



American Society for Nutrition  
*Excellence in Nutrition Research and Practice*  
www.nutrition.org

## **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY GPEC EDUCATIONAL NEEDS SURVEY OF ASN MEMBERSHIP 2008**

The Graduate and Professional Education Committee (GPEC), with the prior input of the ASN Executive Committee, Council Chairs, RIS Chair and ASN Executive Director and staff (in particular JJ Morgan who helped design, execute and analyze the survey) created a survey questionnaire to poll the ASN membership about their educational needs. A 30-question web-accessible survey was developed and adapted to be completed on-line. ASN members were notified initially through the ASN monthly newsletter and later by direct e-mail about how to access the survey questionnaire. The survey was opened for two discrete periods of time, once before and once after the Experimental Biology 2008 meeting. The complete results of the entire survey will be made available in the near future on-line at the ASN web site.<sup>1</sup>

The following information represents a brief summary of the GPEC survey findings grouped by topic.

### **What did the respondents identify as educational needs?**

The survey was designed to elicit perceived educational and professional development needs of ASN members. The responses can be generally categorized into 4 main areas of need:

- teaching resources
- professional development
- continuing medical education
- fostering ASN interactions

A synopsis of the main findings in each area is provided below.

---

<sup>1</sup> Additional analysis of the individual response to each question of the survey categorized by the participant's stated Council affiliation will be made available to the respective Chairs of each ASN Council. The majority of respondents to the questionnaire were affiliated with the Nutritional Science Council (52%) compared to 15% for Medical Nutrition Council, 10% for International Nutrition Council and 22% who have not chosen a Council. Notable individual differences in response related to Council affiliation are pointed in the footnotes.

## Teaching Resources

**There is a strong indication that our members would welcome ASN-sponsored opportunities for greater general access to teaching-related resources** (such as teaching material, refresher courses, case studies, etc.)

- 90% of the survey respondents “agreed” (30%) or “strongly agreed” (60%) to this idea
- 60% agreed that ASN should support additional workshops and mini-symposia.

**Making resources available for down loading through the ASN web site would be useful**

- 66% of the respondents already use the internet to obtain educational resources
- Among the current web users, the most popular current use of the web is to download *slides* and *lecture* material
  - 86% of the survey participant web users have already used the internet to download slides
  - 50% have used it to download lecture notes.

### **Top 5 resources to include in an ASN Archive of Teaching Resources**

- Key concepts in nutrition (Powerpoint slides & lectures) (60%)
- Key points that ‘changed nutrition thinking’ (journal papers) (41%)
- Nutrition and disease case studies (35%)
- Test question bank (integration questions of biochemical nutrition & clinical nutrition/disease) (23%)
- Information updates (advances in nutrition, nutrition & epigenetics) (22%)

## Professional Development

**The respondents to the survey were highly in favor of ASN offering more opportunities and information for overall professional development**

- 82% were in favor (45% ‘agreed’ and 36% ‘strongly agreed’) to this suggestion
- 88% were in favor of additional professional development opportunities specifically for graduate student and postdoctoral researchers

### **Top 3 priority areas for professional development emphasis**

- *Grantsmanship* (79%)
- *Development of communication skills*
  - Better writing (62%)
  - Better oral presentations (48%)
- *Development of better mentor-mentee communication* (53%)

**There is strong interest in developing a “Mid-Career Nutrition Leadership Institute”**

- 86% felt that it would be ‘important’ to ‘very important’
- 50% thought that, if launched, they would personally likely participate<sup>2</sup>

---

<sup>2</sup> While the majority of overall respondents responded that they would be likely to participate if the Institute was launched, the majority of Medical Nutrition Council respondents were ‘highly unlikely’ to directly participate.

- 86% thought it should be targeted to ‘academic nutrition scientists and professionals’, although there was also strong support for government and industry scientists and professionals (~50%)
- The top skills development opportunities that respondents thought should be offered in the program by the Nutrition Leadership Institute was
  - ‘influencing and motivating people’ (70%)*
  - ‘team building’ (58%)*
 Other skills, such as *‘conflict resolution’*, *‘recruiting and retaining faculty members’* and *‘developing personal insight regarding strengths and weaknesses’* were also highly rated (~45%)

## **Clinical and Medical Education & Professional Development**

### **The top 3 choices for increased ASN effort and resources in the area of clinical and medical professional development were**

- Greater access to *Nutrition in Medicine educational modules (73%)*
- Developing *clinical nutrition internships* for medical students (51%)
- Increased ASN sponsorship of *medical education courses (34%)*

### **ASN-sponsored opportunities for CME (Continuing Medical Education) credit**

- 45% of the respondents<sup>3</sup> ‘agree’ or ‘strongly agree’ that ASN should offer more opportunities for CME credit (see footnote)
- In the area of subject matter for CME credit, the top 3 priority areas were as follows
  - Clinical/medical uses of nutrition (60%)*
  - Updates in basic science (47%)*
  - Workshops on research methods (44%)*

### **Using the internet for personal education and CME credit**

- A sizable portion of survey participants who were web users also use the internet as a means for personal education
  - 36% have used the internet for *web seminars*
  - 20% have used the internet for *continuing medical education (CME) training*

## **Fostering ASN Interactions**

### **Increased ASN sponsorship of “bench-to-bedside” mini-symposia**

- 87% of the respondents thought that ASN sponsorship of mini-symposia with a ‘bench-to-bedside’ theme would be a good way to foster interaction between medical nutrition and other interest groups in ASN

---

<sup>3</sup> Of the 15% of the total respondents who claimed affiliation with the Medical Nutrition Council, 69% agreed or strongly agreed that ASN should offer more opportunities for CME credit.

**Development of teaching resources that use a “bench-to-bedside” theme**

- 55% thought that the development of teaching resources that emphasized a “bench-to-bedside” theme would encourage interaction between medical nutrition and other research interest groups in ASN

**ASN should facilitate more opportunities for interactions with representatives from industry and government**

- 77% agreed or strongly agreed that they would like to see more opportunities for these interactions
- 90% of the respondents were particularly interested in seeing *short descriptions of examples of nutrition careers in industry and government*

**Using the internet for social networking**

- A small portion (15%) of the survey respondents currently use the internet for ‘social networking’ functions, such as using *bulletin boards* or *chat rooms*.

## Characteristics of Respondents GPEC Educational Survey - 2008

**How many ASN members participated in the GPEC Educational Needs anonymous survey?**<sup>4</sup>

In total, about 630 ASN members completed the survey questionnaire

**What were the characteristics of the survey participants?**

The respondents appear to represent a broad cross-section of members in ASN.

**The majority (66%) of respondents was regular ASN members;** the next highest category of respondents was students (16%), followed by emeritus members (6%).

**The respondents represented a well distributed age range**<sup>5</sup>

- 40% were in their 50s and 60s,
- 40% were in their 30s and 40s,
- 13% were in their 20s
- 6% were in their 70s.

**Duration of membership in ASN was also fairly evenly split**

- 40% of the respondents were ASN members for 5 years or less<sup>6</sup>,
- 36% were members for 6-20 years, and
- 24% were members for more than 20 years.

**Most of the respondents held Ph.D. degrees**

- Three-fourths of the respondents hold a PhD degree,
- 10% an MD
- 10% an RD

**About half of the respondents listed themselves as 'academic'**<sup>7</sup>

- 52% classified themselves as 'academic'
- 29% as 'researcher'
- 13% as 'teacher'
- 7% as 'medical professional'
- 8% as 'industry' affiliated
- 5% as government.

**A large majority of survey respondents belong to other professional societies**

- ASN was their sole professional society affiliation for 14% of the respondents
- 86% of the respondents belong to at least one other professional society besides ASN
- Of those that belong to another professional society, the most popular individual society was the American Dietetic Association (34%), followed by more general

---

<sup>4</sup> Participants were given the option at the end of the survey to provide additional comments and to identify themselves if they so desired for additional follow up information. Seventeen percent of the respondents (n=106) chose to do so.

<sup>5</sup> International Nutrition Council respondents were younger on average than the overall survey respondents.

<sup>6</sup> The majority of survey respondents have been members of ASN for 5 years or less. The majority of the Medical Nutrition Council respondents have been members for over 20 years.

<sup>7</sup> Participants could choose more than one descriptor

scientific societies, such as the American Association for the Advancement of Science (17%) and the Society for Experimental Biology and Medicine (12%). The remaining society affiliations were widely dispersed. Maximum membership<sup>8</sup> in other FASEB societies by ASN members was 36% (see footnote).

- Overall, membership in individual FASEB societies was low (7% or less).

## What are the areas of nutrition interest of the survey respondents?

### Human and clinical nutrition is the major area of nutrition interest

- 52% of the respondents indicated that 'human and clinical nutrition' best fit their area of nutrition interest
- 31% picked 'molecular, genetic and biochemical nutrition'
- 17% 'international and community nutrition'<sup>9</sup>
- 14% 'nutritional epidemiology'<sup>9</sup>
- 8% 'animal and comparative nutrition'.

## What is the ASN Council affiliation of the survey respondents?

**Almost one-in-four (22%) of the survey participants reported that they were NOT affiliated with a specific ASN Scientific Council.**

**Among those that identified a Council affiliation<sup>10</sup>,**

- 68% chose Nutritional Science
- 19% Medical Nutrition
- 13% International Nutrition

## What Research Interest Section (RIS) do the survey respondents belong to?

**16% of the respondents claimed NO RIS affiliation**

**There was a wide distribution in RIS affiliation**

- Among those who were RIS affiliated<sup>11</sup>, the 3 most popular RIS groups were:
  - Vitamins & Minerals (27%),
  - Nutrition & Gene Interactions (21%)
  - Dietary Bioactive Compounds (20%).

## Are the survey respondents actively involved in ASN activities?

**15% of the survey respondents were currently active in ASN committee or editorial board work, while 28% of the participants had previously served in this role<sup>12</sup>.**

---

<sup>8</sup> Respondents checked all professional affiliations. Maximum membership estimate assumes that each society response represents a single individual respondent who did not belong to any other individual FASEB society. Data based on 10 of the most prominent of the 20 FASEB society members that were presented as check box choices.

<sup>9</sup> The International Nutrition Council respondents overwhelmingly selected 'International & Community Nutrition' (82%) and 'Nutritional Epidemiology' (29%) as their top area of nutrition interest.

<sup>10</sup> Members can be affiliated with more than one Council

<sup>11</sup> The majority of Medical Nutrition Council respondents do not belong to any RIS. The majority of International Nutrition Council respondents belong to the Community & Public Health (45%) and Nutrition Epidemiology (41%) RIS.

<sup>12</sup> Medical nutrition Council respondents participate at a higher rate in ASN leadership positions than overall respondents.