



President's Letter

DEAR COLLEAGUES,

Each year, it is the President's duty to chair the awards ceremony during the Annual Meeting, in which the contributions of the officers, committees, SIMB staff and a select group of our colleagues are recognized. The ceremony is culminated when the President-Elect recognizes the outgoing President's contributions and service to the Society. As I took my turn to participate in this ceremony and to recognize Scott Baker for his service to the Society for Industrial Microbiology and Biotechnology, it became apparent that more than a dozen of my predecessors were in attendance.

There were also many other past and present officers, committee members and program chairs in the audience, each of whom had contributed to the success and longevity of the SIMB. It is this long history of continued involvement and shared stewardship that makes the SIMB unique among professional and scholarly societies.

As the 66th President of the SIMB, I am pleased to inform members that we remain a strong and vibrant society. Through the leadership and initiatives of my immediate predecessors, Tom Jeffries, Leonard Katz, Tim Davies and Scott Baker, the SIMB retains its reputation as an important forum for scientists, engineers and others interested in the field of applied microbiology and biotechnology. Through the stewardship of our Treasurer Jan Westpheling, our Audit Committee, Herb Ward and Jeff Schwartz, our Board of Directors and our Executive Director, Chris Lowe, the financial health of the SIMB remains sound. As a result, the SIMB can continue to sponsor meetings that are recognized for their scientifically strong and topically relevant programs, a collegial atmosphere, and the exemplary planning, management and execution by the SIMB staff.

MEETINGS

As I write this letter, the SIMB has already sponsored two successful meetings this year; the 38th Symposium on Biotechnology for Biofuels and Chemicals in April in Baltimore and the 2016 Annual Meeting in New Orleans in July. The third meeting in 2016 is the 4th Recent Advances on Microbial Control in San Diego in October. I would like to thank the Program Committees and the chairs and co-chairs (Steve Brown, Thomas Klasson, Steve Decker and Jim McMillan; Debbie Yaver; Rob Donofrio and Jon Calomiris, respectively) for the time, effort and care they have taken to ensure that these meetings were successful. I would also like to acknowledge the efforts the program chairs and committees for the upcoming meetings that will be held in 2017 and 2018, which are already in the planning stage. They are Steve Decker and Jim McMillan, (39th SBFC Meeting in San Francisco May 2017), Hal Alper (2017 Annual Meeting, Denver, July 2017), Tiffany Rau and Lawrence Chew (RAFT, Bonita Springs, FL, Oct 2017), Leonard Katz, Dick Baltz, Steve van Lanen, Brian Bachman and Nathan Magarvey 2nd Natural Products Discovery and Development in the Genomics Era (Clearwater, FL, Jan 2018)

PUBLICATIONS

In addition to our meetings, our publications serve as a means of communicating important information about the field with SIMB members, the broader scientific community and the general public. Our flagship publication is the highly regarded *Journal of Industrial Microbiology and Biotechnology*. In 2015, Ramon Gonzalez became the fifth Editor-in-Chief of the *Journal* and was charged with reshaping it so that it more closely mirrors the field and meets the expectations of the Society and the broader scientific community. He was also charged with engaging the membership of the SIMB as authors, editors and reviewers and capturing much of the cutting-edge work that is presented during Society meetings, which has been absent from the *JIMB*. In the first year of his leadership, he took steps to accomplish these objectives. We expect to see the effects

of these changes in the next 12-18 months. Among the more significant changes in the recent past was the introduction of special topics issues- three of which have been published to date. To sustain that effort, the *JIMB* editorial board was reshaped and Dick Baltz was appointed the Special Issues editor. Other changes in the publications committee also took place in 2016. Nigel Mouncey was appointed the chair of the committee and is taking the lead in negotiations with our publisher, Springer-Nature on a renewal of our publishing contract and exploring the possibility of establishing a new Open Access publication with Biomed Central (a division of Springer-Nature).

Under the able leadership of its Editor-in-Chief, Betty Elder, the *SIMB News* continues to serve as an important vehicle for publishing up-to-date information about the SIMB, committee activities, upcoming meetings and outstanding mini-reviews contributed by our members. The new Committee Corner section provides a way for committee chairs to inform the membership about their activities and progress at meeting milestones. The mini-reviews are particularly useful as a form of persistent outreach and as teaching supplements at the undergraduate level to stimulate interest in the field. The *SIMB News* also provides a popular means of advertising for some of our corporate members and sponsors and I would encourage members to consider their offerings, when possible. Although the SIMB website is not formally a responsibility of the Publications Committee, it also serves as an important vehicle for communicating with members and the public about the SIMB history, mission, strategic plan and activities at the local and national level.

PRESIDENT'S INITIATIVES

Each year, it is the President's prerogative to establish one or more ad-hoc committees to address issues that may either be outside the remit of standing committees or of a time limited nature. Three such ad-hoc committees were formed recently. One resulted in a well-developed Strategic Plan (www.simbhq.org/about-simb/strategic-plan) and a second resulted in a set of offerings for corporate membership at different price-points. A third ad-hoc committee was established in 2015 to explore ways to improve international engagement by the SIMB; however, the scope of that committee was perhaps too broad and additional time was needed to develop concrete

recommendations for action by the BoD. Rather than establishing new ad-hoc committees during my term, I would like to focus on execution of the strategic plan and to work towards engaging new corporate members and retaining existing ones by demonstrating the value of the SIMB in their missions. I am also recommending that the International Outreach Committee chaired by Susanne Kleff continue its work in developing a plan on which the BoD can act by the 2017 Annual Meeting.

In closing, 2017 will be a challenging year for the SIMB. Market forces, especially in segments where bio-based solutions may not be price competitive, will have an impact on some of our members, and some changes in direction will be necessary. But we have seen such changes in the past, and topics such as natural products are undergoing a resurgence in interest and will be greatly stimulated by an outcry for solutions to familiar problems such as antimicrobial resistance. Opportunities also are emerging in the development of new solutions based on an understanding and control of microbiomes. The SIMB is uniquely positioned to play a major role in informing the public discussion on these topics, much as we have on other topics in the past. The SIMB will also face challenges as several of our long serving directors and officers become term limited in their current positions. They will not, however, disappear. Instead, they will stand ready to aid their successors in sustaining the SIMB in accomplishing its stated mission and conveying their knowledge, wisdom and dedication to the Society and the field. I also know I will see them in Denver next year.

George Garrity
SIMB President 2016-2017