The Role of the Health Physics Society in the 21st Century
Raymond H. Johnson, Jr., President, Health Physics Society
481 N. Frederick Ave., Suite 302
Gaithersburg, MD 20877

ABSTRACT
As the Health Physics Society approaches the 21st century, it is time to evaluate the changing role of radiation safety in the United States. Clearly the Society has changed since its formation in 1956. Early members of the Society were mostly concerned with understanding the biological effects of radiation and establishing programs for controlling radiation exposures. Today, relatively few of the Society’s members are engaged in academic or research functions, or development of radiation safety standards. The largest proportion of members is involved in the implementation of radiation safety programs. These programs also do not typically require the technical judgment of safety programs in the 1950s and 1960s. In the 21st century, most radiation safety functions will be highly prescriptive. The role of the specialist in radiation safety will be to carefully implement the established requirements.

Several past presidents of the Society have met with the Executive Committee at a special retreat to consider, “Who are we, whom do we represent, and whom would we like to represent.” This retreat determined that there are over 25,000 radioactive material licenses issued in the United States. Each of these licenses requires a responsible manager, known as a Radiation Safety Officer (RSO). We estimate that there are about 20,000 RSOs in the U.S. The current HPS membership of about 6,000 represents only a small fraction of the persons responsible for radiation safety in the U.S. In fact, relatively few RSO’s would call themselves health physicists, or even know the meaning of the words “health physics.” Most RSOs have multiple duties, of which radiation safety may be a small part.

The question for the HPS is whether the Society should expand its outreach to include RSOs? These RSOs currently have no organization providing opportunities for professional development, education, technical support, or networking. Should the HPS include RSOs in its membership, even though they are not full time practicing health physicists? Would this reduce the Society to a trade organization, rather than a professional organization? Does the HPS have a responsibility for maintaining and upgrading the quality of radiation safety programs in the U.S. by providing membership services to RSOs? Does the name “Health Physics Society” adequately represent the broad functions of radiation safety in the U.S.? Perhaps the name should be changed to “Radiation Safety Society.”

Many issues confront the HPS as we approach the 21st century. The changing field of radiation safety will result in changes in HPS membership and services. More and more the Society is challenged to meet the needs of persons engaged in operational and applied radiation safety, rather than academic and research interests. Outreach to provide professional support to 20,000 RSOs could drastically change the demographics of the Society. The issues confronting the HPS likely reflect challenges to be faced by other IRPA societies in the 21st century.

INTRODUCTION
The Health Physics Society is facing changes as the profession of radiation safety evolves in the new century. When the Society was formed nearly 45 years ago, there was a need for radiation safety professionals to join together for resolving complex issues of the physics and biological effects of radiation. Thousands of specialists in radiation safety were involved in programs for nuclear weapons development. Uses of radioactive materials in nuclear power, research, industrial, and medical applications were still relatively new. Procedures and guidelines for radiation safety for workers and the public were still developing.

Most early members of the Society would not have called themselves "health physicists." No schools were offering degrees in health physics as a profession. Early members were trained in physics, engineering, mathematics, chemistry, biology, and other sciences. The profession of radiation safety was a mingling of many technical disciplines. Consequently, the appeal for many entering the profession was the challenging opportunity for applying science and engineering for resolving problems in radiation safety. Since few standards or procedures were established for radiation safety in the 1950s, radiation safety professionals relied on their knowledge of the sciences to apply independent judgement for developing radiation safety programs.

Many early members were engaged in research programs for understanding the biological effects of radiation. Many studies focused on measurements to track the movement of radionuclides in the environment. Methodologies for both external and internal dosimetry were still evolving in the 1950s and 1960s.

Changes in the HPS Since 1956
The membership of the Society has changed as the profession of radiation safety has evolved since the 1950s. As the Society comes into the 21st century, the roles of health physicists in general have become more operational. Less than 15% of the members are now engaged in academic or research functions. In contrast, as much as 75% of the members are now engaged in operational and applied radiation safety. Only about 10% of the members are engaged in development of radiation safety standards or regulations.

If the 1990s are a good indicator, in the 21st century, most radiation safety functions will be highly
prescriptive. The role of the radiation safety professional will be the careful implementation of the requirements established by regulations. The prescriptive nature of regulations means that radiation safety practitioners need only read and comply with the regulations. As regulatory programs become more prescriptive, the requirements for radiation safety can be met by persons who carefully follow the prescribed guidelines, without requiring the extensive education and experience expected of professional health physicists. Thus, more and more, radiation safety programs are being managed by Radiation Safety Officers (RSOs), who are not full-time practicing specialists in radiation safety. The performance of radiation safety programs will be rated on how well programs comply with the established requirements. Although radiation safety professionals are expected to understand the basics of radiation safety, the success of radiation safety programs may be judged more as a matter of compliance with requirements rather than the reduction of radiation exposures to workers or the public.

WHY ARE YOU AN HPS MEMBER?

At each chapter visit, as President-elect, I concluded my presentation with six questions. The first of these questions was, "I am, or am not, a member of the Health Physics Society, because..." Everyone was given an index card for recording their answers. About 1300 cards were collected and entered into a database for evaluation by the Executive Committee and Board of Directors. The following responses are summarized from the President's Message (HPS Newsletter October 1999).

I Am a Member, Because…

About 75% of the respondents indicated that they were national HPS members. The most common response was from those who identified themselves as radiation safety professionals and the HPS as the professional organization representing their interests. The main responses are summarized below (not in any particular order).

1. HPS represents my profession
2. HPS is premier organization in radiation safety
3. HPS provides educational, networking opportunities
4. HPS enhances professional growth and enrichment
5. HPS provides great publications
6. HPS provides forum for technical discussions
7. HPS stands for good science
8. HPS provides latest news on radiation safety
9. HPS helps with understanding issues
10. HPS helps maintain association with peers
11. HPS gives opportunities to be involved in issues
12. HPS helps me keep up with topics outside my work
13. HPS helps educate the public
14. HPS represents those I have interests with
15. HPS services are a great bargain
16. HPS helps me keep in touch
17. HPS sponsors great meetings
18. Being a member is part of being a professional
19. HPS provides information exchange and contacts
20. HPS provides strength in numbers
21. HPS membership is seen as a plus on my resume
22. HPS provides information on employment options
23. HPS provides information on education options
24. HPS lends credibility and supports my work
25. HPS helps me broaden perspectives
26. HPS provides good technical information
27. HPS provides opportunity to contact other HPs
28. Offers opportunity for professional interactions
29. HPS monitors legislation
30. HPS enhances my profession

I Am Not an HPS Member, Because…

The most common concern expressed by non-members is the cost of HPS membership relative to benefits provided. The main responses are summarized below (in no particular order).

1. My job is not primarily health physics
2. The HPS does not focus on practical issues
3. I am a Chapter member
4. I do not see the benefits of membership
5. I am unemployed
6. I plan to join, or rejoin
7. The cost is too great
8. I do not meet the requirements
9. HPS focus not relevant to my work
10. My membership has lapsed, need to renew
11. Prefer to support local chapter
12. Joining is too complicated, need sponsors, etc.
13. I am not a health physicist
14. HPS is elitist and serving a dying profession
15. No support from my organization
16. Obtain HPS publications from others
17. HPS not relevant on day to day issues
18. Do not have information on HPS
19. Never thought of joining
20. I have applied, but not heard anything

CONCERNS OF HPS MEMBERS AS WE COME INTO THE 21ST CENTURY

During President-elect visits to HPS chapters in 1998-1999, over 1300 written responses were obtained on the question, "My biggest concerns for the HPS now and in the future are..." The following notes summarize these responses (from the President's message in the HPS Newsletter November 1999).
Public Communications and Perceptions
1. getting appropriate messages to the public
2. public perceptions of radiation safety
3. ability to influence regulatory issues
4. survival in face of anti-nuclear forces
5. need more involvement in public schools
6. debate and divisions on LNT
7. need to be more reactive
8. recognition as the experts on radiation safety
9. need to be more pro-nuke

Society Membership and HPS Future
1. declining membership
2. too many old timers, who are disappearing
3. survival of the Society, declining relevance
4. remaining viable, progressive, relevant
5. retaining leadership in radiation safety
6. not reaching next generation
7. need to attract young members
8. dues and meeting expenses are too high
9. need more member participation

Orientation of HPS
1. becoming too elite, academic, esoteric
2. over emphasis on certifications
3. not enough operational health physics
4. not reaching all radiation safety practitioners
5. HPS needs to reach out to RSOs and others
6. need to modernize, stay relevant
7. getting so big we lose contact with member needs
8. chapters disconnected from national
9. change from professional to trade group
10. need to maintain HPS reputation
11. maintain quality while expanding

Members Conclude
By far the greatest concerns of HPS members are for the difficulties in public understanding of radiation issues. Distorted public perceptions reflect negatively on the health physics profession. Anti-nuclear forces seem to be gaining at our expense. Our debates and divisions over LNT issues are viewed as harmful in public communications.

The next two greatest concerns were for declining membership and the aging of the membership. By not attracting new members, we may lose our relevance and leadership in radiation safety. We may be losing members because we are not meeting real world needs of those practicing in the field of radiation safety and because we cost too much for what we provide.

Large numbers indicate concerns for the elitism of the HPS and the lack of support for operational health physics. Many noted that we need to reach out to RSOs and others to stay relevant. Some were concerned that a move towards more operational interests would lead to the HPS being seen as a trade organization.

Many indicated that we need to define our image. They are tired of always having to explain the HPS, which appears like a secret society to many. There was much concern that the HPS name hinders our ability to communicate with the public and practitioners in radiation safety who do not call themselves health physicists.

Are We Growing?
The answer is no. We have lost about 900 members over the past six years. Although many members have indicated great concerns for our aging and declining membership, do we want to grow? If the industry is shrinking, perhaps we should be happy with remaining stable. It was noted that the radiation industry is not shrinking. There is an increasing demand for specialists in radiation safety to serve as Radiation Safety Officers on radioactive material licenses. Hundreds and thousands of people with training and experience in radiation safety are finding jobs in decommissioning and decontamination of facilities where radioactive materials have been generated, stored, or used. The cleanup of Department of Energy and U.S. Environmental Protection Agency Superfund sites is providing thousands of jobs for specialists in radiation safety. Unfortunately, more and more of these jobs in radiation safety
are going to people who do not call themselves HPs. Consequently, these people are not looking to the HPS for support. However, can we achieve our mission for promoting good practices in radiation safety without reaching out to all people with responsibilities for radiation safety. What if they do not qualify for plenary membership? Does restricting membership help achieve our mission?

**EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE RETREAT ON "WHO ARE WE?"

The Executive Committee including Ray Johnson, Keith Dingier, Paul Rohwer, John Frazier, Ruth McBurney, Brian Dood, and Richard Burk, with special guests, Dade Moeller, Frank Masse, Richard Vetter, and David Kent spent all day on Saturday, October 16, 1999 exploring issues related to "Who are we, who do we represent, and who do we want to represent?" (HPS Newsletter Dec. 1999).

Richard Vetter facilitated the meeting and led us in several exercises for examining our identity. He first encouraged us to identify the products when several familiar brand names were mentioned, such as IBM. He noted that brand names that do not define products or services have come to be recognized because of enormous investments in advertising and marketing. He also asked us to identify the brand names associated with several phrases, such as "Quality is job one." He noted that companies try to make themselves indispensable by providing a service that is indispensable. He then asked what products or services come to mind for the Health Physics Society? Is the Health Physics Society recognized as a brand name? How is the HPS indispensable?

We were asked to define our ethos, the distinguishing character, sentiment, moral nature, or guiding beliefs that characterize our organization. What statement describes our values and purpose? Do people see us as an organization to promote the practice of radiation safety? We have been portrayed as pro-nuclear and apologists for the nuclear industry. Our customers (members) need to see value in membership. The HPS then has to deliver on those values.

If we think of the Health Physics Society membership as a circle, then members are distinguished by a boundary (those within the circle) from non-members (people outside the circle). We have defined the boundary by our requirements for plenary membership. These requirements include practicing radiation safety at a professional level and attainment of certification by the American Board of Health Physics, registration by the National Registry of Radiation Protection Technologists, or a Master's degree in health physics. One can also qualify for plenary membership with a Bachelor's degree and one year of professional experience, an Associates Degree with three years of professional experience, or five years of professional experience.

**Who We Are and Who We Are Not**

We define **who we are** by those qualities that we value for ourselves. We define **who we are not** by those qualities that we reject. We join as members of the HPS, in part, because we share a "like mindedness." We see in one another those qualities that we value, such as professionalism, integrity, competence, diligence, education, experience, knowledge, logical thinking, dependability, insight, imagination, creativity, problem solving ability, efficiency, humor, understanding, caring, and a sense of duty. Those who do not belong to our Society, we may see as opposites of the above qualities. For example, we may see them as less knowledgeable, less competent, less educated, inexperienced, unscientific, unprofessional, illogical, irrational, emotional, unethical, or unscrupulous. I'm not suggesting that we see these qualities in everyone outside the HPS. But, we clearly have a sense of who is **"one of us"** as defined by membership requirements. By elimination, everyone else is then **"not one of us"** and they represent our "shadow" (Johnson 1999).

**Our HPS Shadow - Not One of Us**

We, as a professional society, have a collective shadow that hinders our abilities to understand, relate to, or communicate with those outside our Society. Our shadow represents all of those qualities that we find unacceptable (as described in the monthly columns Insights in Communication, No. 44 - 53, HPS Newsletter October 1998 - August 1999).

We may even be inclined to look down upon those who are "not one of us," because in some ways they do not measure up to our values. Is this "elitism?" Is the HPS elitist? We certainly see most persons who are not knowledgeable about radiation safety as "not one of us," such as the "general public." But, do we also include the 50,000 or more people in the U.S. with responsibilities for radiation safety programs, who do not call themselves "health physicists?" Is there any way that we could see the 20,000 RSOs and their staffs in the United States as "one of us?" Should they be included even when they do not call themselves health physicists and they are not practicing radiation safety full time? After all, they are doing our jobs in radiation safety. If they do not have our level of education or experience in health physics, are they somehow less "professional" in their concerns for radiation safety? If we enlarge the circle to include RSOs and their staffs, will this reduce the HPS to a trade organization?

Is our shadow keeping us from uniting with all radiation safety practitioners as we move into the new millennium? Are we ready to look at the negative qualities that we see in others as a projection of our HPS shadow?

**Who Would We Like in the HPS Circle?**

To achieve our mission for improving the quality of radiation safety practices, who should be in our circle? Some of the groups we thought about include health physicists and other specialists in radiation safety, certified health...
physicists, HPS chapter members, registered radiation protection technologists, RSOs, campus radiation safety officers, university professors, radiation protection managers, regulatory agency staff, Department of Energy radiation program managers, military radiation professionals, and members of other groups with an interest in radiation safety, such as the Conference of Radiation Control Program Directors, the American Nuclear Society, the American Industrial Hygiene Association, and the American Association of Physicists in Medicine.

What Does the HPS have to Offer these People?
We offer training and educational opportunities, publications, networking, professional meetings, and representation for good practices in radiation safety for interventions with the media, Congress, and agencies. We also offer a website (www.hps.org) that provides current information and a special "members only" section with more useful information, including the current status of legislation and how to contact congress. Our customers (members) need to see the value of membership. The HPS has to deliver on those values.

BRAND IDENTIFICATION - HOW ARE WE SEEN?
We considered the question, "How do the people who could benefit from our services identify with us when they do not consider themselves health physicists?" How do we create HPS name identity? Does the Health Physics Society name adequately represent our broad functions in radiation safety. Is our name keeping us from accomplishing our mission? Does our name keep us from connecting with the majority of practitioners of radiation safety. Would a name such as the "Radiation Safety Society" help people identify with our mission? Are we proud enough of our profession to be willing to tell people that we are specialists in radiation safety and members of the Radiation Safety Society?

Are We a User Friendly Society?
We all agreed that our application form is NOT user friendly. For example, do we need sponsors and letters of recommendation? Do we need detailed education and experience descriptions? Would a resume suffice?

Who Should be Our Target Audience?
There are more than 20,000 RSOs in the U.S. that we are not connecting with. Perhaps we could show these people the benefits of our services by providing RSO Section membership to all 40 - hour RSO graduates. We could also attract more interest by simplifying our membership application. The Executive Committee also agreed that we need a publication aimed at RSOs, at a lower level than current Society publications, such as the RSO Magazine. We could help employers recognize RSOs as professionals in radiation safety.

Assuring Excellence in Radiation Safety
This is the new mission statement of the Health Physics Society proposed by the Board of Directors at a special one-day meeting in Virginia Beach, Saturday, January 29, 2000. This special meeting was convened to allow the Board the opportunity to discuss issues such as, who are we, who do we represent, where is the Society going, and what changes should be made as we come into the new century. (HPS Newsletter Mar. 2000).

Officers and Board members attending included, Ray Johnson, Paul Rohwer, Keith Dinger, John Frazier, Brian Dodd, Ruth McBurney, George Anastas, Nancy Daugherty, Carmine Plott, Kent Lambert, Terri Aldridge, Bill Kennedy, and Ed Maher; Board Designate member, Cindy Jones; Board Advisors, Richard Burk, Ken Miller, and Gen Roessler; Secretariat Staff, Brett Burk, Ann Landis, and Beth Krieger; and Past President, Richard Vetter.

Richard Vetter served as the meeting facilitator, as he did for the Executive Committee retreat on the same issues in Williamsburg, October 16, 1999. (reported in the President's column, December 1999 Newsletter). He began by leading us in a series of exercises to identify our "brand," i.e. what are we known for? We agreed that people buy products or services for recognized quality or value.

Do Employers See Value in the HPS?
Whether HPS members participate in Society meetings or other functions are often is a matter of whether the employer sees value in that participation. The Board discussed the fact that some employers do not see the business value or advantage of HPS services. From this discussion we concluded that we need to start an employer outreach program to support our members. We need to foster the knowledge that good radiation safety is also good business practice.

What Should be the Focus of the HPS?
Each participant was asked to identify an area of focus for the HPS. Responses included:
1. maintaining the quality of educational programs
2. meetings need to be attractive to members
3. we need to define our membership
4. we need to assure the quality of information services
5. change our name to "Radiation Safety Society"
6. focus on membership benefits and services
7. effective communication to build consensus on issues
8. annual meetings as an educational service
9. promote good science in radiation safety
10. HPS as gatekeeper for quality radiation safety
11. HPS as an organization that we can be proud of
12. change our name for better brand identification
13. develop credibility for who we are
14. HPS as recognized authority on radiation information
15. bring in younger members
16. provide sound information for the public
17. HPS as the premier radiation safety society
18. mentoring for upgrading radiation safety programs

After each person shared their focus interest, Cindy Jones noted that we had all used the words "radiation safety" and no one had used the words "health physics." Many practitioners of radiation safety and other societies do not know who we are. One Board member said we should stick with our old name and change reality. We need to be more visible and as long as we have quality the name does not matter.

What Are Indicators We Should Note?
We discussed several areas of need that the HPS should be concerned about, including:
1. some chapters need help, such as speakers, a chapter handbook, better info from HPS
2. members are diversifying into industrial hygiene, etc.
3. we need to be concerned for filling the pipeline
4. splinter groups are offering special interest services
5. HPS Sections need help
6. Why are people going outside the HPS for commercial information services?
7. we should be helping other countries
8. travel funds are limiting meeting attendance
9. do we need midyear meetings?
10. midyear's are to serve smaller group interests
11. HPS can underwrite meetings of two or more chapters

What is Our Mission?
We all agreed that we would like to the "recognized" source of radiation safety information. We also want to promote good practices and good science in radiation safety. After much discussion we agreed on the mission statement "Assuring Excellence in Radiation Safety." We also discussed principles for guiding our mission, such as:
1. positions should be based on sound scientific evidence
2. maintaining professional ethics
3. improving public health
4. exposures should result in a net benefit to society
5. effective communications are needed
6. do no harm, do good with radiation

WHAT DOES THE HPS REPRESENT?
As President, when I visit an agency official or a congressman and staff, what do I tell them in the first 15 seconds that uniquely describes or defines the Health Physics Society? Unfortunately, our name does not describe our area of interest, without further explanation. Therefore, I usually begin by saying that we are a professional society of 6,000 members representing specialists in radiation safety. This answers the question of "who we represent," but it does not explain "what we represent." (HPS Newsletter Apr. 2000).

We have attempted to answer this question by a mission statement that is given in our By-laws and the HPS Prospectus in our Membership Handbook (1999-2000). This statement says "The Society is a professional organization whose mission is to promote the practice of radiation safety." This statement is followed by a long paragraph describing six activities appropriate for accomplishing this mission. All of this looks good on paper. However, it is much too long and complicated for people outside the Society to grasp and remember as a statement of what we represent.

Good Practices and Good Science in Radiation Safety
These are the words I have used to capture the essence of what we represent. My hope has been that these words would convey what we stand for in simple terms that others could not only understand, but also would be able
to remember. Past President Richard Vetter would say these are the words that identify our "brand." Ideally, for recognition by the public, agencies, and congress, every time the name "Health Physics Society" comes up, that name would be immediately connected with good practices and good science in radiation safety.

I believe that our recognition could be greatly enhanced if our name described our interest. For example, if our name was **Radiation Safety Society** then our interest in radiation safety would be obvious. With this name, our recognition would be reinforced by calling ourselves specialists in radiation safety with a mission to support good practices and good science in radiation safety.

While we all take pride in our Society and what we have represented over the past 44 years, we have not accomplished one factor which is troubling to many members. Namely, we have not achieved any significant name or brand recognition. We have all spent our careers trying to explain who we are as health physicists and as a professional society. Although our origins were shrouded in secrecy by necessity for national security, we have done very well in maintaining the lack of identify. For most of the world, we might as well be a secret Society.

**Are We a Secret Society?**

Obviously we are not a secret for members or those whom we have educated to recognize our name. However, even among our members, how many could describe who we are and what we stand for in a few simple words? Many members are very attached to the name Health Physics Society which conveys an aura of prestige. Many feel that if the world does not know who we are, that is the world's problem. They believe that we should establish recognition by educating the world, not by changing our name. Many of our members would conclude, however, that after 45 years we have not been very successful in educating the world.

**Is Our Name Serving Our Mission?**

We should not consider changing our name unless the change serves a useful purpose. The mission proposed by the Board in Virginia Beach is **Assuring Excellence in Radiation Safety**. Now the challenge is how do we connect our name with our mission? We can begin by quoting our mission every place we use our name. That may help the general public know who we are, but will it help in connecting with several tens of thousands of people practicing radiation safety who do not recognize the Health Physics Society.

The Board has agreed that serving our mission means reaching out to provide support to all persons with responsibilities for radiation safety. One category of persons who very much needs organizational support is RSOs. Unfortunately, a large proportion of RSOs do not know about the HPS or the services that we offer. However, even when told about the Health Physics Society, they often do not see the relevance, because they are not full-time specialists in radiation safety and they do not call themselves health physicists. The call themselves safety professionals, engineers, industrial hygienists, etc.

Asking RSOs to join the Health Physics Society may be the equivalent of asking HPs to join the American Nuclear Society or the American Industrial Hygiene Association, or the American Society of Physicists in Medicine. Most HPs would not join these organizations because they believe those organizations are for nuclear engineers, industrial hygienists, and medical physicists. Perhaps, rather than changing the HPS name to be more inclusive of radiation safety practitioners, we should be working with the 20,000 RSOs in the U.S. to set up a separate organization for RSOs.

**Reasons for Changing Our Name**

Changing our name to the **Radiation Safety Society** could be helpful for two reasons: 1) A new name would tell the world the nature of our profession (which we have been trying to do for nearly 45 years) and 2) a new name would also enlarge our support network to include all practitioners in radiation safety (whether or not they call themselves health physicists).

**RECENT POSITIONING INITIATIVES**

Over the past five or six years, HPS presidents have introduced several initiatives that will help place the Society in a great position for success in the 21st century. Some of these include: 1) strategic planning, 2) fiscal planning, 3) public relations, 4) government relations, 5) new Director assignments, 6) quarterly Executive Committee meetings, 7) adopting the byline **Specialists in Radiation Safety**, 8) expanded Secretariat services, 9) position statements and fact sheets, 10) website (www.hps.org), 11) publication of **Operational Radiation Safety**, 12) establishing the section category of membership, 13) establishing the RSO Section and Decommissioning Section, 14) Student Branches, 15) membership recruitment, 16) liaison with other organizations, and 17) international programs. (HPS Membership Handbook 1999-2000).

**Challenges (Opportunities) Ahead**

1) **Outreach to the 20,000 or more RSOs** and their staffs in the U.S. who are responsible for radiation safety programs and not represented by the HPS. If we want to fulfill our role as a professional society with concerns for high quality radiation safety programs, we could begin emphasizing opportunities for education and professional development for the thousands of persons outside the HPS who are practicing our profession of radiation safety. Most of these people are not HPS members because they do not identify themselves as health physicists.
2) Increasing the role of the HPS in Congressional and Agency affairs. Over the past five years we have begun to establish an HPS presence in the world legislation and regulation. With the assistance of Capitol Associates and Bill Mills, we are in excellent position to provide meaningful input to Congress and Federal agencies.

3) Developing and Revising Position Statements. We still have much to learn about effective communications with the public. The Society needs to continue developing public information materials and position statements.

4) Nurturing our greatest resource, our volunteers. The Society has designated 1999-2000 as the Year of the Volunteer. This program will include special awards to be presented to outstanding chapter volunteers by President-Elect Paul Rohwer on his chapter visits.

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

The Health Physics Society is evaluating its changing role as the Society prepares for the 21st century. Over the past 45 years the Society has evolved from a research oriented, scientific, society to more operational and applied radiation safety. As regulatory programs become more prescriptive, the requirements for radiation safety can often be met by persons who carefully follow the prescribed guidelines, without requiring the extensive education and experience expected of professional health physicists. Thus, more and more, radiation safety programs are being managed by Radiation Safety Officers, who are not full-time practicing specialists in radiation safety.

HPS members indicate their greatest concerns for the future of the Society and the profession of health physics are: 1) the difficulties in public understanding of radiation issues and 2) always having to explain who we are as health physicists and as a Society. Many conclude that the name "Health Physics Society" hinders our ability to communicate with the public and practitioners in radiation safety who do not call themselves health physicists. Members are also concerned about lack of support for operational and applied radiation safety and the aging of the Society's members.

The HPS Executive Committee and Board of Directors have held special meetings to address the questions, "Who are we, who do we represent, and who do we want to represent?" We concluded that the HPS primarily represents people who call themselves "Health Physicists." Since most people do not know what a health physicist is we have attempted to clarify our role by calling ourselves "Specialists in Radiation Safety. What we represent is captured by the proposed mission statement "assuring excellence in radiation safety." We would like the world to know that we stand for good practices and good science in radiation safety.

We also concluded that we would like our circle of membership to include a broad range of practitioners in radiation safety who share our concerns and responsibilities for good practices in radiation safety. These practitioners include non-member health physicists, chapter members, registered radiation protection technologists, RSOs, campus RSOs, university professors, radiation protection managers, regulatory agency staff, military radiation professionals, and members of other organizations with interests in radiation safety. We believe that outreach to these persons is in keeping with our mission to assure excellence in radiation safety. We professional and technical support services to offer these persons including training and educational opportunities, publications, networking, professional meetings, and representation for good practices and good science in radiation safety for interventions with the media, Congress, and agencies.

Unfortunately, we have not established a "brand name" that non-members readily identify with. Unless radiation safety practitioners call themselves health physicists, they do not readily identify with the name "Health Physics Society" as a resource of technical support for meeting their needs. There is one large group, in particular, that we are not connecting with, namely the 20,000 RSOs in the U.S. Most RSOs do not call themselves health physicists and yet they are practicing our profession as responsible managers for radiation safety programs. The HPS could provide valuable support to RSOs who have no supporting organization at this time. However, most RSOs do not see the relevance of the HPS because they do not identify with the name.

The question remains as to whether the HPS could 1) better serve its mission for assuring excellence in radiation safety and 2) provide technical support to a broader range of practitioners in radiation safety, if we changed our name to the Radiation Safety Society?

We conclude that changing our name to the Radiation Safety Society could be helpful for two reasons: 1) a new name would tell the world the nature of our profession (which we have been trying to do for nearly 45 years) and 2) a new name could also enlarge our support network to include all practitioners in radiation safety (whether or not they call themselves health physicists).

As we come into the 21st century, the changing world of radiation safety raises many questions for the future of the Health Physics Society. The major question is whether we are attuned and responsive to the changing needs of practitioners in radiation safety? More and more the Society is challenged to meet the needs of all persons engaged in operational and applied radiation safety. Changing our name to the "Radiation Safety Society" and outreach to provide professional support to 20,000 RSOs could drastically change the identity of the Society. The issues confronting the HPS likely reflect challenges to be faced by other IRPA societies in the 21st century.
REFERENCES