President Robert L. Nussbaum welcomed everyone to the business meeting. He began by asking for a moment of silence for the ASHG members who died during the past year. They are: Margorie Asmussen, Don R. Barnett, Camyilnn Brannan, Arnold M. Clark, David M. Danks, Andree M. Dozy, Avril M. Friel, Melissa V. Hill, Claes Lundsteen, Helena A. Miller, Matthew W. Nash, Jane M. Olson, Fay O. Redwine, David C. Rowe, Jakub Patrick Sram, Richard H. Ward, Robin Michael Winter.

Nussbaum thanked retiring board members for their service to ASHG and presented gifts to those who were present. They are: P. Michael Conneally, Wylie Burke, Leena Peltonen-Palotie and Val Sheffield.

SECRETARY’S REPORT - David Nelson, PhD

Nelson presented the Business Meeting minutes from the 2003 meeting in Los Angeles that were posted on the ASHG web site in October. A motion was made and seconded to approve the minutes. The motion carried.

Elections

Nelson thanked the 2004 Nominating Committee comprising Harry Orr, Chair; Miriam Blitzer; Virginia Corson; Stephen Goodman; James Lupski; John Phillips and Anne Spence. The names of the following candidates appeared on the slate: Steve Warren, PhD, for president; Harry Dietz, MD; Brendan Lee, MD, PhD; Roderick McInnes, MD, PhD; Roberta Pagon, MD; Reed Pyeritz, MD, PhD; Daniel VanDyke, PhD for directors. The winners were: Steve Warren for president and Rod McInnes, Roberta Pagon and Reed Pyeritz for directors. Nelson thanked everyone for their willingness to be on the ballot. He then said that this was the first year electronic balloting was instituted. Out of 4500 ballots sent out by both paper and email, 1121 were returned – about 25% - which is about the same as the number of paper ballots received in the past election. Balloting electronically reduces the cost to the Society, and he appreciates that members are keeping up with ASHG’s efforts to utilize electronic methods.

Nelson reported that as of October 19th, there were over 7,700 members, which includes 1,500 trainees and 1,300 from overseas. There are 1,500 members who have let their membership lapse in the past two years, but this is balanced by 1,100 new members, such that total paid membership is nearly identical compared with 2003. He encouraged people to go to the Web site and pay their dues. Nelson said that the Society had enjoyed an annual increase in the membership since 1999, but it has leveled off in the past two years.

Regarding this year’s meeting, the registration total is 4,980, up slightly from last year. He said that a high percentage of registrants came from outside the US – perhaps because of the Canadian location. The increase in Canadian registrants was over 700.

ByLaws Changes

Nelson said that the Board decided to make some minor changes to the bylaws. The first change is in Article IV and deals with elections. In this article, there is an opportunity for individuals to add names to ballots and this had been linked to the timing of the annual meeting. The Board thought this was an awkward way of putting in deadlines for this process. They are proposing to remove "received by the secretary not less than 10 weeks before the Annual Meeting" and replace it with "nominations must be received not less than
10 weeks before ballots are distributed”. Nelson asked for a show of hands to change this section of the Bylaws. The membership voted unanimously for the change.

The second change is found in Article VI. The Bylaws read that "The Society shall publish a program of its scientific meetings, including abstracts of the papers to be presented. A copy of the program will be sent to members in good standing without additional charge." The Board is proposing to change this to "will be available to each member without additional charge." Nelson explained that the rationale is not to have to send the abstract book to every member of the Society, but only make the books available upon request, and continue to make them available at the meeting. He made it clear that the compact discs would be sent out to members prior to the meeting.

There was much discussion by the membership present at the meeting in reaction to this proposed change. Many were unhappy about the possibility of not having a book prior to the meeting. Nelson called for a show of hands in favor of changing Article VI. There was not a clear majority, and the motion was tabled. President Nussbaum said that it is important to hear from the general membership and a survey will be sent out to all regular members immediately after the annual meeting to determine the opinions of the full membership. (Staff Note: An internet poll was distributed and as a result of the responses, there will be a Program and Abstracts book with CD sent to all registrants. The Program guide will be distributed on site.)

TREASURER’S REPORT – Jan Friedman, MD, PhD

Friedman reported that in general the Society is doing fine with a projected net revenue for 2004 of $132,963. The total revenue is projected to be $4.1M, slightly higher than in 2003. The total expense is projected at $3.99M, slightly higher than in 2003. The projected net revenue for the meeting is $104,852.

Friedman discussed major changes that include an increase in the price for nonmember journal subscriptions, an increase in income for fellowships, reduced journal expenses due to fewer pages being published and a reduction in manuscript editing fees, a decrease in payments to ABGC as a result of fulfillment of a 10-year support program, and increased expenses in contracted services for computer support.

He said that the "fund balance," or the Society’s net worth ratio is 60%. The preferred level is between 50% and 75%. The Society moved its investments from Merrill-Lynch to TIAA-CREF. The overall portfolio return is about 11.5%. The management fees are lower than previously at $833/month.

The development fund started at $200,000 and now is at $160,000 after travel awards and the education summit. No money has been added to the development fund. The Board after much discussion decided to ask the membership, starting with the Board, to contribute to the fund. The development fund committee will be comprised of Bianchi, Ward, Nussbaum and Strass. Various ways of advertising the fund and how to contribute to it will be devised. The Board decided that getting involved in K-12 education as well as encouraging medical students to come into the field would be the targets for spending. The Board decided to spend up to $10,000 to explore hiring a professional development person to devise a plan to raise money for these purposes.
**Budget**

The budgeted total revenue for 2005 is $4,265,000 and the budgeted total expenses are $4,210,000, with a net revenue of about $55,000. The 2005 meeting is budgeted to have a net income of $193,972, about double that of the 2004 meeting.

Friedman outlined cost increases/income decreases. The nonmember subscriptions have been falling at the rate of 6% per year. UCP has stated that their copyediting fees will probably rise in 2005. A new staff education position has been added. The Board discussed accepting a break-even budget but was uncomfortable with the risk that a large deficit could ensue. Friedman said that it was decided that the regular member dues will be increased by $20 per year in 2006 to $150. By doing so, the Society will raise an additional $57,000.

**EDITOR'S REPORT - Steve Warren**

Warren thanked retiring editorial board members for their service: John Blangero, Rob Nichols, Evan Eichler, and Lisa Shaffer. He then announced the new associate editors: Goncalo Abecasis, Michael Epstein, Stephen Scherer, and Deborah Nickerson.

Warren told the membership that he would be retiring as editor and Cynthia Morton, the next editor-in-chief, will begin her transition over the summer of 2005. She will begin her editorial duties with the January 2006 issue. Morton should have a fairly seamless transition because all the journal products and processes are electronic.

Warren said that the journal circulation has declined for two reasons. Libraries under increasing fiscal constraints have consolidated multiple institutional subscriptions to a single subscription allowing electronic access to all those on campus or within the institution; our open access policy at six months after publication has added to the problem.

Warren announced that submitted manuscripts will be available on the Web prior to typesetting. The details of this new publish-ahead-of-print feature are being ironed out. This will serve to diminish the submission to publication interval. The Web page for the journal is much improved and now resides in the administrative office instead of at UCP. Warren commented that it is now much more user friendly. Most of the top ten genetics journals are review publications so we are considered number two among journals who publish primary research is human genetics. The cited half life of papers in the journal is 5.1 months, 32nd overall in primary scientific publications. The journal’s impact factor went up a full point in 2004 to 11.4. Reasons for the rise are that the turnaround time has been reduced and the journal has been more selective than in previous years. Warren stated that the acceptance rate has dropped to 16% even though the standards have not changed. Approximately 40% of submissions are sent for peer review, and the rest are rejected after editorial review. In general, the latter are not flawed, they are just not of sufficient interest to the journal.

The time from submission to rejection is 10 days. The time from submission to acceptance is 65 days (including both editorial office review and the review of the manuscript by external referees). The time from point of acceptance to electronic publication by UCP is 33 days.
Open access

Warren was asked about the "Open Access" issue, and he said that the AJHG has had a long tradition of open access. It was the first journal to go to free release 6 months after publication, and it is distributed without charge at the time of publication to many third-world countries, so the journal fulfills many of the points that were raised recently both within the scientific community and in Congress. The Board is actively discussing ways in which it can readily make the journal available to the public without affecting the business plan. Having the journal completely open access would jeopardize the subscription base, but there may be ways to make it available to the public, who are paying for a good percentage of research that is being conducted.

EXECUTIVE VICE PRESIDENT'S UPDATE - Dr. Joann Boughman

Boughman described briefly the two types of ASHG fellowship programs. She reported that there have already been two completed cycles of the NHGRI/ASHG fellows (Daryl Pritchard and Jennifer Leib have finished their tenures). The third fellow is in place (Michael Stebbins), and he is now spending time at the NHGRI and will move on to the "Hill" in the winter.

Another fellowship program is now being funded through the CDC in conjunction with ASHG. A public health genetics fellow, Ridgely Green, was chosen as the first fellow. This is a new partnership that the ASHG and the CDC are developing to institutionalize genetics in the public health sector via CDC and to make the public health perspective more integral to ASHG. There are several policy and legislative issues being discussed between the two agencies.

Genetic Nondiscrimination

Boughman reported that genetic nondiscrimination legislation will die at the end of the 108th Congress, but in the 109th Congress, ASHG and other coalition partners will push the legislation forward on both the Senate and House sides. The Society has been working with the Secretary's Advisory Committee on Genetics, Health and Society on the issue and has helped arrange panels for testimony at SACGHS' recent meeting and for various jurisdictions around the country.

Stem Cells

Stem cell research continues to be an important issue at the US federal and state levels. Legislation was put forward on the House side recently, and it is anticipated that legislative endeavors will come forward in the 109th Congress that ASHG will track.

Open Access

ASHG will be responding to the NIH notice in the Federal Register by November 15. FASEB is also very involved with this issue, but ASHG is one of the organizations already in compliance with proposed policies and clearly supports the spirit of open access.
**Rare Disease Testing**

Presently, the ASHG is a part of a working group with CDC on rare disease testing. The ASHG perspective includes the interface between research and clinical testing. The Society hosted a workshop and will continue to include and obtain the perspective of the researchers as CDC and others move forward in clinical rare disease testing.

**Family Health History Initiative**

There have been several initiatives in family health history taking place simultaneously. ASHG has an active program along with the NSGC and the Genetic Alliance, and the family history tool developed as a result of this association is available on the ASHG Web site. The ASHG is also working with the Institute of Cultural Partnerships and with the Library of Congress on a HRSA-funded project in which grantee representatives will be going to underrepresented minority populations and will take a more culturally sensitive folk approach to family histories, leading to the development of an increased awareness of family medical history. The Society has also worked with Research!America on some of its polls (Parade Magazine, September 9, 2004, on Individualized Medicine).

On November 8 the Surgeon General will launch a national initiative to encourage all American families to learn more about their family health histories. He will announce that Thanksgiving Day will be declared Family History Day. The ASHG, the Genetic Alliance and NCHPEG have been working with NHGRI and the Surgeon General’s office to make this an annual event.

**SOCIAL ISSUES COMMITTEE - Mary Z. Pelias, PhD, JD, and Kathy Hudson, PhD, Chairs**

Members of the committee are: Wylie Burke, Sylvia Au, Elizabeth Cameron, Louis Elsas, Robert Fineman, Eric Johnson, Matthew McGinniss, Angela Scheuerle.

Pelias announced that the Social Issues sessions in Los Angeles in 2003 had been very well attended and the two sessions at the 2004 meeting are: (1) Reproductive Genetic Technologies: Who Decides? The Role of Professional Societies and Advisory Bodies in Setting Policy Guidelines; and (2) Public Representations of Genetic Research: Social, Legal and Ethical Issues. She reported that one of the sessions for the 2005 meeting had already been determined: Genetic Information: Is Knowledge Power? It will be moderated by Bonnie LeRoy. The second one for 2005 is tentative but will revolve around race and genetics. The details will be worked out at a later date.

Pelias thanked the Board and the Society for giving her the opportunity to serve and to chair the Social Issues Committee. Her tenure will be ending at the end of 2004. She then introduced Kathy Hudson, the new Chair of the Committee.

Hudson reported that in addition to organizing the Social Issues sessions, the committee is responsible for a new mandate from the board to help coordinate rapid action teams to respond to new and emerging issues. She reported that the committee is anxious to be as responsive and helpful to the board as possible and to reflect the broad interests and expertise of the membership of the Society. The committee will review the 31 policy statements that are already in place dating back to 1987 and will develop a set of priorities to bring to the Board for further direction.
Hudson announced that there are positions open on the committee, and she encouraged interested members to contact her.

PROGRAM COMMITTEE - Brenden Lee and Tony Wynshaw-Boris, Chairs

Members of this committee are: Chris Amos, David Beier, Nancy Cox, William Gahl, Louanne Hudgins, Jeff Long, Marcy MacDonald, John McPherson, Richard Spielman, Katherine Schneider, Nancy Spinner, Constantine Stratakis, Douglas Wilson

Lee announced that the theme for this year’s meeting is "development." He stated that the 2004 committee continued to do cross topic sessions, and he encouraged feedback from the membership. He highlighted some of the new initiatives for this year including a joint workshop with ARVO and one that focused on NIH study section mechanics. He said that for the first time the schedule was changed in order to have two poster sessions on Friday and two platform sessions on Saturday. The committee this year reviewed over 113 new proposals and some deferrals from the prior year for a total of 121, the highest number ever submitted. Many excellent proposals have already been considered by the current committee for 2005.

For the Toronto meeting, the committee evaluated 3,160 abstracts, an all-time high for the Society.

He thanked the Committee for their hard work and made special mention to those rotating off at the end of 2004. They are: Nancy Cox, Louanne Hudgins, Nancy Spinner and Doug Wilson. The chair for the 2005 meeting will be Tony Wynshaw-Boris.

Wynshaw-Boris reported that the theme for the 2005 meeting in Salt Lake City will be "the promise of the genome," and Peter Byers, 2005 President, is planning a presidential symposium on that subject. Fifty invited sessions have already been reviewed, and the committee is also considering a new set of invited speakers that will provide outreach to other professional societies. He acknowledged Brendan Lee’s hard work and encouraged members to let the chairs know how improvements can be made.

PROFESSIONAL ETHICS COMMITTEE - Ethylin Wang Jabs, MD

Members of this committee are: Bartha Knoppers, Barbara McGillivray, Helga Toriello, Daniel Van Dyke, and Vivian Weinblatt.

Jabs reported that this committee is responsible for responding to the board as it considers ethical issues within the Society, the scientific community, the general public and industry. She said that the committee has proposed to draft a code of ethics for the ASHG. It will consist of guiding principles for the Society as a whole as well as for its individual members. Among the principles will be those that advocate for the responsible conduct and use of basic/clinical scientific expertise, the disclosure of conflicts of interest, the respect for racial and cultural diversity and the avoidance of misconduct and misrepresentation. The committee will draft a document that will be available for the membership for comments and suggestions. Through an educational session at the 2005 meeting and through publications, the process involved in developing this code of ethics will be presented and discussions will be encouraged on issues such as the relationship of the Society to industry. Anticipated date of finalization and approval by the board will be 2005 and no later than
INFORMATION AND EDUCATION COMMITTEE - Loraine Oman-Ganes, MD, Chair

Members of the 2004 Committee are: David Gale, Paula Gregory, Susanne Haga, Feige Kaplan, Judith Fridovich-Keil, Neil Lamb, Howard McLeod, and Vincent Riccardi.

Oman-Ganes discussed the importance of maintaining old partnerships and building new ones with multiple groups and organizations interested in science education, including teacher organizations. She reported on a unique collaborative effort that was held in September in Bethesda called the "ASHG Science Education Summit", in which 30 leaders in the field of science education participated. This was a first-of-its-kind event where representatives considered collaborative approaches to enhancing K-12 and beyond science education. A list of participants can be obtained via the ASHG Administrative Office.

Oman-Ganes said that the committee has continuing concerns about the status of evolution education both nationally and internationally, and Joe McInerney has assisted the committee extensively in promoting positive information. The Society was represented this year at the annual National Association of Biology Teachers meeting and a short course entitled "The Genetics Detective" was presented at the National Science Teachers Association’s annual meeting in Atlanta. Eighty-five science teachers attended the short course.

The annual high school workshop was held in Toronto, and there were 320 students and teachers in attendance. The workshop included 10 small group sessions with 30 Canadian and US presenters. In addition, the annual student mentor lunch was well-received again this year.

Oman-Ganes reported on the "mentor network" and said that the committee is planning to make it more effective by liaising with other networks that are already in existence, both in school systems and through other organizations.

She thanked committee members for their hard work and particularly noted the outgoing members, Vincent Riccardi and Feige Kaplan.

INTERNATIONAL FEDERATION OF HUMAN GENETICS SOCIETIES - Judith Allanson, MD

The Federation consists of five full member societies including: ASHG, ESHG, the Human Genetics Society of Australasia, the Latin American Network of Human Genetics Societies and East Asian Union of Human Genetics Societies. The Federation is in the process of considering an application from the newly formed African Society of Human Genetics. There are also 48 corresponding members, many of which are national genetics societies. Most of the activity of the Federation over the last year has focused on the International Congress of Human Genetics, which will be held in Brisbane in August of 2006. The Scientific Program Committee will be meeting in Singapore at the HUGO meeting in November. The Committee has finalized eight workshop proposals and a large number of invited session proposals. The breakdown in session proposal acceptances is 30 from North America, 30 from Europe, 30 from Australasia and 10 from South America. Allanson appealed to Asian colleagues to submit proposals for invited sessions. The committee would like to see more proposals in the following areas: clinical genetics, prenatal diagnosis, pharmacogenetics, stem cells and bioinformatics.
Student support will be made available, and the ASHG has pledged $20,000. Large-scale sponsorship has been arranged with two companies.

NEW BUSINESS - Dr. Steve Warren

In response to a question about fund raising, Nussbaum said that the Society is at a turning point right now and it must decide whether to stay the course or have heightened visibility on certain issues. The Society presently is starting to have an impact on policy issues, as it has invested in ASHG fellows on the "Hill." However, Nussbaum emphasized that education is where the focus needs to be right now, and he plans to approach philanthropic organizations for funding to support a much more concerted full-time effort in educational activities. He talked about the importance of the Development Fund and how it will target educational initiatives for K-12 or other educational efforts such as bringing MD/PhD students who haven’t quite decided on making a career in genetics to the meeting. He also mentioned raising funds to increase the exposure of underserved minority groups to genetics by granting student scholarships to attend the meeting. He stated that many Board members have already donated to the fund, and he hoped that other Society members will join him in making similar contributions.

Nussbaum discussed the possibility of a bylaws change regarding the tenure of the president. There has been some support for a two-year presidency. If that were the case, the presidency would require a more substantial time commitment. He asked for feedback from the membership and promised to investigate the idea over the next year.

Vic Riccardi from the floor reminded the ASHG officers of the importance of preserving the history of the Society and appealed to the Executive Director to consider a more formal way of keeping this history. He also pointed out that the Toronto Convention Center has been difficult for handicapped people and asked for additional considerations in future meetings. He suggested that a handicapped liaison be appointed and volunteered to be that person.

There being no further business, it was moved and seconded that the meeting be adjourned. The motion carried.

Respectfully submitted,
David Nelson, Secretary
Elaine Strass, Executive Director