

The Benefits of Your Wisdom: A Call to Action

"I don't do committees." Condoleezza Rice

Condi Rice, when serving as provost at Stanford University, (in-) famously stated, 'I don't do committees.' When challenged about this position, she replied "Stanford had a very consensual style of decision-making, and I wasn't going to be able to make those changes consensually, and I knew it....Because you don't get it done."

In her view, committees would have unduly slowed, if not paralyzed, the identification and implementation of what she saw as necessary strategies to restore the university's economic health. The 1989 earthquake had caused substantial damage on campus and depleted any budgetary fat. Tasked with cutting \$25 million from an already tight annual budget, Provost Rice cut programs, staff and services without making any effort to build consensus or create a common cause. As a result, she suffered a series of nasty confrontations with faculty groups that she might have avoided had she remembered that she was but one part of a collegial community, and had asked that community to participate in the process. But, she balanced the budget and was able to show a small surplus early in her tenure as provost.

The SCA president's mandate is to honor and serve the mission of the Society. But every president and every SCA Board Member has her or his own vision of what might best serve that mission. And, while my passion for the continued success of the SCA informs my work on behalf of the Society, I am not empowered to declare, 'I don't do committees.' Indeed, the work of our Committees, including the Board of Directors, is the lifeblood of the SCA. We accomplish and achieve only through consensus as expressed through the committee process. The work of the SCA depends upon our membership's participation in standing and ad hoc SCA Committees, and in task forces created within that framework. This statement of fact serves as the foundation for this month's messages to the membership: a report on the outcome of our journal deliberations, the importance of choosing representatives for the SCA Board of Directors, and an invitation to each member to contribute to the Society by joining a committee.

Our Journal Deliberations

Those of you who have read my previous messages know that I believe our future is in collaborating with the surgery and perfusion communities. Consequently, I was elated by the large response from the membership weighing-in on the journal decision which, to my mind, expressed an openness to change and a willingness to consider such a collaboration. But despite months of lobbying, I did not persuade my colleagues that affiliating with a journal dedicated to the care of cardiothoracic and vascular patients would best fulfill the mission of the SCA: "to... promote(s) excellence in patient care through education and research in perioperative care for patients undergoing cardiothoracic and vascular procedures."

The Board chose the conservative course and is now engaged in on-going negotiations with a general interest anesthesiology journal. We hope to have an announcement on the journal selection in the very near future.

Choosing your Board of Directors

You have the opportunity to elect two new board members to represent your interests on the Board of Directors. This year, there are seven outstanding candidates – David Amar, MD; James A. DiNardo, MD, FAAP; Martin J. London, MD; Charles W. Hogue, Jr., MD; Stanton K. Shernan, MD; Marc A. Rozner, PhD, MD; and Scott T. Reeves, MD – seeking your support. Each possesses excellent qualifications and each has served the SCA.



Christina Mora Mangano, MD
President, 2007-2009

You will find their biographies on the SCA web site (www.SCAhq.org) in the members section (if you do not have your password, call 804-282-0084 to secure your code), where you also can cast your vote. The members section also includes contact information for each of these individuals. I am certain that each candidate would value a conversation with our members regarding his candidacy. To better advance this process of communication, I will next year ask each candidate to make a statement regarding her or his vision for the Society. We will include these statements in the newsletter and on the Society's website.

Please 'do' a Committee

Several committees have contributed to (if not constituted!) the substance of the SCA over the last 29 years. The Program, Publications, and Newsletter Committees each have clear mandates. Their members donate hundreds of hours to ensure the accomplishment of each Committee's important tasks. In the past, other standing committees have had less clear objectives and have not enjoyed the attention of the Board of Directors. With the maturing of the Society and the increasing recognition of our sub-specialty, the responsibilities and activities of all of our committees will become more important. The board knows that there is a deep pool of talented individuals constituting the SCA membership. We will continue with strength if we are able to recruit those willing to serve the committee structures. With that in mind, Heather Spiess and I will be drafting protocols for the committees to facilitate their activities. Please look for a description of the SCA Committees on our Society's website in the next few months.

Most importantly, take the time to identify a committee that addresses your area of interest or expertise, and sign up. You will find a wealth of reward in participating more fully in the SCA mission.

Committees, like the democratic process, may interfere with efficiency, but there is wisdom in crowds, as Provost Rice admitted. When asked if she had any regrets about her approach at Stanford, Rice allowed that she was sorry that she had sometimes been too harsh. "And so I learned to do that better."

It is a good lesson. Please write. cmoraman@stanford.edu.