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Council Meeting – National Human Genome Research Institute
A Brief Update from the American Society of Human Genetics
September 2014

Society Update

Partnerships

- In June, ASHG signed a Memorandum of Understanding with [The Jackson Laboratory \(JAX\)](#) to collaborate on genetics education for health professionals. The first program from this collaboration, [Cancer Genetics in the Primary Care Setting](#), will take place Nov. 7-8, 2014 at the new JAX Jackson Laboratory for Genomic Medicine, in Farmington, Connecticut.
- In April, ASHG and the [European Society of Human Genetics \(ESHG\)](#) announced a formal partnership that includes new initiatives such as joint memberships at discount rates, with access to both societies' journals, and a series of new "Building Bridges" sessions at both societies' Annual Meetings. As of August 26, 72 genetics professionals from 21 countries have become joint members. The second joint "Building Bridges" session will take place at the ASHG Annual Meeting in October and will address uncertainty in genomic medicine.

Other Society News

- We have developed and announced a new mission statement: Our mission is to advance human genetics in science, health, and society through excellence in research, education, and advocacy.
- ASHG members have elected a 2016 president: Hal Dietz, MD, of Johns Hopkins University; three new board members: Gail Jarvik, MD, PhD, of the University of Washington; Joel Hirschhorn, MD, PhD, of Children's Hospital of Boston; and Gert-Jan Van Ommen, PhD, of Leiden University in the Netherlands; and its first-ever trainee board member: Gorka Alkorta-Aranburu, PhD, of the University of Chicago.
- ASHG is seeking a [Scientific Program Manager](#) to support the work of the Program Committee and the Meetings and Education departments. Applications are under review.
- The Society's journal, [The American Journal of Human Genetics](#), will commemorate its 65th year of publication this fall through a special "Best Of" issue highlighting notable genetic advances during the last 65 years. Complimentary copies of the special issue will be available at the ASHG Annual Meeting, October 18-22 in San Diego.

Policy Activities

- In collaboration with NHGRI, we selected the 2014-2015 [ASHG/NHGRI Genetics & Public Policy Fellow](#), Katherine Blizinsky, PhD, who [began her fellowship](#) at NHGRI on September 2.

Subsequent rotations will take Dr. Blizinsky to a placement on Capitol Hill, followed by several months at ASHG headquarters.

- In light of rapid progress in clinical genomic testing, our social issues committee is updating ASHG's [1995 policy statement on pediatric genetic testing](#) and will discuss the new recommendations at the Annual Meeting during a [joint symposium](#) with the American Society for Bioethics and Humanities (ASBH).

Educational Programs

Professional

- In collaboration with NHGRI, we selected the first-ever [ASHG/NHGRI Genetics & Education Fellow](#), Elizabeth P. Tuck, MA, who [began work](#) at ASHG on September 2. Ms. Tuck also will spend time in the Education and Community Involvement Branch at NHGRI and may spend time at an external internship yet to be determined.

Undergraduate

- ASHG continues its faculty development program [Building Excellence in Genetics Instruction \(BEGIn\)](#), which includes 1.5-day workshops held on university campuses and a full-day workshop for undergraduate faculty at its Annual Meeting. These events focus on improving genetics instruction to slow the loss of talent from undergraduate genetics courses.
- ASHG's [Genetics Education Research Program](#) provides one \$10K grant per year to support genetics/genomics-specific education research in grades K-20. This year's awardees are Dr. Rivka Glaser of Stevenson University and Dr. Erin Zimmer of Lewis University, who will use the grant to develop tools to evaluate students' understanding of the genetics of complex traits.

K-12

- ASHG has begun planning its 10th annual [DNA Day essay contest](#). The 2015 essay question will address definitions of a gene beyond a single, contiguous stretch of DNA coding for a functional protein product. It will be announced on September 2. Winners will receive monetary prizes and their teachers will receive grants to purchase genetics laboratory materials for their schools.

ASHG's 64th Annual Meeting – San Diego, October 18-22

- [ASHG's Annual Meeting](#) is the largest professional genetics meeting in the world, attracting more than 6500 scientific attendees from more than 50 countries. In addition, 1500 exhibit personnel, representing ~250 companies, participate in showcasing their products and services.
- Highlights of the Annual Meeting include invited scientific sessions, 400+ abstract-driven oral presentations, 3000+ poster presentations, education events, workshops, exhibitor seminars, award presentations, and career resources and coaching.
- Advance registration is open. The fee includes access to all scientific sessions, exhibits and poster sessions, plus access to recorded webcasts and the ability to earn CME and CEU credits.
- New initiatives in 2014 include poster walks that pair trainee members with senior mentors (fully subscribed), a joint Building Bridges session with ESHG, a joint satellite symposium with ASBH, and an interactive art exhibit called The Genetic Portrait Project.
- ASHG and NHGRI are working with the [Fleet Science Center](#) in San Diego to schedule educational and social events in conjunction with NHGRI's exhibit, "[Genome: Unlocking Life's Code,](#)" which will move from Smithsonian to the Fleet Center in September.

- Future meeting locations include Baltimore in 2015 (October 6-10) and Vancouver in 2016 (October 18-22).