Committee Members
Susan M. Barman, PhD (Chair)
Francois M. Abboud, MD
Kevin P. Campbell, PhD
Shu Chien, MD, PhD
Juanita L. Merchant, PhD, MD
Ernest M. Wright, DSc
Martin Frank, PhD (Ex officio member)

Committee description/charge

The Committee on Honors (COH) is composed of five members of the Society who have been elected to the National Academy of Sciences (NAS), National Academy of Engineering (NAE), and/or Institute of Medicine (IOM). The Chair of the Committee is the APS Past President, and the Society's Executive Director is an ex officio member, without vote. The duties of the COH are to:

- Coordinate the nomination process of APS members to National Academy of Sciences (NAS), Institute of Medicine (IOM), or organizations of similar stature
- Coordinate the nomination process of APS members for major scientific awards
- Identify APS members to serve on task forces or subcommittees with these organizations

Background

The Committee on Honors (COH) is the newest committee of the APS, officially established at the 2013 Summer Council Meeting after several discussions among the members of the APS Executive Cabinet. The Executive Cabinet was charged with identifying members of the COH, and they selected the above list of individuals.

The COH was formed to address a longstanding concern of the Society, namely the inability of our members to gain recognition for their outstanding contributions to science by honorific bodies such as the NAS, NAE, and IOM. In the months leading up to the formation of the committee, Barman and Frank had engaged in several informative conversations with two APS members that are also active members of the IOM, Frank Abboud and Barbara Hansen, to gain insight into the nomination and selection process. Nominations to the IOM can be made only by IOM members. In early 2013, Barman and Frank identified a few APS members who seemed to meet the criteria for election to the IOM. On the basis of their initiative, and numerous phone calls by Frank to potential nominators, nomination packets for three APS members were completed for the 2013 IOM nomination process. One of these
nominees, Eve Marder, was elected to the IOM in Fall 2013. (Due to the confidential nature of these nominations, the names of the other applicants are not included in this report.)

Barman and Frank were also instrumental in completing the nomination process for Eve Marder’s candidacy for a 2013 National Science Foundation (NSF) National Medal of Science, which is described by the NSF as the nation’s highest honor for American scientists and engineers. A decision on this award has not yet been announced by the NSF.

Over the past year, Hansen has notified Barman and Frank about calls for nominees to serve on IOM taskforces/panels. She has specifically brought to our attention those taskforces/panels addressing topics of interest to our membership. When notified of these openings, Barman and Frank have raised the topic with the Executive Cabinet. As a result, several APS members have been contacted to self-nominate for these positions. It is unknown whether any of them followed through with a nomination, and if so, whether they were selected to serve.

Committee activities between Fall 2013 – Spring 2014

In addition to numerous email exchanges, the COH had one conference call (January 2, 2014) and one face-to-face meeting at EB (April 29, 2014). Email discussions helped clarify details regarding deadlines and nomination procedures for NAS. Plans also were initiated to nominate an APS member for the 2014 NSF National Medal of Science. The potential applicant did not follow through with providing the necessary information.

The conference call in January was to discuss potential candidates for nomination to the IOM/NAS. This included deciding to proceed with re-nominating two APS members that were nominated but not elected to the IOM last year and to identify some new candidates. The committee agreed to move forward with the nomination of five APS members for the IOM. Marty and other committee members contacted potential nominators. Results of the election will be announced in Fall 2014.

The meeting at EB was attended by Abboud and Chien as well as Barman and Frank. The COH had further discussion on the process involved in getting individuals elected to the IOM/NAS. It was agreed that the committee should discuss potential candidates well in advance of the February 1 deadlines. Since getting elected to the IOM generally requires that one has served on an IOM taskforce or had other involvement with the IOM, the committee agreed it would be wise to solicit nominees for these taskforces/panels from the APS membership. Likewise, when the NAS announces a call for nominees to a subcommittee or other panel, APS members should be encouraged to apply. Abboud recommended that the COH should focus on nominating individuals to the NAS as it may be easier to get basic scientists elected to the NAS than to the IOM.

Since the Chair of the COH is the Past president of the APS, Barman’s term ended with EB 2014. Kim Barrett will serve as Chair of the COH through EB 2015.