

**Notes on the Pathway to becoming a Fellow  
Aerospace Medical Association (AsMA)  
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According to the AsMA Bylaws, Fellows shall be elected from among the Association's active members who have made outstanding contributions to aerospace medicine and related professional domains. Although not absolutely required by the Bylaws or by Association policies, most of those elected to the grade of Fellow in recent times have been Associate Fellows.

At its annual meeting at the Sheraton Hotel in New Orleans on May 14<sup>th</sup>, 2007, the Fellows Group received a report on the Election Reform Initiative of 2007. After a lengthy discussion in the spirit of due process, a motion to approve a revised process by which new Fellows are elected was passed. The motion read as follows:

"A new process by which Fellows are elected shall be instituted for the election of the 2008 Class of Fellows and for the class years that follow. This process is in accordance with bylaws Article IV, Fellowship, Section B.4, "Fellows will be elected annually through a published process developed by the Fellows and approved by Council." The features of this process include the building of a slate of nominees by a Fellows Nominating Committee, the management of evaluation criteria by a Fellows Evaluation Committee, election by vote on the slate of nominees at the annual Meeting of Fellows, and voting by proxy for those who can not attend. The process is based on the *Fellows Election Process Assumptions* document of March 18, 2007 and the *Fellows Group Organizational Structure and Fellows Election Process Milestones* document of March 23, 2007. These documents should be maintained for reference and the *Aerospace Medical Association Policy Procedures* document should be changed to reflect the new election process."

The documents mentioned in the motion are available for reference at the AsMA website. The *Aerospace Medical Association Policy Procedures* document was subsequently up-dated to reflect the changes mandated by this motion and serves as another solid reference. An election process flow chart and Fellows Group Meeting Minutes are also available for reference at the AsMA website.

Candidates for nomination to the grade of Fellow are recommended by individual Fellows or by the Associate Fellows Group leadership. The Fellows Evaluation Committee manages the "points system" by which candidates for nomination to Fellow are evaluated. Each candidate provides personal professional information by responding to a Fellows Evaluation Committee generated questionnaire. That Committee scores the candidates and presents them to the Fellows Nominating Committee in a format that includes their scores and biographical information.

The Fellows Nominating Committee confidentially reviews the candidates for nomination and formulates the slates of nominees for election each year. The election of new Fellows takes place at the Annual Fellows Group Meeting, and a report of the outcome is included in the Meeting Minutes.

The election process follows an annual cycle and is complex. However, the pathway to becoming a Fellow is relatively easy to navigate. The key to success is to be involved. Assuming that they are active participants in Association activities, AsMA members should apply to become Associate Fellows once they have been members for five years. Members build a record of service by volunteering for committee duty, attending annual meetings, publishing papers, giving presentations, and pursuing the full spectrum of opportunities to take part in Association activities. Each member's contributions over the years are reflected in the point score that is eventually determined during the Fellows election process.

The election of each class of new Fellows was considered by many members to be governed by organizational politics in times past. The Fellows Group, which elects each class of new Fellows, made a determined effort to put an objective process in place to ensure that all worthy candidates can be recommended and properly evaluated. The internal workings of the Fellows Group Committees must be confidential because personal information is used, but the election process itself is not secretive. Information on each candidate's professional qualifications is provided by the individual member, and each candidate is scored by more than one reviewer. It is impossible to completely eliminate political factors in any organization, but this election process was structured to avoid political agendas.

The best advice to members seeking to become a Fellow is to have a long term view of AsMA membership and to participate in Association activities. Election to Fellow will come in due time for those members who attend meetings, deliver professional presentations, submit articles for publication, serve on committees, and become Associate Fellows. Being recognized by election to Fellow is a wonderful feature of a career in our professional domains.