

Dear fellow Cordes members,

It has been a great honor to serve as your society president during this 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary year. Some of my fondest memories as a resident were of the annual Cordes Society meetings, at which I met many of you for the first time. Likewise, one of the major benefits of practicing in the Bay Area has been the opportunity to regularly attend the annual Cordes meeting. Despite the fact that, like you, my schedule is already packed with ophthalmology conferences, I still enjoy the Cordes meeting because I can hear what is happening in specialties outside of my own, and see what our own alumni and faculty are contributing in these areas.

This anniversary year gives us a special opportunity to celebrate our society and its members with the upcoming scientific and social events this April. I am excited that so many of you are planning to attend, and I am attaching the program which will highlight the history of UCSF ophthalmology and the accomplishments of Cordes members. However, it also gives us an occasion to examine the health of our organization and to contemplate its future direction. Since serving as the resident vice-president 25 years ago, I have paid little attention to how our society operates – something that I now appreciate very well from this year of planning.

Like many of you, I have been concerned with diminishing participation in our alumni society. This certainly mirrors a national trend. Our secretary treasurer, Ayman Naseri, shares many of the same concerns and together, we have spent the past year hoping to revitalize the Cordes Society in this 50th anniversary year. We started by forming an ad hoc Cordes steering committee, for which we openly solicited volunteers at the 2008 meeting. Our committee includes a cross section of committed society members and reflects the diversity of our group (Jack Hetherington, Stacy Mettier, Brooks Crawford, Syd Williams, Jacque Duncan, and resident Vice President, Shelley Day). Through Stephen McLeod and Kathleen Rydar, we have worked closely with both the department and with That Man May See (TMMS) to explore changes and possible solutions to problems that we have identified. Both Ayman and I have worked with the TMMS board to brainstorm potential ideas. We believe that we have forged an excellent solution to the problem of future administration and leadership of our society. This letter summarizes the consensus that we, as a volunteer advisory group, have reached throughout the course of numerous discussions and conference calls this year.

Please take a moment to read the attached summary. While it reflects our own recommendations, we are very interested in hearing feedback from you. Our hope is to use the once-a-year business meeting in April to present these ideas for a formal vote. However, because of both the brevity and the size of this meeting, we would like to explain our proposal and solicit your thoughts in advance.

Sincerely,

*David*

David F. Chang, MD

## Steering Committee Executive Summary

Organizational Problems identified:

**Dues** – As a fiscally independent organization funded by dues, we have historically made payment of annual dues a condition of membership. We are concerned that our society has lost touch with many alumni who have moved out of the Bay Area and therefore stopped paying dues. This problem was undoubtedly magnified by a misguided past policy whereby an alum from out of state who wanted to attend a Cordes meeting was required to first pay all back years of unpaid dues in order to attend.

This reliance on dues for funding seems to have resulted in our membership being heavily concentrated on those Bay Area alumni who regularly attend the annual scientific meeting. In trying to announce our plans for a 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary celebration, we discovered that we were missing contact information for a significant number of alumni. Thanks to several of you who helped us to locate missing members, we now have current contact information for most members. TMMS separately maintains an alumni contact list, and Kathleen Rydar and her staff supplied us with some missing information as well.

**Recent alumni** – We have noted that as a group, recent residency graduates are not becoming active Cordes members. Although the residents and their significant others continue to be guests at the annual Cordes banquet, they generally do not realize that the cost of their attendance is covered by the Cordes Society.

**Finances** – For the past several years, we have barely collected enough dues revenue to cover postage, our part-time administrator stipend, and the costs of running the scientific symposium. There has essentially been no annual surplus, and in October our checking account balance was insufficient to pay a deposit to reserve a banquet facility for our gala anniversary dinner. The Bank of America has been charging us half-price for the Giannini Auditorium due to a prior arrangement, but we are not sure whether we will continue to enjoy this courtesy. Any decrease in dues revenue would immediately threaten our financial solvency.

**Declining attendance** – Attendance at both the scientific meeting and at the annual banquet has declined in recent years. The scientific meeting was recently shortened to a single day. Planning the annual banquet is always difficult because it is not possible to establish a budget until we know how many members will attend. Because we have no financial reserves, the banquet ticket revenue must entirely cover the cost of the event or else we risk bankruptcy.

**Administrative** – We are indebted to Kelly Stone for running our society on a part time basis for a very nominal stipend. Without Kelly's dedicated effort, our organization would have long since ceased to operate in its present form. After generously serving as

our administrative staff person for 11 years, Kelly retired this past November because of a personal career change. We do not have the financial resources to hire a part time administrator at a market rate of compensation.

As our philanthropic organization, That Man May See (TMMS) also wants to maintain communication with our alumni. We are very grateful to Kathleen Rydar and TMMS for all that they have done to support the Cordes Society in the past. For the past two years, they have generously hosted the cocktails at the AAO Annual Meeting Cordes Society reception. Kathleen also publicizes our annual scientific meeting in the TMMS Visions Newsletter, and has profiled and interviewed a Cordes society member as a regular feature in most newsletter issues.

**Governance** – Because the president and the resident vice-president only serve one-year terms, we do not have any governing body or ongoing leadership positions. Aside from the secretary treasurer, who serves for four years, we do not have any other members who oversee our organization on a continuing basis. There is basically no group to set policies, make decisions, or to initiate long range planning. We do not have a mission statement for the Cordes Society.

### **Proposal**

As a steering committee, we have discussed these significant problems and tried to examine a number of potential solutions. We started by proposing the following mission statement: *The mission of the Cordes Society is to maintain and foster the tradition of excellence of UCSF-trained ophthalmologists by supporting residency education and maintaining a professional and social network for UCSF ophthalmology alumni.*

Our goal has been to maintain the identity of the Cordes Society and the many traditions that we all associate with this name. However, from an operational standpoint, we have neither the means, nor the practical need to have a separate administrative staff. We therefore believe that the best solution is to integrate the administration of our society with that of TMMS. In this way, we would not need to employ a separate staff person, and would avoid duplicating many important functions – such as communicating with alumni and maintaining current alumni contact information.

### **Administrative Structure**

Under the direction of Kathleen Rydar, TMMS is run by an impressive full time staff. As any of us who have attended the TMMS award dinners can attest to, they do a first class job in event planning. Their expertise would be a tremendous resource in planning future Cordes scientific meetings, banquets and AAO cocktail receptions. Communications to alumni from the Cordes Society, TMMS, and the Department of Ophthalmology could all be coordinated and centralized through one office. From year to year, alumni would also enjoy familiar access to the same regular staff regarding questions about the Cordes meeting, the department, or about other alumni.

To maintain the mission and identity of the Cordes Society, we suggest the formation of a volunteer steering committee. We suggest that this group should include the department chair, a senior resident serving as secretary, the treasurer (4 year term), a two-member scientific program committee, and 3 other members who would each rotate from being vice-president to president to immediate past president. One of the two program chairs would rotate off every year. Having individuals serve for 3 successive years in the presidential track would provide needed continuity of leadership and oversight within our organization.

## **Finances and Dues**

As an organization, TMMS is governed separately from the UCSF Medical School and Department of Ophthalmology. TMMS has its own board, comprised of private citizens, UCSF faculty, and Cordes members. The Cordes Society is basically a pay-as-you-go organization and virtually all of our revenues go toward running the annual events. Over time, we may want to integrate and pass our operating expenses through the TMMS budget. However, we are not asking TMMS to pay for our meals and our meeting overhead. Attendees will still pay for their annual meeting registration (and luncheon) and the annual banquet.

Although our finances may eventually be administered through TMMS, we believe that it is important to preserve the identity of the Cordes Society- both in name and in the scientific autonomy of the annual meeting. We would therefore continue to be members of the UCSF residency and fellow alumni group called the “Cordes Society”. Our members will still organize the scientific program of our annual meeting, but the TMMS staff will assist us in coordinating the meeting logistics, announcements, and registration.

If it proves economically feasible, we would like to consider reducing or eventually abolishing membership dues. This way, every resident and fellow who trains at UCSF becomes a permanent member of the Cordes Society. As we currently do for the annual dinner banquet, we would then cover the costs of running the annual symposium by charging a modest registration fee, and attendees would pay for their lunch. Although there is also the option of soliciting industry sponsorship, we would initially like to avoid doing this if possible. In the meantime, Cordes Society dues would be collected by TMMS.

## **TMMS giving**

While departmental fundraising is not the primary concern of the Cordes Society, we recognize that many alumni will be interested in supporting resident education, as it is our UCSF training that gives all of us a common bond. TMMS already asks Cordes members to consider supporting the training of our residents and fellows. Currently, funding for resident attendance at scientific meetings, textbooks, and maintaining the microsurgery lab comes in part from Cordes Society member donations.

There are numerous non-financial ways for alumni to support residents and fellows, as well. Our membership comprises a national network of contacts spanning all ophthalmic

subspecialties that is now more easily accessible through digital communication. If someone were to organize it, Cordes members might be willing to provide residents and recent graduates with practice management and job or fellowship hunting advice, or participate in a dinner speaker series for residents.

Overall, it is the recommendation of this steering committee that the Cordes Society members approve the mission statement, the new administrative arrangement with TMMS, and governance under a voluntary steering committee as outlined. The Cordes Society will continue to exist as a separate fiscal and legal entity, but we propose to further explore integrating our budget with that of TMMS.

Sincerely,  
Cordes Society Steering Committee

(David F. Chang, Ayman Naseri, J. Brooks Crawford, Shelley Day, Jacque Duncan, Jack Hetherington, Stephen McLeod, Stacy Mettier, Jr., Dudley Stone, Kelly Stone, Sydney Williams)