It’s hard to believe we are almost six months through my term as president. While I would like to say it feels like just yesterday I was being inducted, the work that our committees have done illustrates just how untrue that is. Over the past six months the SNMTS committees and leadership team have been hard at work. Many hard decisions had to be made to ensure the continued success of the SNMTS, and despite these changes, the committees and SNMTS programs continue to thrive. We have put in place new programs and products that have increased our revenue streams and to create a system where progress is reviewed and monitored often to make certain the goals outlined in our strategic plan our met. It’s safe to say, we are on track for a great year!

Last year, the SNMTS received an overwhelming number of requests for data regarding the job shortage, how the job shortage was affecting nuclear medicine technologist jobs, and general workforce data for NMT’s. As the healthcare field is moving more towards evidenced based medicine, I thought it was important for the SNMTS to move forward in evidence based programming. With this in mind, I created the SNMTS Research Committee, chaired by David Gilmore. The Task Force was charged with; identifying gaps in statistics and research needed within the Nuclear Medicine Technologist Community, conducting research via surveys, focus groups, etc. to fulfill gaps identified, analyzing research and report to the Executive Board on a regular basis, disseminating results of the research to NMT community as deemed appropriate by the Executives Board, and working with other SNMTS Committees to utilize the research gathered to implement changes or future goals within the SNMTS. Since its creation the task force has conducted two surveys; one regarding the job market task force and the other on mentoring. Results from both of these surveys are included in the agenda books for review. The Research Committee will be developing a summary of the findings from each survey and will post the summary, with background on the SNMTS website. The SNMTS Research Committee, at the request of the Educators Committee will be working on a task analysis survey, for entry level transition, as an update to the previous survey conducted several years ago. The research gathered in this task analysis will help in preparing to write another white paper on the importance of transitioning to a baccalaureate degree as entry level.

One of my focus areas this year has been the transition program from associate degree to baccalaureate. With the work of the Educators Committee and Transition Task Force, we have a lot to be excited about! We have successfully completed a Pilot Program with three schools who transitioned to the baccalaureate level. More recently, we held a conference call to review the applications submitted by the schools who are interested in participating in this initiative in 2011. We will be reviewing the Resource Manual that was recently completed, by the Task Force, and includes a wealth of information to assist in the transition process. The Resource Manual is an online resource that will be continually updated with new information and materials. In addition, later this year, we will be submitting for publication, an article in the JNMT on the gap analysis data collected last year.
While we continue to develop our entry level program, we are simultaneously ensuring an advanced career path for NMT’s. There is one existing program, currently, a consortium of three universities: the University of Arkansas for Medical Sciences (UAMS), Saint Louis University and the University of Missouri–Columbia. The program currently has 10 students enrolled, four in their second-year and six in their first-year of the program. In addition, we plan to enroll two to three more students this spring. The four second-year students are on track to graduate in May 2011. In addition, during the September 2010 SNMTS Executive Board meeting, we discussed, in depth the Nuclear Medicine Advanced Associate program and the importance the American College of Radiology (ACR) approval has jump starting the process within the states to start allowing the NMAA’s to practice. The SNM and SNMTS Leadership have been working diligently with the ACR for the past three years on this issue and have been trying to get the ACR to adopt the roles and responsibilities of the NMAA. Later this month, Paul Ellenbogen, MD, ACR Commission on Human Resources Chair (Commission on Nuclear Medicine falls under the Commission on Human Resources) will be seeking ACR Board approval and endorsement of the NMAA resolution and roles and responsibilities document. By achieving ACR Board of Directors approval and endorsement, the resolution will be nearly guaranteed ACR House of Delegates approval, in May. The ACR Board of Directors will be meeting at the end of this month, and ACR staff will be informing the SNMTS shortly after. If approved, this will pave the way for the future of the NMAA program.

While education is an integral part to any person’s success, so is professional development. One of the most exciting and future oriented programs the SNMTS created, the SNMTS Leadership Academy, entering its fifth year. Through the vision of Scott Holbrook and the implementation by David Gilmore, this program has been a proven success for us. The 4th Annual SNMTS/IBA Leadership Academy was held October 15-17 in Indianapolis, IN. With eleven eager and aspiring new leaders in attendance, the SNMTS Leadership (with facilitator Shawn Dunning from Adventure Associates, Inc.) began the three day academy with high hopes and an important message to convey. Over the past four years, the SNMTS has continued to accept highly qualified applicants into the Academy, and this year was no different. These individuals (listed below) have demonstrated leadership abilities and engagement at the national and/or chapter level. They, like those before them, had the unique opportunity to work side-by-side with the current SNMTS Leadership to gain knowledge in fundamental leadership techniques and skills that will ensure their success as a leader within their career and the SNMTS. The application process is now underway for the 2011 Leadership Academy! The application deadline for the 2011 academy is May 9, 2011. Applicants will be notified of their acceptance into the academy during the SNMTS Business Meeting, to be held at the SNM Annual Meeting, June 6, 2011.

As the spring chapter meetings begin, Ann Marie and I are excited about our leadership visits to the chapters and are looking forward to presenting an update on the SNMTS. The interaction we receive with members at the chapter meetings is invaluable to helping us hear the needs of our members. We have developed a comprehensive powerpoint presentation that provides background on what the SNMTS has to offer. It explains that although some benefits are not tangible they are, in some cases, more beneficial to the overall membership; i.e. advocacy related efforts. We hope that by presenting information that directly relates to the members and non-member attendees, we will be able to not only generate discussion, but buy-in from our constituents.
Finally, as a new class enters Congress, the Consistency, Accuracy, Responsibility and Excellence in Medical Imaging and Radiation Therapy bill (CARE) continues to be on the agenda. The SNMTS, through the assistance of Arent Fox, the new Government Relations firm, hired by the SNM and a new team in place within the Health Policy and Regulatory Affairs Department, is armed and ready to work side-by-side with ASRT to get the CARE bill passed. The SNMTS has been a long time supporter of the CARE Bill. As some may not know, the Alliance for Quality Medical Imaging and Radiation Therapy was created in 1998 by the American Society of Radiologic Technologists and SNMTS - a coalition of 25 health care organizations dedicated to the provision of safe, high quality medical imaging and radiation therapy. This group is gaining momentum and is hopeful that 2011 will be the year of the CARE Bill. As the SNMTS continues to work directly with the Alliance to push the CARE bill forward, we are beginning our work to revitalize the State Health Policy Liaison – SHPL – program. We will be reaching out to the grassroots organizations and asking for volunteers to serve as the designated SHPL in their state. SHPLs are often called upon to engage in grassroots activity at the federal and state levels of government for the betterment of nuclear medicine professionals and patients. With the assistance of the Advocacy Committee, we will organize the SHPLs to become active in their respective states. With the advent of hybrid imaging, in particular, it is very important for nuclear medicine technologists to be familiar with their state’s regulations pertaining to imaging personnel and influence changes before regulations are in place. Even if the CARE bill passes into law, state regulations will still determine the qualifications of the imaging personnel performing procedures such as PET, CT and MR. We need to pool our resources (state and national) to effectively work together on these regulatory issues affecting nuclear medicine technologists.

It’s been a fun and busy six months and I have not only learned a lot but become more appreciative of exactly what all of the committee chairs, committee members NCOR and Executive Board accomplish. We couldn’t do the work without all of you and I am very impressed with all we have accomplished. I look forward to seeing what the next six months have to hold!