

NATIONAL SECRETARIAL
ADVISORY COUNCIL

AND

ORGANIZATIONAL SECRETARIAL
ADVISORY COUNCILS

ANNUAL REPORT - 1998

Prepared By

NATIONAL SECRETARIAL ADVISORY COUNCIL
AGRICULTURAL RESEARCH SERVICE U.S.
DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The ARS National Secretarial Advisory Council (NSAC) continues to set a standard of excellence for the Agency since its inception April 1, 1994. This past year realized the first turnover for six members of the Council as well as the Technical Advisor, Cecelia Stortzum. The main focus of the Council is to maintain excellence in program development, career enhancement, and employee dedication to the mission of ARS. The Council continually seeks new ways to communicate with secretarial and clerical employees and provide opportunities to this sector of the ARS workforce to work toward professional development.

This NSAC Annual Report compiles information on current goals, activities, and accomplishments of NSAC and the Organizational Councils established throughout the ARS organizational structure. Activities of the Organizational Councils are also included in this report.

NSAC established goals for FY-98 to enhance the NSAC Home Page, develop and distribute the NSAC Newsletter, finalize and distribute the Quick Reference Guide for ARS Secretarial/Clerical Personnel and work with the HRD staff to develop training programs for secretarial/clerical personnel using the information in the NSAC Training and Planning Guide for ARS Secretarial/Clerical Personnel (1996) as a reference.

The NSAC Home Page is updated regularly with informative data and hot links to other web sites. Information the Council developed originally in hard copy is now available at <http://www.ars.usda.gov/afm/nsac/>. Two editions of the NSAC Newsletter have been published and the Quick Reference Guide for ARS/Secretarial/Clerical Personnel has been completed and distribution was accomplished through the Organizational Councils. A subcommittee on Train the Trainer is working on developing training programs for ARS secretarial/clerical personnel.

The Council responds to specific requests of administrators and scientists alike in fulfilling its mission. One such request was addressed this year:

The ARS Administrator, Dr. Floyd P. Horn, requested NSAC to explore the possibility of setting up one standardized guideline/format for publication lists prepared by ARS scientists. A subcommittee was formed to study this issue.

The NSAC welcomes additional challenges and initiatives for improving the ARS working environment and awareness of critical operating issues.

Members of the 1997-98 Council are:

KAY CARR, SAA
CARMELA CARRICK, NPS
LIBBY FOUSE, PWA
MARCIA JENKINS, MWA
OLGA LEE, NPA
ANGIE MARCHETTI, AFM
ELAINE MCGUIRE, BA
MARY SILVA, NAL
JOYCE SMITH, NAA
JANET FERST, OA
ANNE STEELE, SPA
CECELIA STORTZUM, HRD
SANDRA WARREN, MSA

Former members of the NSAC are:

MICHELLE SNOWDEN, OA
QUEEN SPRIGGS, OA
GENEVIEVE SWARTZBERG, MSA
SUE THORNBURG, NPA

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NATIONAL SECRETARIAL ADVISORY COUNCIL

ANNUAL MEETING

The National Secretarial Advisory Council (NSAC) held its annual meeting April 28-30, 1998, in New Orleans, Louisiana. The Council was hosted by MSA Representative, Sandra Warren, and Dr. John Patrick Jordan, Director of the Southern Regional Research Center. Dr. Edgar King, Associate Area Director and Mr. Archie Tucker, Area Administrative Officer, also made welcoming remarks.

New Council member Cathy Lonaberger, Secretary to the Administrator, ARS, was welcomed to the Council. The final version of the *Quick Reference Guide* was reviewed and approved by all Council members. Focus Reports were given on Area Organizational Councils, the Research, Education and Economics Secretarial and Clerical Coordinating Council, the NSAC Newsletter and Home Page. An in-depth session on *Train the Trainer* was held to develop a viable program. The NSAC met with Western Regional Research Center secretaries and clerical staff for roundtable discussions, and toured the Southern Regional Research and National Finance Centers.

This year is the first time major changes in NSAC membership will occur with six members rotating off the Council after serving since the Council's inception in 1994. At the meeting, outgoing Council members introduced their replacements, listed below:

Area of Representation	Outgoing Member	Incoming Member
AFM	Angie Marchetti	Joyce Craig
BA	Elaine McGuire	Nadine Hiers
NAA	Joyce Smith	Phillis Davis
PWA	Libby Fouse	Tammy Durfee

SAA	Kay Carr	Frankee Simpson
SPA	Anne Steele	Ruth Treat

ACCOMPLISHMENTS

Quick Reference Guide for ARS Secretarial/ Clerical Personnel

The subcommittee completed and finalized The Quick Reference Guide for ARS Secretarial/Clerical Personnel in May 1998. In June 1998 the guide was distributed to all ARS secretarial and clerical personnel through the Organizational Councils. NSAC plans to update the guide annually.

Newsletter

The subcommittee issued two newsletters, one in September 1997 and one in February 1998. Both newsletters were distributed through the Organizational Councils. The newsletters are on the NSAC's Home Page on the Internet. Plans are to continue publishing and distributing the newsletter as news accumulates and on a random basis.

Teleconference Calls

Quarterly calls were held to discuss issues and plan methods and processes towards achieving the goals set.

Home Page

The Home Page Subcommittee has had a very productive year, keeping the site updated and adding several additional links to informative data that the Council originally developed in paper copy only.

Now available via the World Wide Web on the NSAC web site are the documents and links listed in the following table.

Training and Planning Guide	July 17, 1997
Secretarial Orientation Plan Checklist	July 17, 1997

Highlights of NSAC Meetings August 1994 May 1995 May 1996 April 1997 June 1997	September 8, 1997
NSAC Annual Reports 1996 and 1997	October 14, 1997
Organizational Advisory Councils Reports for 1996 and 1997 AFM BA MSA MWA NAA NAL NPA NPA NPS PWA SAA SPA	October 14, 1997
NSAC Newsletters	September 1997 February 1998
Hot Links <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ARS Employment Opportunities • The Currency Site • Traveloco: Xenon Labs Currency Converter • GSA - Federal Supply Service • Office of Personnel Management • Per Diem Rates • Professional Secretaries International (816-891-6000) • REE Directory • RMIS Frequently Asked Questions • U.S. Department of State <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Foreign Per Diem Rates • Visa Services • Bureau of Consular Affairs (download forms for new or replacement passports, etc.) • U.S. Postal Service Zip Code Information 	Updated periodically
USDA Group Honor Award - <div style="text-align: center;">group photo featured</div>	June 1997

FY-99 GOALS

- Train the Trainer - Form subcommittee to identify and develop training programs for secretarial/clerical personnel using the information in the *NSAC Training and Planning Guide for ARS Secretaries/Clerical Personnel* (1996) as a reference.

- Year 2000 Training Conference - Form subcommittee to develop and submit a proposal to the ARS Administrator to conduct a workshop for ARS Secretarial/Clerical personnel to be held in 2000.
- Develop guidelines of the roles and responsibilities of the Technical Advisor and make distribution to the Organizational Councils.
- Bibliographic Lists - Form a subcommittee to explore the possibility of setting up one standardized guideline or format for publication lists that are prepared by ARS scientists and prepare a report for Dr. Floyd P. Horn, ARS Administrator.
 - Develop a satellite broadcast for National Secretaries Week in 1999.
 - Develop a national e-mail list of all ARS secretarial/clerical personnel.
 - Develop an e-mail address for NSAC.

Design a logo for NSAC which could be used on ARS letterhead for all NSAC correspondence and reports.

 - Continue to enhance the NSAC Home Page.
 - Continue to enhance the NSAC Newsletter.

SECRETARIAL RECOGNITION PROGRAM

Winners for 1997-1998 are:

- Headquarters Secretary of the Year, 1997 - Joyce Smith, GS-0318-09, Secretary, Office of the Area Director, North Atlantic Area, Wyndmoor, Pennsylvania.
- Midwest Area Secretary of the Year, 1998 - Lori Wilson-Voss, GS-0303-07, Supervisory Program Support, Plant Introduction Research, Ames, Iowa.
- Northern Plains Area Secretary of the Year, 1997 - Sandra S. Mathewson, GS-0318-08, Grain Marketing and Production Center, Manhattan, Kansas.
Pacific West Area Secretary of the Year, 1998 - Marla Lawrence, GS-0318-06, Secretary to the Director, Western Cotton Research Laboratory, Phoenix, Arizona.
South Atlantic Area Secretary of the Year, 1997 - Kay Carr, GS-0318-06, Secretary to the Location Coordinator, Insect Biology and Population Management Research Unit, Tifton, Georgia.

REE SECRETARIAL AND CLERICAL COORDINATING COUNCIL

Mary Silva, the ARS Representative to the Research, Education and Economics Secretarial Clerical Coordinating Council, made a presentation on the mission, goal and objectives of the

REE Council. The REE Council has produced a brochure and made a request that NSAC representatives distribute copies to all secretarial, clerical, and key management personnel in ARS.

ORGANIZATIONAL SECRETARIAL ADVISORY COUNCILS

ADMINISTRATIVE AND FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT (AFM)

Joyce Craig - Co-chair
Clarice Fleming - Co-chair
Melissa Goodloe
Dorothy Marshall

Mary Payne - Recorder
Deadra Perry
Ann Randall

Linda Simpson - Information Coordinator
Angie Marchetti - Technical Advisor

Three Council members rotated off this year: Mary Goleski, Co-Chair; Pat Berry, Recorder; and on June 1, 1998, Joyce Craig, Co-Chair, replaced Angie Marchetti as the AFM Representative to the NSAC. Joyce will serve on the NSAC and as the Technical Advisor the AFM Council for a period of three years.

Accomplishments

Partnership in Excellence. The Orientation and Training Team for Secretaries (OTTS), a subcommittee formed from the 1996 AFM Secretaries meeting, was established to come up with a plan for AFM secretaries to perform better and be more informed on training, travel, personnel, correspondence procedures, and other important aspects of their jobs. In that effort, a survey was preformed of the secretaries/support staff and AFM management to gain input on what they felt was most needed to meet the requirements of the support staff to perform at the most professional level. As a result of that survey, the OTTS has completed the Survival Kit for AFM Secretaries. The OTTS plans to distribute this Kit at the September 10, 1998, AFM Secretaries Annual Meeting.

- One representative of the AFMSAC worked on a move committee which AFM put together to help to efficiently manage the move from Greenbelt to the Beltsville Office Facility (FOB). This representative rotated off the AFMSAC recently but continues in the capacity until the move is complete. (The Facilities Division, AFM, and the Information Staff still remain in Greenbelt until their offices are ready in BOF.)

The AFMSAC was asked to send a representative for brainstorming and working a plan for a FlexiWork Place (FWP) pilot. As a result of this team effort, satellite stations have been put in place and a list of volunteers to participate in the pilot has been established. AFM will begin to work on this pilot in the very near future.

The Council has a subcommittee on correspondence which created and distributed the AFM Correspondence Samples and Reference Manual. This has become a continuing team effort for updates which include staff changes, address and e-mail changes, correspondence procedures, updated Congressional correspondence procedures, and other related information. (There have been several requests for this manual for use as guides for like-manuals being prepared by other offices.)

- The Annual AFM Secretarial Meeting is being planned for September 10, 1998.
- The Council increased its membership by two this year. The needed membership was to ensure that a quorum of five members will be present at all meetings. This increase will allow the members to participate on more teams as necessary for AFM charges.
- The Council and its new members have drafted their new charter for approval.

Goals

- In support of Partnership in Excellence, continue to pursue better training and orientation for AFM secretarial/support staff and encourage participation.
- Continue to encourage all secretarial support staff to communicate ideas and concerns
- Continue to promote professionalism among AFM secretaries.
- Continue to work on the AFMSAC Home Page.
- Make plans for workshops for training in travel, PC-TARE, and other programs.
- Promote continued cooperation among support staff and management.
- Continue to update the Correspondence Samples and Reference Manual.

- Distribute the Basic Survival Kit for AFM Secretarial/Support Staff. Keep the AFM Secretarial Advisory Council active and visible.

BELTSVILLE AREA (BA)

The 1997-98 Beltsville Area Secretarial Advisory Council (BASAC) members and their duties are:

Judith Holland - Co-Chair
Claudette Joyner - Co-Chair
Carol Applebaum
Janet Gates
Nadine Hiers
Janice Hill
Sheila Messineo
Lora Tanner
Elaine McGuire - Technical Advisor

On June 1, 1998, Nadine Hiers replaced Elaine McGuire as the BA Representative to the NSAC. Nadine will serve on the NSAC and as the Technical Advisor to the BA Council for a period of three years.

Accomplishments

- **Secretarial Workshops.** Area-wide workshops were held on preparing Time and Attendance Reports and Travel. Representatives organized, within their respective Institutes/Centers, training on File Management and the CRIS system.
- **National Secretaries' Day Observance.** A one-half day workshop was held in conjunction with the Beltsville Area (BA) Civil Rights Office on April 22. Secretaries from the Administrative and Financial Management Division, National Program Staff, and National Agricultural Library were invited. Linda Stoner, Chair of the Beltsville Area Partnership in Excellence Subcommittee, presented an overview of their accomplishments and plans for the future. A seminar, "The Indispensable Assistant," was presented by Linda Kotkin of Skillpath® Seminars.
- **Newsletter.** The "BASAC Flyer" was published in March and August of 1997. This publication is designed to keep BA secretaries and clerical staff apprized of what is happening in the Beltsville Area. Some highlights were: a spotlight on the Facilities Management and Operations Division, a report on the Partnership in Excellence

Subcommittee, information on the National Agricultural Library, and announcements of training opportunities. Copies are distributed to all BA secretaries and the BA Leadership Team.

- ***Impact Line***. Information on the Impact Line is published in all **BASAC** Flyers. There have been several discussions at the monthly BASAC meetings on updating and expanding this list and have it available to all secretarial and clerical staff at the Beltsville Agricultural Research Center.
- ***Partnership in Excellence***. This Subcommittee of the **BASAC** was established in 1996 to set up an orientation program for secretaries and office automation clerks at Beltsville. This Subcommittee has been very active over the last year; some of their activities include:
 - Incorporated the use of Desk Reference Binders.
 - Provided an opportunity for Institute and Laboratory secretaries to visit the BA Smart Center, a reference and resource facility.
 - Reinforced the importance of the Shadow Program and emphasized the need for Area participation. This program was instituted to assist, especially, new BA secretaries.
 - Prepared a summary document of all BA due dates. This is currently being reviewed by Area offices and is intended for distribution to all BA offices.
 - Submitted to the BASAC a "Summary Checklist" of those items which need to be available to a new secretary. Prepared a reference file of each item addressed.
 - Prepared a summary of workshops desired, with a full description of interest items. This included, but was not limited to: Correspondence, Travel, Personnel, T&As, RMIS, and BA policies and procedures.
 - Corresponded with all BA secretaries soliciting input on workshops and training desired.

Goals

- ***Procedures Manual***. Work continues on finalizing an updated Procedures Manual for the Beltsville Area. Reorganization of the Service Centers and institution of many new procedures, i.e., credit cards and the anticipated check writing capability, have delayed completion. BASAC will hold a workshop for all BA secretaries and clerical personnel to present and review the manual when completed.
- ***Partnership in Excellence***. Instituted Subcommittee to produce a Secretarial/Administrative Welcome Guide Folder to be distributed within an Institute or Laboratory as a help to new secretaries and office automation clerks.

MID SOUTH AREA (MSA)

The Mid South Area Secretarial Advisory Council was established by

Dr. Thomas J. Army, Area Director, in May 1996. Members of the MSA Secretarial Council for 1997-98 are:

Patricia Brown, Stoneville, Mississippi - Chair
Paula Brodofsky, Stoneville, Mississippi
Wanda Hildreth, Auburn, Alabama
Betty Hoogerwerf, New Orleans, Louisiana
Cynthia Poynor, Oxford, Mississippi
Sandra Warren, Stoneville, Mississippi - Technical Advisor

Accomplishments

- Provided orientation through *Partnership in Excellence* program to one new secretary.
- Held scheduled conference calls.

Goals

- Restructure the Mid South Area Secretarial Council to achieve the Council's mission and to better serve the secretaries in the Mid South Area.

MIDWEST AREA (MSA)

The MWA PASTG met four times in person and held four conference calls over the past year. During the meetings, the following were addressed or achieved:

Members of PASTG and locations they represent for 1997-98 are:

Sherri Buxton, Peoria, Illinois - Co-Chair
Lori Wilson-Voss, Ames Campus Locations, Iowa - Co-Chair
Sandy Groneberg, St. Paul and Morris, Minnesota, and Madison, Wisconsin
Alice McCain (out-going), LonaJean Strickland (in-coming) Urbana, Illinois and
W. Lafayette, Indiana
Susan Ohlendorf, National Animal Disease Center, Ames, Iowa
Shirley Runge, Peoria, Illinois
Jean Sparks, Columbia, Missouri
Karen Sussman (out-going), Sedina Lowe (in-coming) Columbus, Coshocton and
Wooster, Ohio and E. Lansing, Michigan
Marcia Jenkins, Peoria, Illinois - Technical Advisor

Accomplishments

- The Task Group planned and organized an Area Secretarial/Clerical Staff Meeting, entitled, "Positive Attitude to Strive for Teamwork and Growth." Eighty individuals attended from the MWA locations as well as invited guests from the NSAC. The agenda consisted of motivational and technical training geared specifically toward this work group. The PASTG presented plaques to Drs. Richard Dunkle and Adrianna Hewings to show appreciation for their support of PASTG. Recognition was also given to individuals serving as mentors to new employees in the MWA. Those recognized were, Shirley Runge, Doris Meinke, Lori Wilson-Voss, Georgetta Stonewall, Peggy Keefer, and Deborah Bitner. Additional recognition was given to Sandy Groneberg and Karen Sussman for their assistance to the East Lansing location.
- A finalized version of the Standard Operating Procedures Manual was developed and disseminated to all clerical employees. This manual will serve as a desk reference for secretarial positions within the Midwest Area. Updates will be done during the PASTG meetings to keep the manual current.
- 1998 marked the second year of the Midwest Area Secretary of the Year program. Eight highly qualified secretaries were submitted for consideration. A panel unanimously selected Lori Wilson-Voss, Ames, Iowa, who was presented her award at the Secretarial Meeting held March 24-26, 1998 in Peoria, Illinois.
- At the recommendation of the PASTG, the Area implemented the policy that all new secretarial employees will be assigned a mentor for a term of one year. The mentor will visit the mentee to initiate the training. An outline has been developed to be covered during this initial visit. In addition, those new employees will be asked to visit the Area Directors' Office where they will be provided additional training to aid in their development. The Standard Operating Procedures Manual will be used in conjunction with this training.

Goals

- Plans continue to increase communication and networking through the PASTG newsletter and development of a Home Page.
- Establish a training library available to the MWA employees. This training library will consist of books and videos, both commercially produced and specifically designed by Area Personnel to aid in the training and career enhancement of the clerical staff.
- The PASTG Co-Chairs, Sherri Buxton and Lori Wilson-Voss, traveled to several locations in the Area to present training, as well as to promote participation in PASTG activities. Those locations not visited last year will be visited this year.
- Explore the possibility of creating a chat room on the Internet in which clerical employees can post questions or concerns and have others assist them in resolving their problems.

NATIONAL AGRICULTURAL LIBRARY (NAL)

The National Agricultural Library (NAL) Secretarial Advisory Council (NALSAC) continues to work toward its goal of ensuring that NAL has highly skilled professionals working in partnership with management to meet its secretarial and administrative needs.

Council members and their duties for 1997-98 are:

Ann Palmes, Technical Services Division – Chair
Phyllis Bickerton, Information Systems Division
Gail DeAtley, Public Services Division - Recorder
Shirley Evans, Office of Director
Mary Silva - Technical Advisor

Mary Silva transferred to the Human Resources Division in May 1998 and Maria Archer was selected as the NAL Representative to the NSAC. Maria will serve on the NSAC and as the Technical Advisor to the NALSAC for a period of three years.

Accomplishments

- Held two all-hands meetings to improve communication and share information among the secretarial support staff. Topics included:
 - *Informs and Online Travel System*. Guest speakers included Yvonne Washington, Administrative Manager, and Chris Stephens, Information Systems Division.
 - *Physical fitness and nutrition in the workplace*. Guest speakers included Sharon Jacobson from the ARS Fitness Center and Lora Wilder, Nutritional Information Specialist, Food and Nutrition Information Center.
- Continued to provide career development opportunities by offering classes on Team Building, Proofreading, Listening Skills, and Effective Business Writing.
- Continued to update the NAL Secretarial Handbook.
- Visited the USDA TARGET Center. As a result, the Center was invited to NAL to demonstrate workstation ergonomic technology.

Goals

- Continue to update the NAL Secretarial Handbook to include correspondence preparation guidance.

- Prepare formal travel guidance for all travelers and travel coordinators.
- Continue convening quarterly information sharing meetings.
- Study and make recommendations on telephone coverage issues and voicemail usage.

NATIONAL PROGRAM STAFF (NPS)

Members of the National Program Staff-Organizational Secretarial Advisory Council (NPS-OSAC) and their duties for 1997-98 are:

Barbara Zapp – Chair
 Linda Neuenhahn - Vice Chair
 Viola Matthews - Recording Secretary
 Nancy Hobbs - Executive Secretary
 Carmela Carrick - Technical Advisor

Committee Chairs:

Beth Lloyd - Building 005 Security
 Kathy Martin - Training/Career Enhancement
 Jan Cline - Workstation Review Committee

Accomplishments

- Promoted training opportunities for NPS-OSAC members.
- Restructuring Activities - The National Program Staff is in the process of restructuring the support staff into Service Centers where specific positions, such as support staff assistant, computer assistant, program assistant, etc., will perform specialized support functions. NPS-OSAC representatives served on various committees relating to this restructuring, including the Work Process Team, the Personnel Transition Team, the Files Subcommittee, and the Communications Subcommittee.
- Identified workstation requirements for NPS support positions for the new Beltsville Office Facility.

Goals

- Continue to be involved in promoting training and career enhancement activities.
- Review current charter of the NPS-OSAC.
- Establish an NPS-OSAC suggestion box.
- Organize a training/information retreat.

- Develop NPS-OSAC web site.

NORTH ATLANTIC AREA (NAA)

The Secretarial Advisory Committee for NAA (NAA-SAC) is comprised of the secretaries to the Area and Associate Area Directors, the Administrative Officer, the Center Directors at Plum Island Animal Disease Center and the Eastern Regional Research Center and two rotating members selected from field locations.

Members for 1997-98 are:

Diane Koch, Wyndmoor, Pennsylvania – Chair
Prunella Brashich, Plum Island, New York
Phyllis Davis, Wyndmoor, Pennsylvania
Denise Madden, Wyndmoor, Pennsylvania
Teri Anne Jordan, University Park, Pennsylvania - rotating member
Vacant - rotating member
Joyce Smith, Wyndmoor, Pennsylvania - Technical Advisor

On June 1, 1998, Phyllis Davis replaced Joyce Smith as the NAA representative to the NSAC. Phyllis will serve on the NSAC and as the Technical Advisor to the NAA-SAC for a period of three years.

Accomplishments

- Mentoring, shadowing and orientation continues to be an important part of the NAA-SAC'S activities. This year the orientation has been expanded to include clerical employees at the various locations and was conducted several times during the past year. The orientation includes a session with the Area and Associate Area Directors' secretaries to acquaint new secretaries with the NAA Secretarial Handbook and other resource materials that should be available to them at their desks. This includes an in-depth review of formal and informal correspondence, foreign correspondence, and RPES case write-ups, along with general information. Sessions are also scheduled with each of the sections of the Area Administrative Office which lets the participants get a feel of the different operations that go on within the Area. Training in RMIS is provided with hands-on experience followed by a day of "Shadowing" a secretary in the daily operations of an office. Also added this year is the Ethics Orientation for New Employees along with expanded time for sessions.
- Minutes from conference calls/meeting held by the NSAC are distributed to all NAA-SAC members.
- Minutes from the NAA-SAC are shared with secretaries, clerks, and Research Leaders in NAA and shared with the NSAC.

- New secretaries in the NAA receive a call from either the Area Director's or Associate Area Director's secretary welcoming them to ARS. This call is made as soon as the Area Office is advised of their reporting dates and serves to advise new secretaries that NAA has a Secretarial Advisory Council and that a member of the Council will be contacting them to assist them in getting acquainted with their jobs. Currently rotating member Teri Jordan serves as the contact person. Teri is advised of new secretaries' arrival by the Area Director's office and contacts them to offer assistance in getting started.
- The second rotating member position is currently vacant due to resignation of the member. A search is underway to fill this vacant position. The other rotating member's term has expired but she has agreed to stay on board until the selection of a new second member has been completed. After the new second rotating member is in place for a period of time, the Council will go out with a call for nominations to replace the first rotating member, thus allowing for a smooth and effective transition without disruption to the Council.
- A "New Employee Welcoming Packet" containing a letter from the Area Director, a listing of the NAA-SAC members, a brief explanation of the NAA along with a list of contact people to enable new secretaries and clerical employees to feel more comfortable in their first days on the job is in preparation and will be given to the Area Director for approval prior to implementation of this new process.
- The NAA-SAC is still committed to having a Newsletter which could be put up on the NAA Home Page that was recently unveiled. The Newsletter is considered to be a good source of communicating new ideas and changes quickly to the secretarial community. With the ability to communicate electronically with all locations within NAA, the newsletter is now considered a vital aspect for improved communication.
- The Council will have a face-to-face meeting July 27-31, 1998, at the Plum Island Animal Disease Center location at their invitation.
- A subcommittee worked to put together instructions for using GroupWise® mail on the LAN/WAN and through the Internet. Work is ongoing with the Area Computer Specialist since the initial instructions that were put together have since been replaced with newer, faster ways to communicate. The Subcommittee met to review new instructions which will be distributed to NAA secretaries/clerical employees.
- The next NAA Leadership Meeting is scheduled for November 16-19, 1998, and will be hosted by the University of Maryland, Eastern Shore, in Princess Anne, Maryland. The NAA-SAC will be involved in putting together the program for the secretaries in attendance at this meeting. A call for suggested topics was made. A conference call in May with the local Council started the planning process.
- The NAA-SAC was given the packet calling for nominations for the "Secretary of the Year" Award to the Area Director for approval. Nominations were due to the Area Administrative Officer by June 30 for this award.

- A brochure describing the NAA-SAC is in preparation. This brochure details the mission and goal of the NAA-SAC along with its guidelines and membership and will be given to the Area Director for approval. After approval is received, this brochure will be distributed to all secretarial and clerical employees along with their supervisors. It will also be included in the "New Employee Welcoming Packet."

Goals

- Continue to improve and expand the mentoring, shadowing and orientation for new secretarial and clerical employees.
- Finalize and obtain approval for implementation of the "New Employee Welcoming Packet" process.
- Replacement of the second rotating member and selection of a new first rotating member to fill all empty Council slots.
- Re-energize the NAA-SAC newsletter and put on the newly created NAA Home Page for distribution.
- Finalize and distribute instructions for using GroupWise e-mail and Internet for
- Meet and plan for the upcoming NAA Leadership Meeting. Propose agenda to the Planning Committee for the Meeting.
- Follow up with the Area Director for approval and distribution of the NAA "Secretary of the Year" Award for nominations to the Area Administrative Officer.
- Update listing of Resource Personnel and distribute to all secretarial/clerical employees in NAA.

NORTHERN PLAINS AREA (NPA)

The Northern Plains Area Secretarial Advisory Council (NPASAC) met March 3, 1998 in Ft. Collins, Colorado, to continue working on the goals set at the previous meeting. The Council reviewed the reasons it was formed: To assist secretaries (those already on board and new) with day-to-day procedures, to support programs that encourage professionalism amongst secretaries, and serve as an information source as needed.

One meeting was held in 1997. It was decided that council members remain in their current assignments. Olga Lee replaced Sue Thornburg as the NSAC Representative and Technical Advisor to NPASAC when Sue retired June 30, 1997. Members for 1997-98 and their duties are:

Kathleen Aragon, Laramie, Wyoming
 Louise Dalton, Fort Collins, Colorado - Chair
 Sandy Mathewson, Manhattan, Kansas

Sharon Peterson, Grand Forks, North Dakota – Recorder
Jan Preston, Lincoln, Nebraska
Olga Lee, Fort Collins, Colorado - Technical Advisor

Accomplishments

- The Directory of Volunteer Resources, a listing of secretaries to serve as mentors to other secretaries in specialized areas was revised; updated; and distributed to secretaries and will be used in the informational packet to be given to new secretaries. Volunteer response was excellent.
- The New Secretary Welcome Package was reviewed. The welcome letter has been revised and is ready for inclusion in the secretarial packet. The letter with the revisions provides some very helpful and practical information for new secretaries which is intended to keep them from feeling isolated. The enclosures to the welcome letter that make up the packet include: a copy of the NPASAC Charter; a list of council members with locations, phone numbers and e-mail addresses; the current Resource Assistants list with locations, phone numbers, and e-mail addresses; and the NSAC *Training and Planning Guide for ARS Secretarial/Clerical Personnel*.
- Provisions for follow-up have been made to enable new secretaries to ask questions, give feedback, receive adequate orientation and in-house training at the Area Office and become generally familiar with the sections they will be dealing with on numerous matters. The Area Director's secretary, Olga Lee, will personally call each new secretary to extend a welcome.
- Method of communication between secretaries has been provided. A list server was formed and a Home Page is being developed. After the Home Page is up and running, pertinent information of value to secretaries will be added as it becomes available.
- As influenced by NPASAC and Total Quality Service training in Ft. Collins last year, a Colorado-Wyoming secretarial group has been formed which meets monthly. These meetings are supported by Dr. Blackburn, NPA Area Director and sponsored by Dr. Roos, NPA Acting Assistant Area Director. In conjunction with these meetings, several in-house training sessions have been provided by Area Office personnel. Sessions on T&A procedures (and prevention of T&A errors), Travel, and ARMPs have been conducted. A session on RMIS is planned for the near future.
- A secretarial handbook is being developed. The Council is using the handbook developed by the NAA as a guide and is modifying it to serve the NPA.

Goals

- Continue to provide mentoring, orientation, and basic in-house training for all newly hired secretaries in addition to refresher sessions for those already on board.

- Continue to provide assistance to the NSAC.
- Promote programs in support of professionalism in the secretarial field.
- Identify and provide outside training courses of particular value to secretaries and continue to encourage networking with peers.
- Continue working on the secretarial handbook that is presently in the process of being tailored to the needs of the NPA.
- Decide at some point on a reevaluation of the Council's efforts to determine if goals are being accomplished. Also, through feedback, learn whether or not secretaries think the help they receive is worthwhile.

OFFICE OF THE ADMINISTRATOR (OA)

The Office of the Administrator is incorporated into the National Program Staff Organizational Secretarial Council due to the small number of secretaries on the Administrator's staff.

PACIFIC WEST AREA (PWA)

The PWA Secretarial/Program Support Advisory Council continues to work toward their goal of ensuring that PWA has highly skilled professional secretarial/program support staff working as part of the location leadership team to meet the program/administrative goals of the Agency. The PWA Council conducted its 1998 annual meeting at the ARS Pullman, Washington location April 1-2.

Previous Council meetings have been held at the following ARS locations: Albany, California; Corvallis, Oregon; and Phoenix, Arizona.

Council members and their positions for 1997-98 are:

Tammy Durfee, Pullman, Washington - Co-Chair
 Patti Speckman, Riverside, California - Co-Chair
 Barbara Ballengee, Shafter, California - Recorder
 Veronica Cullum, Albany, California
 Judy Flynn, Corvallis, Oregon
 Monta Whitehurst, Albany, California - Handbook Coordinator
 Libby Fouse, Fresno, California - Technical Advisor

On June 1, 1998, Tammy Durfee replaced Libby Fouse as the PWA Representative to the NSAC. Tammy will serve on the NSAC and as the Technical Advisor to the PWA Council for a period of three years.

Accomplishments

- Participated in development of 1997 Leadership Conference until cancelled.
- Finalized second draft of PWA Secretarial Handbook.
- Developed PWA Secretarial Handbook Subcommittee.
- Developed e-mail contact list.

Goals

- Improve/expand PWA Directory to include mission statements, all staff listings, e-mail addresses (FTS/Internet), and map/directions to location.
- Create PWA Secretarial Council Website.
- Finalize/distribute PWA Secretarial Handbook.
- Develop/implement electronic newsletter.
- Develop PWA Secretarial Handbook Update Subcommittee.
- Motivate interest in the Mentoring Program.

SOUTH ATLANTIC AREA (SAA)

The South Atlantic Area Secretarial Council (SAA-SAC) strives to maintain an urgent Agency goal - To ensure that highly skilled, professional/secretarial support is provided for the Area. To that end, an Orientation/Training Program has been established this year to provide professionals working in partnership with management to meet its secretarial and administrative needs.

Council members for 1997-98 are:

Susan Mewborn, Athens, Georgia – Chair
 Patricia Fields, Clemson, South Carolina
 Rhonda Harper, Athens, Georgia
 Migdalia Malave, Mayaguez, Puerto Rico
 Frankee Simpson, Athens, Georgia
 Sabrina Whitley-Ferrell, Raleigh, North Carolina

Peggy Zelonka, Gainesville, Florida
Kay Carr, Tifton, Georgia - Technical Advisor

On June 1, 1998, Frankee Simpson replaced Kay Carr as the SAA Representative to the NSAC. Frankee will serve on the NSAC and as the Technical Advisor to the SAA Council for a period of three years.

Accomplishments

- Established a Mentoring Program - SAA Orientation Plan.
- Established a SAA-SAC Website which was developed by Council member, Sabrina Whitley-Ferrell.
<http://www.ars-grin.gov/ars/SoAtlantic/ao/saasac.htm>

In lieu of an Area-wide secretaries meeting, the Council planned and presented the secretarial session of the Biennial Research Leaders Meeting, Stuart, Florida, April 6-9, 1998. Presentations were made on travel, RMIS, and agreements.

- Held annual SAA-SAC meeting in Tifton, Georgia, and provided 8 hours of training for the Council. Invited secretaries from three surrounding locations to attend training on CRIS with overhead projection instructions provided; and travel with questions/answers as time allowed within the 4hour timeframe allotted. Updated/revised Charter at Annual August 1997 Meeting. Each year the SAA Council holds their meeting at a Council Member's site for Council visibility, and to meet and interact with other support staff at these locations. Training is planned and provided whenever possible to cut expenses and enhance job performance. Positive feedback from throughout the Area make Council members aware that this practice is effective.
- SAA Secretary of the Year 1997 - Kathryn Carr, GS-0318-06, Secretary to the Location Coordinator, Insect Biology and Population Management Research Unit, Tifton, Georgia.

Goals

- Conduct annual meeting of SAA-SAC at the Raleigh, North Carolina location to consist of a one day training session on "Internet/Internet Training. "
- Upgrade Website with new "hotlinks" to pertinent information providing a vast wealth of information to all secretarial support with just a click. This will save an enormous amount of time, especially when looking up reference materials and instructions.
- Establish a Groupwise®/e-mail mailbox for secretaries and their supervisors to disseminate Council information easier throughout the SAA. This will be handled through the Area Computer Staff who sets up the mailboxes.

- Develop the SAA portion of a Reference Guide to accompany the Quick Reference Guide for ARS Secretarial/Clerical Personnel provided by the NSAC and disseminate this package throughout the SAA.
Add a Secretarial/Clerical Representative to the SAA-AFM Quality Council.
- Develop a Training Survey for the South Atlantic Area.
- Replace one Council vacancy and add two new members.

SOUTHERN PLAINS AREA (SPA)

Members of the 1997-98 SPA Secretarial/Program Support Council are:

Ruth Treat, Stillwater, Oklahoma – Chair
 Pat Agold, Kerrville, Texas
 Lola Albright, Lane, Oklahoma
 Sherry Dewald, Woodward, Oklahoma
 Eilene Gibbons, El Reno, Oklahoma
 Janice Story, Lane, Oklahoma
 Anne Steele, College Station, Texas - Technical Advisor

On June 1, 1998, Ruth Treat replaced Anne Steele as the SPA representative to the NSAC. Ruth will serve on the NSAC and as the Technical Advisor to the SPA Council for a period of three years.

Accomplishments

- Completed the compilation of the Council's Location Response Questionnaires on locations' progress in implementing specific recommendations identified in *Stepping Into the Future*, and provided a final report to the Area Director. Although the report was not made public within the Area, and the Council does not know what actions the Area Director has taken after reading the report, the Council believes that there are some changes being made. Hopefully this trend will continue as more secretaries become involved in the Council activities.
- Based on interactions with SPA secretaries and program support persons, focused on developing training and interacting opportunities. Established a contact in HRD to discover resources that are available at that level, and to pursue the development of a train-the-trainer program.
- Implemented a SPA Shadowing Program for secretaries and program support employees, involving site visits to other locations. This dove-tails with a Cross-Training Opportunity devised by the SPA Program Analyst, and the SPA Council is encouraging participation in both programs. Funding appears to be a deterrent at the present time, but Council members are encouraging Locations to keep this in mind when developing the FY-99 budgets.

- Contacted coordinators about the Service Employees Team program, which involves opportunities to take on detail assignments in other offices, but were informed that the SET program currently was open only to volunteers in Administration.
- Continued to work toward putting out a quarterly Area-wide newsletter, which includes highlighting individual SPA secretaries, and providing tips and shortcuts for a variety of common tasks. The latest issue focused on strategies for holding a productive Laboratory Program Review
- Promoted the use of working titles that reflect a distinct tie with program support functions.
- Identified, and recommended to the Area Director, replacement members for half of the original SPA Council members whose terms expired. The new Council membership will include: Sherry Dewald, Woodward, Oklahoma, as Chair; Pat Agold, Kerrville, Texas; Lola Albright, Booneville, Arkansas; Rhea Fryar, Big Spring, Texas; Karen Wilcox, College Station, Texas; and Rayma Cox, Bushland, Texas. Ruth Treat was appointed by the Area Director to replace Anne Steele as the Technical Advisor.

Goals

- Review and revise objectives and goals developed by the initial Council membership in the Chartering process. Additional goals will be identified during this process.
- Develop a SPA Council Home Page, linked to the Area Home Page, Home Pages of the Council members, and the NSAC Home Page.
- Maintain communications through the newsletter, with distribution and posting on a developed Home Page.
- Pursue extension of the SET program for volunteers from the Program side and encourage participation when permitted.
- Administer the SPA Shadowing Program implemented in 1998.