Public Affairs Report

NIH RFI on Diversity in the Biomedical Research Workforce

ASM submitted comments on 24 February 2012 to the National Institutes of Health on the Request for Information (RFI): Input into the Deliberations of the Advisory Committee to the NIH Director Working Group on Diversity in the Biomedical Research Workforce. The NIH sought input on issues related to the Biomedical Research Workforce Pipeline, including transition points where NIH’s training, career development, and research grant programs could most effectively cultivate diversity in the biomedical research workforce, the role of mentorship in the training and success of biomedical researchers throughout their careers, the influence of role models whose qualities and characteristics can positively affect the training and success of underrepresented biomedical researchers, the role of NIH messaging in encouraging underrepresented researchers to apply for NIH fellowships and grants, and the role of institutional infrastructure support and climate as a factor in the success of underrepresented researchers and the NIH grant review process. The Public and Scientific Affairs Board Committee on Microbiological Issues Impacting Minorities developed ASM’s comments, which are available on the ASM website at http://www.asm.org/index.php/policy/nih-rfi-2-24-12.html.

ASM Supports Agriculture Research Funding

In February, ASM, as a steering committee member of the AFRI Coalition, partnered with other member organizations to write and distribute a letter to Congress urging funding of the Agricultural and Food Research Initiative (AFRI) at $325 million in FY 2013. This letter, sent to the House and Senate agriculture committees and the House and Senate agriculture appropriations subcommittees, highlighted the importance of agricultural R&D research to combat current and emerging threats as well as the outstanding economic return on investment it provides. For more information and updated appropriations information, please see the ASM public policy website at http://www.asm.org/index.php/policy/radfy2013.html.

ASM Comments on Recreational Water Quality Standards

On 21 February, the Public and Scientific Affairs Board Committee for Environmental Microbiology, chaired by Gary King, submitted comments to the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) on the proposed Recreational Water Quality Criteria (RWQC) for management of all U.S. inland, coastal, and Great Lake waters designated for primary contact recreation. ASM commended the EPA for improvements made to the list since its development in 1986 and the use of epidemiological studies and the development of new methods to ensure the best science is reflected. ASM also raised concerns and offered recommendations to the EPA on ways to further improve the RWQC to further promote public health and limit human exposure to high or risky levels of microbial contamination that can result in illness. A copy of the letter can be found online at http://www.asm.org/index.php/policy/epa-wq-2-22-12.html.

ASM Attends Clinical Laboratory Meetings

On 12 March, Public and Scientific Affairs Board Professional Affairs Committee Chair Vickie Baselski attended the Coordinating Committee for the Clinical Laboratory Workforce (CCCLW) in Chicago, Ill. The CCCLW is focused on increasing the number of qualified clinical laboratory professionals, increasing health care and public awareness of the value of laboratory professionals in achieving positive patient outcomes, and enhancing the image of clinical laboratory professionals. One of the many topics on the agenda for discussion is the CCCLW participation in the Labs Are Vital™ program. For more information on Labs Are Vital™ and how this program serves clinical laboratory professionals, please see http://www.labsarevital.com/html/main.isx. Yvette Carter, member of the PSAB Committee on Laboratory Practices, participated in the Joint Commission’s 1 March Laboratory Professional and Technical Advisory Committee (LAB PTAC) quarterly conference call as the ASM representative. One announcement of note was the addition of an at large informatics representative to the committee. For a list of other clinical laboratory organizations represented on the LAB PTAC, please see http://www.jointcommission.org/accreditation/laboratory_ptac.aspx.
ASM Cosponsors National Medical Laboratory Professionals Week

National Medical Laboratory Professionals Week (NMLPW) is an annual celebration of the more than 300,000 medical laboratory professionals whose vital role affects decision making in nearly every aspect of health care. NMLPW, which began in 1975, takes place the last full week in April each year and is coordinated by a collaborative committee with representatives from 13 national clinical laboratory organizations, including ASM. This year’s celebration took place between 22–28 April. To read more about NMLPW and for ideas, please see http://www.ascls.org/?page=NMLPW

ASM Joins CDC and APHL in Campylobacter Forum

ASM, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), and the Association of Public Health Laboratories (APHL) are jointly sponsoring Forum on the Development of Best Practice Laboratory Guidelines for Campylobacter Diagnosis on 26 June in Atlanta, Ga. This forum will bring together clinical, public health, and commercial laboratory professionals, clinicians, and epidemiologists to review available data on diagnostic tests for Campylobacter. It will also facilitate the establishment of an action plan for development of the guideline.

15th International Congress on Infectious Diseases

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