

**American Society of Animal Science  
Candidate for the Office of President-Elect  
2010**

**Margaret E. Benson**

Margaret E. Benson currently serves as the chair of the Department of Animal Sciences at Washington State University, a position she has held since February of 2007. She grew up on a diversified livestock (beef and sheep) and grain farm near Okabena, Minnesota, and remains an owner of the family farm. Benson received BS and MS degrees in animal science and ruminant nutrition, respectively, from North Dakota State University. Her PhD in ruminant nutrition was earned at the University of Kentucky. Benson began her career in academia when she accepted an assistant professor position in the Department of Animal Science at Michigan State University in 1985. She was promoted through the ranks to the position of professor in 1996, and for most of her career, she has held an appointment with a 3-way split in teaching, research, and extension responsibilities. While at Michigan State University, she taught a variety of courses including Introductory Animal Science, Ruminant Nutrition, Sheep Production and Management, and Ethics in Animal Agriculture. Throughout her career, Benson has been recognized as a dedicated and skilled educator, and she received Michigan State University's Teacher Scholar Award in 1992. She was also recognized by the American Society of Animal Science in 1995, winning the Outstanding Young Teacher Award for the Midwestern Section. Applied research and extension were part of her responsibilities when she conducted applied sheep and beef cattle nutrition and management studies and served as the state sheep extension specialist. In 2000, Benson completed a master's of business administration degree at Michigan State University to attain new expertise for application in teaching, extension, and administrative activities. She served as the interim chair of the Department of Animal Sciences at Michigan State University for 2 1/2 years. In 2007, Benson accepted the position of chair in the Department of Animal Sciences at Washington State University. In this position, she leads a faculty and staff who are engaged in, and committed to, delivering outstanding undergraduate and graduate programs, conducting diverse research programs that contribute new findings to fundamental and applied animal science disciplines, and delivering extension programs that address emerging and relevant issues designed to sustain animal agriculture in the Pacific Northwest, nationally, and globally. In her role as department chair, her responsibilities include fiscal and administrative management of department allocations from academic programs, Agricultural Research Center, and Washington State University extension funding lines. Administrative and fiscal responsibility and oversight also includes 4 animal production units, a meats laboratory, an experimental animal laboratory, a feed mill, and a farm shop. Benson has served the American Society of Animal Sciences throughout her career with service on a variety of committees at the national and sectional levels. She recently completed a term on the Board of Directors and was involved in developing the current strategic plan.

## Vision Statement

To describe my vision for the American Society of Animal Sciences, I first looked at our last 100 years, which have been marked with many accomplishments. Although the future is unpredictable, our core values must remain unchanged. The changes that society is experiencing have likely affected all of us at personal and professional levels, and the federal, state, and local economic environments are having dramatic effects on higher education, departments of animal science, allied industries, and our stakeholders. How we respond to these and other changes, collectively and individually, will determine what we as an organization will accomplish over our next 100 years.

With change comes opportunity. It is the responsibility of ASAS to embrace change and play an important role in helping to position our animal and agribusiness industries and academic institutions for a successful future. How we, our students, our stakeholders, our clientele, and society respond to challenges and opportunities will chart the course for what animal science and animal scientists will do in the future. To effectively respond to a continually evolving landscape, our association must be nimble and flexible, capable of proactive and reactive actions. Proactively, ASAS needs to anticipate upcoming needs and situations and empower our membership to move forward with new initiatives. Reactively, we must address the unexpected and provide sound leadership and effective communication. The current strategic plan does a good job in combining visionary perspectives for an unknown future with the acknowledgment that current issues such as membership, communications, and relevance to an increasingly diverse core of scientists need to be addressed. I served on the ASAS Board when the strategic plan was written, and it was rewarding to see the dedication and commitment our membership has in making ASAS successful in the future. Membership input clearly demonstrated investment in the strategic plan process and a desire for a successful outcome. The five goals and objectives of the plan include having a strong voice with decision makers, expanding membership numbers, investing in our membership, effective use of communications technologies, and our desire to serve as a generator and disseminator of scientific information and knowledge. These goals address our changing demographics, our need to be responsive and expansive to those we serve, and our need to employ the tools and technologies we have available to enhance our communication effectiveness. The strategic plan is a map to use to aggressively reach our goals. What we do as a society must be examined in the context of our goals, and our plan needs to have the flexibility to change course if necessary.

I believe ASAS needs to continue to take a stronger and more visible stand to meet one of the strategic directives—to be the scientific voice of animal agriculture. We must convey the importance of federal funding support of animal research to legislative bodies, academic institutions, and stakeholder groups. Proposed or actual changes in funding priorities and the effect changes will have if implemented must be clearly communicated. Within USDA, animal research dollars are in direct competition with plant science research. The current reorganization at USDA may change how grant funds will be allocated, and there is speculation that the proportion of grant dollars going to support animal science research may be reduced. If this is true, it will significantly

alter how basic and applied animal research will be conducted in the future. Our ASAS leadership must work actively to educate USDA, legislators, and the agricultural industries so they understand the importance of investing in animal science research and the value and effect of its past investment. Although USDA is currently in the spotlight, the competitive federal funding environment is one that affects most all of our departments of animal science, and our competitive position in the other federal funding programs is also of concern. As a Society, we need to voice a unified and compelling position and be proactive in defining our needs and abilities if we are to continue to advance our sciences and move our industries forward in a competitive global society. With a Public Policy Committee in place and a formal scientific presence resumed in Washington, DC, important first steps have been taken.

The American Society of Animal Science also needs to be a recognized and reliable voice of science in communicating with audiences ranging from regulatory officials to the general public on difficult and controversial subjects. We must be prepared to provide science-based, unbiased information and be viewed as the reliable source for that information. How effective we are in communicating with diverse audiences will have a bearing on our successful and sustainable future.

The American Society of Animal Science has been an important part of my professional career, and it has provided many valued opportunities for me to grow professionally. Today's Society has a different membership demographic and faces different challenges than when I became a member. However, ASAS must and can provide professional relevance to today's and tomorrow's members. I am committed to giving back to an organization from which I have benefited and look forward to working with the members to keep ASAS relevant and important. Helping to chart the course to lead the American Society of Animal Science on a continuing and successful journey would be an honor and an opportunity I would welcome.