

2006 REPORT OF THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

For the Year Ending 30 June 2006

Fiscal year 2006 was a year of tremendous progress across the full spectrum of Sigma Xi activities. Foremost among these improvements is the heightened prominence of Sigma Xi's programs. In January, the Society hosted a workshop entitled "Professionalizing the Postdoc Experience." Postdoc program administrators comprised the participants. From this workshop, funded by the National Science Foundation, Alfred P. Sloan Foundation and the Burroughs Wellcome Fund, a handbook detailing recommendations on how to overcome barriers to implementation of improvements for Postdoc programs was created. The workshop and report represent the first step in implementation of the findings of Sigma Xi's groundbreaking Postdoc Survey, accomplished the previous year.

Throughout the spring, the Society's Public Understanding of Science program worked with visiting scholar Dr. Elizabeth J. Kirk on developing the National Science Foundation-funded workshop on "Developing a Strategy for Assuring a Globally-Engaged U.S. Science and Engineering Workforce." The workshop was held in September 2006 in Washington, D.C. Similarly the Society began its activities to foster propagation of the National Academy's report "Rising Above the Gathering Storm." In September of 2006 the Society's chapters participated in a Web conference on this report.

In February the Advisory Council of the Sigma Xi-United Nations Scientific Expert Group (UNSEG) on Climate Change conducted a peer review of its draft report during the annual meeting of the American Association for the Advancement of Science. The draft was well received and we've been asked to continue our efforts to refine the report. The final meeting of the expert panel was held August 17-19, 2006 at the United Nations Foundation in Washington D.C. Also in February a conference on science cafés was held at the Sigma Xi Center. The Society continues to play a leading role in the burgeoning science café movement. In partnership with WGBH we conducted the first-ever national gathering of leaders and organizers of the café movement. The conference was funded

through a grant from the National Science Foundation. On February 21st the café movement, and Sigma Xi's role in it, was featured in *The New York Times* weekly science section.

On May 6th the Society hosted the East Coast Nationals of Sally Ride Science's TOYchallenge. This year's event had national scope and local impact. Firsts for 2006 include partnering with fourteen local science outreach and educational organizations to participate in SciFest, an educational hands-on science fair; achieving media coverage on television and in newspapers on multiple days; inviting national vendors to provide food and beverage service to contestants and visitors; and raising Sigma Xi brand awareness with a custom-designed logo used on the event program and on T-shirts worn by all volunteers. This year we were proud to raise in excess of \$5,000 cash and in-kind sponsorship from nine Triangle area organizations. Fifty-three teams representing eighteen states from across the Eastern United States competed. Also in May, Treasurer Rick Meyer represented the Society at the Intel International Science and Engineering Fair, the world's largest pre-college science competition, which was held in Indianapolis. Dr. Meyer led a team of eighteen Sigma Xi judges who selected three teams to receive Sigma Xi cash awards.

Numerous other program activities are worthy of note. On May 18th, under the leadership of International Program Manager Syed Ahmad, we hosted a delegation of scientists from the Republic of Georgia at the Sigma Xi Center. The visit of the delegation was coordinated through the U.S. Department of State. In June we hosted the Image and Meaning 2 (IM2) workshop. This is a partnership between Sigma Xi, Harvard and MIT (and funded by NSF) which focuses on improving the visual representation of science.

The Grants-in Aid-of Research program continues to be one of our most prominent and well appreciated activities. In fiscal year 2006 the Grants-in-Aid of Research Committee provided over \$367,000 to 452 grant recipients. This represents a 41.7% increase in the dollar-amount of the awards, and 55.9% increase in the number of awards over the previous year.

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Another important programmatic event was the selection of the first-ever National Science Board Sigma Xi fellow. Ms. Elizabeth Strickland was selected for this position from a very talented group of eighty-six applicants.

Our flagship publication, *American Scientist* magazine, continues to delight its readership. In 2006 we received notification of three separate awards for the magazine for the previous year (FY 2005). Our media kit received "Best in Category" from the Printing Industry of the Carolinas (PICA), and we also received notification that our cover for the May-June 2005 issue of *American Scientist* received first place in the Newsstand Resources Awards. Additionally, we learned that one of our articles, "Yawning" by Robert Provine, was selected to be published in *The Best American Science Writing 2006*, published by Harper Perennial. In January, Sigma Xi announced its first prize for writing in *American Scientist*—The George Bugliarello Prize. The prize will be awarded biennially, beginning in 2007 for articles written for the magazine in 2005 and 2006.

Membership continues to be a challenge, but many initiatives conducted during fiscal year 2006 provide promise for improvements in initiations and retention. Three new chapters were installed during the year: CINVESTAV (Centro De Investigación De Estudios) in Mexico City; UNAM (Universidad Nacional Autónoma De Mexico), also in Mexico City; and Mercer University in Macon, Georgia. Three other petitions have been approved and the University of Texas at Brownsville, the University of Missouri at St. Louis, and the Iberian Chapter in Spain will be installed in the near future. As usual, our multitude of chapters undertook a wide array of interesting activities. Many of these engaged the chapters' host institutions and/or the local or regional community, in addition to their own members. One such initiative in April was the Northeast Regional Student Poster Conference. This was a joint effort by the Cornell and SUNY at Oswego Chapters, which also involved undergraduate students and Sigma Xi members from Ithaca College, Quinnipiac University, Lemoyne College, Hobart College and William Smith

College. Their meritorious efforts earned the Cornell and SUNY at Oswego Chapters a Sigma Xi Multi-Chapter Collaboration Grant to reprise and expand this activity in FY07 and FY08.

The report of the Brand and Organizational Assessment Team was finalized in fiscal year 2006. This report provides a host of recommendations to improve the sum total of the membership experience. Coming from that report was a recommendation to improve support for the Society through the creation of non-member, affiliate categories. The board of directors of the Society approved the creation of "Professional," "Student" and "Friend" Affiliate categories during their meeting in November 2005. The Affiliate categories were launched in the summer of 2006. Mrs. Doris Jones, who recommended the concept of a "Friends" Affiliate, was recognized at a special ceremony held at the Sigma Xi Center in April.

The Annual Meeting in Seattle was a huge success with inspiring scientific sessions, updated chapter training, regional and constituency caucuses, and governance events. The Assembly of Delegates approved the nine-point motion setting the dues structure for the Society for fiscal year 2007. I note with pride the altruistic motives of the Assembly in approving a higher fee structure for regular members to offset the potential for increased expenses in initiation fees for students.

The fiscal year 2005 awards of the Society were presented at November's Annual Meeting. Sylvia A. Earle was recognized with the John P. McGovern Award; Thomas Spencer, the Young Investigator Award; Bjarne Stroustrup, the William Procter Prize; and Ira Flatow and David Quammen were recognized as Honorary Members. At the Annual Meeting in November the Awards Committee approved the following awards for 2006: Alan Lightman for the McGovern Award, W. Raphael Hix for the Young Investigator Award, Susan L. Lindquist for the Procter Prize, and Richard L. Hill and Claudia Dreifus as Honorary Members. Thanks to a generous gift from long-time Sigma Xi member Mr. Walston Chubb, the Walston Chubb Award for Innovation was initiated, with Mark T. Holtzapple chosen to be the first recipient.

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In May, under the aegis of President-elect James Baur, the Society held its first Presidents' Symposium, bringing together the former chief elected officials of the Society. During two days of discussion they affirmed the importance of our program focus. They also strongly supported an effort by the presidents to create an endowment for the Young Investigator Award, hence to be called the Sigma Xi President's Young Investigator Award.

During the Presidents Symposium, past presidents received a dynamic briefing from the Society's new development director, Kristen Greenaway. Ms. Greenaway has performed magnificently in her first year of fundraising efforts for the Society. With the guidance of our Development Committee, a new development strategy has been created centered upon an annual Sigma Xi Futures Fund and a targeted major gifts program. In fiscal year 2006 the Society received over \$555,000 in gifts and pledges from its generous membership, as compared with \$288,000 in fiscal year 2005. To support future development activities (as well as membership development and chapter outreach) a wonderful DVD highlighting the Society's legacy, as well as current and future programs, was created. This DVD is available to all online.

Many administrative matters also occupied the staff of the Society during the past year. I'm proud to report that we closed fiscal year 2006 within our budget, requiring a draw on our investment portfolio that was reduced from what had previously been approved by the board. We also ensured greater financial stability for future years by locking in a favorable fixed-rate debt instrument for the Sigma Xi Center. In this process we were also able to garner savings in normal treasury services for the Society's banking activities. Rising health insurance costs presented a challenge to our budget for the coming year. However, bundling our health, dental and disability insurance allowed us to offset rising fees. In the end we were able to develop a balanced budget for fiscal year 2007.

Recent scandals in the for-profit world have resulted in calls for increased accountability across all organizations, for-profit and not-for-profit alike. I am proud to say that the board and staff of

Sigma Xi have been well ahead of pending legislation in implementing appropriate safeguards. In 2006 we put into practice whistle-blower and document destruction policies for the Society.

On April 1st our faithful and long-serving Deputy Executive Director, Evan Ferguson, retired. The board of the Society unanimously approved the following proclamation in recognition of Dr. Ferguson's long service.

Commemorative Resolution of the Board of Directors

Whereas Evan R. Ferguson has retired after 24 years of distinguished service to Sigma Xi and whereas the Society has benefited greatly from his leadership, counsel and vision, be it hereby resolved that the Board of Directors unanimously expresses its sincere appreciation for Dr. Ferguson's service and extends its best wishes for health and happiness.

Evan will be missed.

In the wake of Dr. Ferguson's departure it was important to move quickly to reorganize the staff to accomplish the duties formerly discharged by Dr. Ferguson. Mr. John Rintoul was hired as Director of Sigma Xi Center Programs and Chief Counsel for the Center, and Ms. Lana Barnwell was promoted to the position of Chief of Staff. The new organization provides great stability and more support for the Society's staff activities, while allowing the Executive Director to focus more on governance, external collaborations, chapter support and program development. The Society is well-positioned for future success grounded upon strong chapters, forward-looking programs and staff expertise.

In December of 2005, I announced my retirement, to take effect upon the successful conclusion of a search to select my replacement. I depart my duties to join my family with a strong sense of pride in the accomplishments and promise of the Society. It has been my privilege to serve Sigma Xi.

Sincerely,
Patrick D. Sculley, D.D.S., M.A.
Executive Director