What is in a Membership?

Each of us has many options for how we spend our time and money. So why do we choose membership in ASHS among all the other options available to us? In college, we are taught that networking is vital for success. Professional societies certainly provide opportunities for networking through professional meetings, professional interest groups, and, likely, in many other ways.

Beyond networking, the ASHS Board of Directors and Headquarters staff look for ways to make our membership valuable to each of us. One of the most visible member benefits centers around the three journals published through ASHS. As members, we get a substantial discount for publishing in ASHS journals compared to non-members. With the transition of HortTechnology to an open-access journal this year, and as we assess JASHS and HortScience over the coming years to join OA, this will be of increasing value to our members and authors as it should help increase impact factors and other measures that some administrators see as important in our professional development processes.

ASHS Members also have reduced registration costs for the Annual Conferences, nearly 30% less than non-member registrations. Registration for the conference gives full access to all sessions at the conference except for a few meals and tours that are extra ticketed events. The conference provides opportunity for members and their students to participate in oral and poster presentations related to current research. Professional Interest Groups plan many workshops and special sessions running the gamut of the diversity of the groups. The conference is also the best time and place for informal networking among individuals, in addition to the formal sessions.

Recently, thanks to the efforts of Rob Mikkelsen, ASHS members have access to webinars on current interest topics. Rob has done a wonderful job of getting the webinar series started and identifying speakers and topics of interest. If you have not been able to participate in the live webinars, they have been recorded and are available on the ASHS website only to ASHS members to view at your leisure. You will need a password to access each webinar. The passwords have been shared in the ASHS E-News editions, or you can contact headquarters staff to get the passwords.

Communication is vital to any organization. ASHS communicates primarily through our interactive social website, electronic newsletters, targeted e-mail messages as needed, and social media. While we want to keep you informed, we do not want to overfill e-mail inboxes with messages that are of little value. In other words, we respect your time and efforts and want to be valuable to you.

There are many other benefits of ASHS membership. The society has created and made available to members a series of educational videos developed from presentations at past ASHS conferences, and has recorded all conference presentations back to the 2014 annual conference—all available to ASHS members. Thanks to Past President Carl Sams, ASHS members will soon have access to career development videos through the American Association for the Advancement of Science (AAAS). Carl has been particularly interested in having these videos available for graduate students as he saw topics that he thought would be particularly helpful to those members.
Did you know that students can be ASHS members at no cost to them? Undergraduate students receive complimentary membership throughout their educational experience. Graduate students are eligible for one year of free membership.

Each year, headquarters sends out a request to members to identify committees in which they might be interested in serving. ASHS is truly a volunteer society. If the members did not volunteer to participate on the various committees and professional interest groups, the society would not exist. Headquarters staff helps coordinate some of the activities, but their work depends on decisions made by the Board of Directors and requests of various individuals and groups. Many of those requests are passed through the Board of Directors before being acted upon. Other requests seem indigent to our goals and values and can just be incorporated as appropriate. As current president, I recognize that our members give freely of their time, talents, and dollars to make ASHS valuable. When I have requested help or representation on committees, I have had few members turn me down. Almost everybody recognizes the value of the society and does what they can to make it great.

Are there things that the society could do that would be valuable to the members? I would like to hear ideas. We can always improve, but we want to make sure that decisions we make are carefully considered for pros and cons and costs. Still, we need ideas. You might have that idea that opens doors not yet open to our membership. Send me your ideas at janet.cole@okstate.edu.