The 2013–2014 year brought many challenges, opportunities, and successes to the American Dairy Science Association®. Through this report, I hope to summarize and inform you, the membership, about the health and position of ADSA as we embark on engaging the challenges ahead. Overall, I hope that you join me in celebrating the many great accomplishments achieved as a society as well as commit to applying your best efforts to enable ADSA to achieve even more in the years to come. Although the operation of a society of this scale and complexity requires efforts on innumerable fronts, the society applies its most focused efforts on our most important assets: the Journal of Dairy Science® and the Annual Meeting. In addition to these, I will report on other measures of ADSA health; namely, our membership profile and financial status. Finally, I will end with some parting words about our position with the Joint Annual Meeting and the American Society of Animal Science.

Journal of Dairy Science

Over 8,000 pages of scientific content will be published in JDS in 2014. In spite of this growth, the high standards of acceptance and review, fastidious editorial support from our FASS staff, and overall publication quality have not only maintained but also advanced the Thomson-Reuters Impact Factor ranking of JDS to second out of 51 journals. Please extend your appreciation to all those who have had a hand in making JDS such a significant and successful publication. Although a financial issue, the health of the JDS cannot be discussed without some commentary on the JDS Endowment Fund. Under our most thoughtful financial design, ADSA embarked on a goal to create an endowment with a capital investment designed to generate, ad infinitum, sufficient investment income to cover JDS page charges for ADSA members. Through contributions made by the association, with improved investment strategies and unusually strong market performance, the JDS Endowment Fund has achieved over 83% of this capital goal in less than six years. Once fully capitalized, the Fund will further secure JDS as the leading journal of its genre with a strong complement to strengthening the value of ADSA membership—payment of page charges.

Annual Meeting

Each year, it is a marvel to experience the enormous number of activities and amount of energy applied to holding the annual meeting. Such events as the various symposia, poster presentations, and student competitions are complemented by an enormous array of meetings and planning sessions designed to steward these processes and programs into the future. There are similarly valuable, yet countless other informal gatherings and interactions across the spectrum of meeting attendees. We are mindful of the sponsors and exhibitors who share our vision of enabling this great gathering. We continue to gather and evaluate feedback from meeting attendees with the goal of improving the meeting experience in the future. I will further address our position concerning the Joint Annual Meeting (JAM) below.

Membership

Anyone reviewing ADSA membership demographics would note one significant characteristic: we are very much an international organization. With an overall membership exceeding 4,000 members, ADSA has seen considerable growth in membership from China, India, and several South American countries, in part reflecting the overall growth of dairying industries in those countries. The ADSA membership comprises scientists from 55 countries across six continents. We have responded to such growth by sponsoring various events such as the Global Networking Reception at JAM and by providing support for dairy-themed conferences in numerous countries. Consistent with our role as a global knowledge transfer organization, growth and support
of our international membership is a strong strategic initiative of our operations. Another strategic area of investment is structured around our interest in growing undergraduate and graduate student involvement. Currently, total student membership exceeds 1,400 and continues to display strong programming in such areas as the “Pioneers in Dairy Science” webinar series; we have more than fifty student chapters that participate in ADSA programming and have both graduate and undergraduate students serve on our board.

Financial Status

In addition to the JDS Endowment Fund, ADSA collectively remains in a very strong financial position to support the needs of our membership. At year’s end, ADSA total assets were just under $9.0 million with total net assets at $8.5 million. Thanks to careful scrutiny across nearly every financial decision and a commitment to a lean cost structure, the total cost of administration and governance of ADSA was less than 20% of total operating income—a very low number for any business. ADSA owes much of its efficient, low-cost operating system to the invaluable services rendered by the Federation of Animal Science Societies (FASS), including JDS editorial support, membership administration, and annual meeting operations. While no two societies are identical, ADSA undertook an operating expense benchmarking study two years ago, which confirmed that ADSA, through its extensive use of FASS, enjoys far lower expense ratios than comparable organizations. Because of these efficient operations complemented by strong market performance, the ADSA Board was able to transfer more than $365,000 to the JDS Endowment Fund earlier this year, staying true to the cause of this investment strategy.

Within this financial category reside the operations of the ADSA Foundation, including the highly regarded ADSA Discover Conferences (DC). Under the keen direction of Larry Miller, the ADSA Discover Conferences continue to respond to the critical needs of the dairy industry with unfettered courage. Of significant note for 2014 was DC 27: Strategies for Improving US Dairy Cattle Welfare, with a notably broad and robust audience to engage in a conversation about this most important issue. Starch for Ruminants and Amino Acid Requirements of Dairy Cattle are the themes for DC 28 and 29, respectively. Other strategic areas the ADSA Foundation oversees include continuing investments in S-PAC and support of undergraduate and graduate student education, travel support, and awards programs. Last year, the Foundation catalyzed the update to the eighth edition of the National Research Council’s Nutrient Requirements of Dairy Cattle with a major contribution that was quickly supported by eleven co-sponsoring organizations. Stay tuned for an announcement of the next major Foundation initiative, designed to benefit a large segment of the global dairy industry.

The Joint Annual Meeting

By way of background, ADSA has partnered, for the last 14 years, to operate our annual meeting with the American Society of Animal Science (ASAS). In 2013, this partnership evolved into a signed memorandum of understanding (MOU) between the two societies; this MOU terminates upon the completion of the 2016 JAM. ADSA met with very real disappointment this year when ASAS announced that they would not be continuing this partnership with ADSA beyond 2016, but rather would take an independent route with their annual meeting. This response was in contrast to the unanimous position of the ADSA Board to continue the JAM by extending the current agreement. ADSA understands the dilemma this independent course creates for our members (i.e., joint ADSA/ASAS members), not to mention the sponsors, exhibitors, and others who are faced with supporting two meetings instead of one. We have heard from all categories of stakeholders in the JAM with a simple resounding message: find a remedy to reinstate the JAM. As now past president of ADSA, I finish my letter to you with a commitment—the same commitment that drives JDS, that fuels the JDS Endowment Fund, that enables the Discover Conferences, that allows us to reach an international audience—a commitment to apply our very best efforts to re-establish the JAM. To that end, however, I invite your commitment, as well, to aid us in this process of working towards re-instating a unified front for animal and dairy science.