

Get to know your council: Marty Cathcart (2011)

We present to you our first written interview with Marty Cathcart, an SLB councilor for the past 3 years and a former chairperson of the nominating committee.

An interview with Melanie Scott



What inspired you to become a scientist?

My mother was a Chemistry major and worked at The Upjohn Company (a pharmaceutical firm). That always impressed me. Also, my fourth grade teacher steered me toward a doctorate.

Who was a significant mentor for you during your career and why?

I have had countless mentors who have guided me.

How do you balance work and life issues? What non-scientific areas of interest keep you happy?

It is very fortunate that women excel in multitasking. Work/life balance is a constant challenge. It is difficult for many of us to admit we can't do everything but once we do admit it, life becomes more focused and enjoyable. As far as non-scientific areas: I love spending time at my

vintage lake cottage in Michigan, hunting for mushrooms and working in my herb garden.

In this age of limited research resources and growing competition for grant awards, how would you advise young faculty who are just beginning their adventure in science?

I would advise junior scientists to follow innovative ideas and follow through with testing them. Ideas are cheap, acting on those ideas is what is important.

Why is SLB important for you?

SLB is important because the members share a common passion for understanding leukocyte function. The society is of moderate size so that you can meet and know many of the members and become active in the workings of the society. The annual meetings are a wonderful place for student/fellow presentations in a friendly and helpful environment.

How do you sum up the time you served as an SLB councilor? Why did you become an SLB councilor?

I was extremely honored to run for council. I had been active early in my career and then had veered off to running national meetings and holding office in other societies. I had returned to the society to attend meetings and enjoyed running into many “old” friends. SLB is the fit for me.

As the former chair of the Nominating committee, could you explain the scope of its activities, what principles guide the selections it makes, and how do those help to shape the future of the SLB?

The Nominating Committee is a very thoughtful group, usually with senior status and historical perspective. The Nominating Committee is responsible for suggesting candidates to run for office (President-elect, Secretary or Treasurer) or Council. After creating a list of candidates and ranking them, the list is presented to the Council and modified according to their suggestions (addition of candidates, reranking, etc.). The Chair of the Nominating Committee then approaches the candidates in rank order to identify two candidates for every open officer or council slot. Elections are then held and new officers and councilors are selected. Anyone with interest in becoming more active at the council level should talk with any of the current officers or council members for advice on how to proceed. Active committee participation is often a good prelude to becoming an officer or council member. The future of the SLB is definitely shaped by the participation of its members and their communication of their potential contributions.

What do you think are the challenges for the SLB in the future?

Future challenges include our ability to overcome the trend toward budgetary restraint affecting the ability of members to pay for meeting attendance, as well as affecting the ability of industries to provide necessary financial support. SLB is currently in a strong financial position but will face challenges in this arena. The JLB, an asset of our society, will also face challenges. As print subscriptions diminish, new publishing approaches will be necessary.