

Get to know your council: interview questions



1. What inspired you to become a scientist?

Answer: When I was an undergraduate at the University of Minnesota – Duluth, I had the privilege of working with Dr. Lester Drewes on the blood brain barrier. The work was amazing, the amount of time spent to plan and execute the experiments drove home the need for careful planning.

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

Answer: Peter Ward was my department chair for 25 years and served as a role model for both science and how to run a Department of Pathology with excellence in diagnostic service, teaching and research.

3. How do you balance work and life issues?

Answer: Compartmentalization. When at work focus on work and when at home, focus on other issues. However, there are times when I daydream about being out of doors and enjoying nature, and there are other times when a work issue will consume my thoughts.

4. What keeps you happy outside of science and work?

Answer: Spending time out of doors enjoying nature. Canoeing, hiking, biking, cross country skiing with my wife all provide great satisfaction.

5. 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?

Answer: Maintain a passion for your science. Focus on the questions that you are trying to answer and not on just getting a grant.

6. Why is SLB important for you?

Answer: The Society has always had outstanding meetings which help me keep up with the rapidly changing field.

7. What made you decide to run for SLB council?

Answer: Moving into the later years of my career it is important to give back in some small manner. Bringing my experience as a funded scientist, former study section chair, and current department chair affords me the opportunity to try and positively impact the society.

8. What is the most challenging aspect of being an SLB councilor?

Answer: It is difficult to keep up with all the changing science. There are also the current challenges of reduced enthusiasm for any aspect of the federal budget so that cuts to NIH funding are a real problem.

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

Answer: We need to maintain the appropriate level of NIH funding to allow the research to flourish. For the next 13 months (until election day, 2012) this will represent the single biggest threat to SLB. Our passion for the science and our great ideas will not bear fruit without an appropriate level of support. This is difficult, because there are several other major areas that also deserve their fair portion of support.

10. What motivated you to start working in your chosen field of research?

Answer: I was lead by the science. My first project involved injecting recombinant tumor necrosis factor into mice, which then evolved (yes evolution is a science) into the study of sepsis. As an autopsy pathologist I saw many patients who died of sepsis and felt a strong need to understand the disease better.

11. What would be your tips for managing a productive lab and keeping everyone in the lab happy?

Answer: You cannot over-communicate. Try to set up policies that are fair to all, and attempt to address any issues before they create resentment. Make sure that everyone feels empowered to raise issues. It should be noted that these are ideal values, something which I personally still struggle to achieve.

12. As a committee member, can you explain what you do and how this affects other SLB members?

Answer: I will be chairing the 2014 SLB meeting, which involves planning the scientific sessions. I am also the liaison to the Professional Development Committee, chaired by Dr. Cambronero. This means Julian does all the work and I just report his efforts to the council.

