

Dear Southern Surgical Fellows,

As everyone is aware, the COVID-19 pandemic continues to be of great concern, especially in the states represented within the Southern Surgical region. This includes Florida, where our 2020 annual meeting is scheduled to be held December 6th-9th. Travel continues to be a challenge and many academic centers and hospitals have maintained restrictions on non-essential travel. We are all aware of many societies and organizations canceling annual meetings and other functions well into early next year. Unfortunately, hopes for a vaccine prior to December appear unlikely.

The leadership of the Southern Surgical Association has met virtually numerous times over the last several months and have continued to monitor the progress of the pandemic. It is with heavy regret to inform everyone that we have made the difficult, but necessary decision to cancel the annual meeting of the Southern Surgical Association. Discussion of going to a virtual platform for the December meeting was considered, but with the Southern Surgical Association's unique and long-standing traditions, we thought best to cancel.

However, in keeping with the academic spirit of the Association, we encourage members to submit scholarly works in the form of abstracts as if the meeting were to proceed as usual. Submitted abstracts, which are due by **July 31st** at midnight, will be reviewed by the program committee in customary fashion.

JACS (with many thanks to Past President Tim Eberlein) has agreed to publish accepted abstracts in the form of full-length manuscripts, each with one invited commentary in block in the journal, as is typically done each year for the Southern Surgical Association.

Additionally, we will continue to proceed with the usual process of reviewing and accepting new candidate applications for SSA membership. Completed applications, including letters of recommendation, are also due by **July 31st**.

For those who have registered and paid for the December meeting, registration fees will be reimbursed through your original form of payment. For more details and to help answer any questions, please contact Lindsey Overman at the Treasurer's office (leoverman@uams.edu). The Breakers will also be cancelling existing hotel reservations made within the SSA room block and issuing full refunds for any deposits you may have already made.

It is a sad, difficult and nearly unprecedented time for our Association, with the only other postponed meeting occurring during World War II. However, we believe safety and practicality must prevail, and we will move forward with the membership's best interest at heart.

Dai H. Chung, MD
On behalf of the Council, Officers and President Chapman