Dear Fellow ASTS members,

I am delighted to serve as chair of the ASTS Awards Committee which champions transplant research and the education and training of future transplant investigators. On behalf of the ASTS Awards Committee, I am pleased to update you on some of the activities which support our 3-year strategic plan. First, I am fortunate to have the opportunity to work closely with Jonathan Bromberg, MD, PhD who is the co-chair of the committee among the great team of committee members. Our group is energized to provide education and training as well as ensure fair and constructive grant reviews for the annual ASTS research grant competition. We are proud to be stewards of research grants for medical students, surgery residents, transplant fellows, early and mid career faculty as well as collaborative science faculty. Together this research grant portfolio represents support along the continuum of physician scientist training.

This year, in order to collect data which evaluates the return on investment of these awards we have developed structured templates to capture research productivity data from the mid and final year reports. In addition we have developed new annual 1-2 and 3-year updates following completion of the award in order to examine longer term outcomes. John Daller, MD will be working with staff to develop a database to efficiently capture awardees’ research productivity based on these reports. Dr. Daller and David Mercer, MD, PhD, will be reviewing last year’s progress and final reports in order to develop profiles of recent award recipients, their successes and future research plans which can be uploaded to the ASTS website. David will also serve as committee liaison to the ASTS Communications Committee in order to jointly develop opportunities for highlighting awardee successes and stories in the Chimera as well as through other communication venues such as iPOD applications.

Last year, Drs. Chris Anderson and Dave Mulligan developed a “Lunch and Learn” at the ASTS Winter Symposium which was very well attended and received very positive evaluations. They have summarized the discussion in a “Lunch & Learn Tips” which has been reviewed and approved by the committee for posting to the Awards Committee website, http://www.asts.org/Awards/default.aspx. To expand upon this initial session, the committee is organizing a second “Lunch & Learn” session at the 2012 ASTS Winter Symposium focused on education and advice regarding research grant applications and mechanisms.

Over the past two years or more, the committee has reviewed the grant review statistics and process and developed a policy and procedures document outlining the “ASTS research grant review process and conflict of interest policy,” which is now uploaded to the website. It is of interest to note that this past year we experienced one of the highest number of overall applications submitted to the ASTS research grant competition. A total of 82 grant applications were received. The grants were reviewed by a total of 33 ASTS members. A computerized averaged score was tabulated based on reviewer assessment of the candidate, significance of the project, research design, environment and overall anticipated impact of the project. In many categories this year, the scores were very very close. Unsuccessful applicants are urged to consider reviewer comments in revising their application for submission to other potential sponsors and/or to reapply to the annual ASTS research grant competition. I would like to sincerely thank all of the reviewers for their time and service to the application review process!

Finally, join me in welcoming the newest committee members, Drs. Robert Stratta, Lucy Wrenshall and Shinul Shah. We look forward to their contributions to ongoing activities and to learning more about their ideas for new activities. We welcome comments and feedback from the membership about plans and activities so that we can be more responsive to the needs of the membership. Please feel free to email Janison Visone, ASTS Awards Committee Liaison with your ideas, comments and concerns, at janison.visone@asts.org.

Sincerely,
Ginny L. Bungardner, MD, PhD
Chair, ASTS Awards Committee