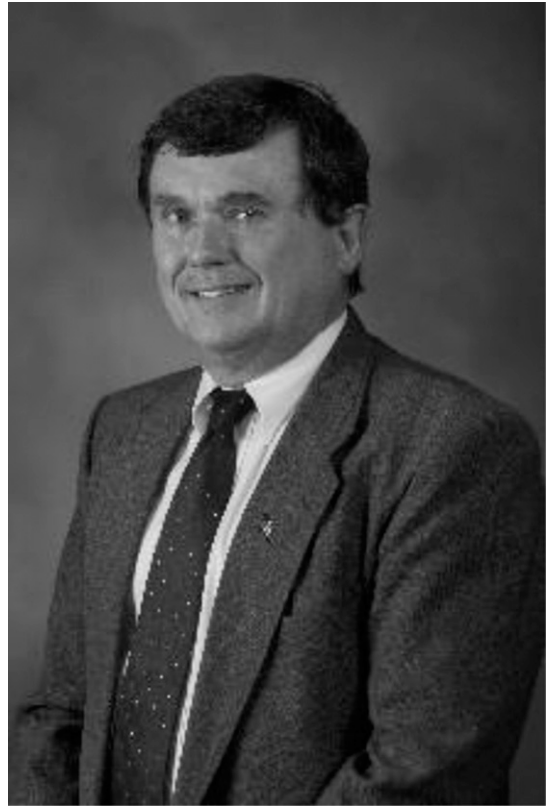


LETTER FROM YOUR PRESIDENT

It is hard to believe that it was 6 months ago that I became your President. It is an honor for me to work with (for) Vicki, your board of directors, and the other committee members that make SWST function so effectively. But, the core of any organization is its membership. Thank you for your continued support of one of the leading societies in the world focusing on research and education in the sustainable use of our natural resources. A few years ago, the Society decided to become an international organization by offering accreditation to universities outside the United States and holding our annual conventions every other year outside of North America. This move has been highly successful with new membership and accrediting universities in Asia, Latin America, and Europe. We are a global society and it is important that we have an encompassing dialog from all regions of the world that can lead to better utilization of our natural resources and educate the future leaders in this discipline.

During my acceptance address at our annual meeting in Vancouver last year, I brought up one of our major challenges that our discipline and the Society continues to face. During the past three decades, we have lost nearly one-half of accredited wood science programs in the United States. In the past few years, those programs that remain have had to change their offerings and names to remain viable in the university structure. We continue to see programs erode or be combined with other disciplines to continue to offer wood science education. At Virginia Tech, before 2010, our undergraduate enrollment in wood science averaged 40-60 students. We were, and still are, under a lot of pressure from upper administration to increase enrollments. I believe this is true with most public universities in the United States. To address this issue, our faculty went through a complete reorganization of our undergraduate curriculum that included a department name change and the addition of a new degree program that is not under SWST accreditation, but has helped in doubling our enrollment for the department. As many of our



Bob Smith

programs, we are a discovery degree once students reach the university. Very few students come to our programs as freshman from high school. We are not destination degrees for students considering college programs.

For those of us who are responsible for enrollment in our programs, there is not much new in these words. However, what may be new is that for the first time in my tenure, natural resources and trees are seen as a solution to many of our societal problems such as clean air, clean water, climate change, green building, and natural products to reduce dependence of fossil fuels. The question in my mind is how does SWST and its membership capture these benefits to help develop future leaders in our field. How do we get young adults interested in our discipline at the high-school level

so that we become a destination degree, just as engineering, business, and science? Our science applies these disciplines to the world's most abundant, renewable resource. In my opinion, unless we can get this message to our young adults, we will continue to struggle with enrollment and long-term viability of our traditional wood science programs. Is there a role for

SWST to lead this effort and what can we do as a Society to address this issue? I can be reached at rsmith4@vt.edu if you have thoughts or comments.

BOB SMITH
SWST President