

## What is it **Really** like being SBM President?

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So you're considering taking the plunge and serving SBM and its members as president. Thank you! Whatever your level of experience with SBM, you probably have some questions about what it is really like to lead the organization. We hope this helps!

1) **You are not alone!** You have a whole team that will help you fulfill your duties. SBM's full-time staff is uniformly excellent, and they will remind you of the timetable of events and your duties. In addition, as president-elect you will have a year to learn on the job, including via an orientation and semi-weekly calls with the current president and most recent past president. (You are technically elected for a 3-year term: the first year as president-elect, the second as president, and the third as immediate past president. The presidential year is of course the busiest.)

2) The most enjoyable aspect of the presidency, at least for me, was figuring out and implementing the **annual meeting theme**. During the past few years, the annual meeting themes have built on each other. Four years ago, Dr. Gary Bennett led the "Expanding our Reach" initiative, an effort to reach new audiences, organizations, and industries who might benefit from our science. Dr. Sherry Pagoto continued with "Leading the Narrative," a broad effort to enhance the communication of our science to non-academic constituencies. I followed this with the Provocative Questions in Behavioral Medicine initiative, a member-led visioning exercise to identify which areas behavioral medicine should focus its attention on for the next decade. Dr. Monica Baskin continues these efforts and focuses on innovation and influence through inclusion. We believe that the more the presidential themes are synergistic, the better the society is served and the stronger the society will become over time.

One of the first tasks as president-elect is to select a program chair, who will help you translate your vision into the annual meeting program. The role of program chair is incredibly important, and you want to select someone who you are comfortable working with.

4) Your **presidential keynote** at the annual meeting is the culminating event. It is your opportunity to tell the membership what you did during your presidency, how your initiatives have turned out, and what is important for SBM moving forward. It is a key way to make your mark on the field.

5) The intensity might vary during the year, but on average you need to budget **4-6 hours per week** for SBM work. Being president requires you be available for quite a number of phone/video calls during the week. For example, the executive director will speak to you at least once a week. In addition to the phone calls, emails, and meeting requests, there are member communications to draft and approve, quarterly Outlook newsletter messages to write, and the annual meeting to help plan. Finances are taken care of by the treasurer, who will give you updates so you can keep abreast of the financial status of the society.

6) It is your responsibility to run SBM's three annual **board meetings**. The executive director will help you put an agenda together and will provide you with all the necessary background information, and you will learn how to run the board meeting and keep everybody on the same page. You also run monthly Executive Committee meetings and the society's annual member business meeting, which

occurs during the annual meeting (don't worry, staff helps you prepare and creates all materials). As a voting member of the Board and Executive Committee, you have input on important decisions like choosing Annual Meeting locations, selecting journal editors, setting health policy priorities, and putting financial resources into new initiatives. As president-elect, it is also your privilege to appoint new Board council/committee chairs whose terms end that particular year.

7) As president you are the **figurehead of the society**. It is expected that you represent the society in public, and as such you have to make sure that your public statements are representative of SBMs approved positions.

8) If things go as planned, it is a lot of **fun** and you have the **unique chance to “put your stamp” on the annual meeting**. Of course, things might turn out differently, as was the case during my year given COVID-19, and your leadership skills might be tested in unexpected ways. But, and this brings us back to the first point, you are not alone and you have support from our great management team and your colleagues.