition of a new layer of administration is something that should be avoided, and that a better plan would be to work to bring people with interests in Chemical Biology into the DBC. This led to the revival of a discussion initiated at an earlier meeting of a proposal to change the name of the Division to the *Division of Biological Chemistry and Chemical Biology* or simply the *Division of Chemical Biology*. Some expressed concern that leaders in the field of Chemical Biology would resent having their name used by an established Division. Others thought that these individuals would jump at the opportunity to participate in the DBC. Carol Fierke and Anna Mapp with discuss these issues with Laura Kiessling. Finally, there is the concern that a name change might cause the DBC to lose the identity that it has developed through the years.

One theme of this discussion was that there is considerable overlap between Chemical Biology and Biological Chemistry. It was suggested and generally agreed upon that the DBC should take tangible steps to emphasize this overlap and work to bring the leaders of Chemical Biology into the DBC. The expansion of our program to the Spring meeting is one such step. The nomination of prominent Chemical Biologists into leadership positions in the DBC is another step. The Secretary pointed out that such efforts could increase the membership base of the DBC. Wilfred van der Donk suggested that efforts in this direction would be of more value than a simple name change, and might lessen interest in undertaking such a change. No one on the committee is aware if the ACS has established procedures for changing a Division's name, or if a name change has ever been proposed by another division. [The Secretary preparing these notes questions the sense of attempting such a name change for political or pragmatic reasons, as this is something the ACS might reject out of hand. A coherent case would need to be made that the interests of our members have changed from Biological Chemistry to Chemical Biology in order to provide justification for this change].

No very strong opposition was expressed to the participation of the DBC in a Chemical Biology secretariat. This remains an option for fostering interdivisional interactions in the emerging field of Chemical Biology that the program committee is free to pursue.

### **(8) Nominations and Awards presented by John Richard.**

There was a brief discussion of the significant role played by the nominations committee. There was general agreement that it is important for this committee to identify effective officers to serve in the DBC. It is equally important that the members of this committee have a broad circle of acquaintances, and the qualities needed to convince potential nominees of the importance of service in the DBC.

The difficulties in obtaining nominations for the Lilly award were discussed. The secretary asked the members of the Executive committee to send names of strong candidates. The pool of candidates that meet the age requirements for this award has decreased over the years, because of the increase in the time required to establish a career as an independent investigator. Carol Fierke noted that a good solution would be to change the eligibility requirements from a maximum age [38 for the Lilly Award], to a maximum number of years worked as an independent investigator.

**(9) Other Business (Carol Fierke).**

Recently, the past, present and future presidents of the DBC have prepared a letter to Jeremy Berg that expresses concerns about changes in policy at the NIH which have led to a decrease in the funding of RO1 grants. Carol Fierke will attend a meeting on strategic planning by the NIGMS.

The ACS would prefer that the DBC establish a Membership committee that works to increase the Division's membership base. A motion was made to establish an ad hoc Membership Committee composed of the *at-large* members of the Executive Committee. The motion was passed unanimously. Wilfred van der Donk has volunteered to head this committee.

Carol Fierke suggested that the Division present officers with certificates to recognize their service. There was general agreement on the Executive committee that this is a good idea. The secretary will work to obtain certificates to present at the Fall ACS meeting.

**(10) New Business.** Eugene Mueller suggested that it would be useful for the Division to have a logo. John Blanchard volunteered to work with Graphic Designers to prepare a suitable logo.