

in this nomination process. This SRM will be a liquid baking chocolate that falls into Sector 2 of the AOAC food triangle. It will be value-assigned for proximates, total dietary fiber, vitamins, minerals, caffeine, and theobromine concentrations.

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## Technical Division on Laboratory Management

The mission of the Division is to provide a focus within AOAC for those concerned with the overall management and operation of analytical laboratories. To achieve that end, the Division goals are:

(1) To provide opportunities for leadership, mentoring, learning, and professional enhancement.

(2) To provide a forum in which solutions to laboratory management issues originate in an exchange of ideas.

(3) To foster and improve understanding and transfer of information, techniques, and procedures.

During 1998, the officers of the Technical Division for Laboratory Management (TDLM) held 3 teleconferences. In addition to ensuring that the Division had a broad base of support and planning a program for the 1998 annual meeting, they invited the members of FLAWG to join the Division. FLAWG agreed and became the Analytical Laboratory Accreditation Criteria Committee (ALACC) within the Division (Lynn Bradley was asked to serve as chair). The officers also agreed to sponsor a problem-solving symposium at the Montréal meeting on Thursday, September 17 from 8:00 am–12:00 noon.

The Division officers held an executive session and a business meeting on Monday. The business meeting elected officers for 1999 and considered the feasibility of holding one or two online symposia designed to encourage participation by those who, because of distance or lack of funds, find it difficult to participate in Division affairs.

There are now 360 members of the Division.

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## Research Institute Report

SCOTT G. COATES, MANAGING DIRECTOR

AOAC Research Institute, 481 N. Frederick Ave, Suite 500, Gaithersburg, MD 20877, USA

### *Climbing the Mountain*

Thank you for the opportunity to review the AOAC Research Institute program with you this afternoon.

Six years ago I attended an "Open Forum" meeting in Cincinnati, at the 108th AOAC INTERNATIONAL Annual meeting. That was my first AOAC meeting. I had been with AOAC for a few months, and was somewhat overwhelmed so I planned to sit back, and simply be a fly on the wall. I walked into a big hall just buzzing with expectation with 200 people and took my seat in the most obscure corner I could find. Little did I know I was to become the main entertainment for the

evening. Our AOAC members wanted to know just what we were going to do with the Performance Tested Methods program. The first 45 minutes of the 1-hour meeting were questions about the Performance Tested Methods program and the AOAC Research Institute. There were many very pointed questions about the new program. The membership, looking out for the best interest of AOAC, was highly concerned about the legitimacy of the Performance Tested Methods evaluation.

Today, 6 years (and many more gray hairs) later, the Performance Tested Methods program, along with the Official Methods and Peer-Verified Methods programs, are part of an interlocking system of method validation programs. Each of the three method validation programs serves a specific role and supports the other two programs. The question is no longer if the Performance Tested Methods evaluation is valid, but how do Performance Tested Methods fit in the AOAC scheme, and how do we best use the AOAC Research Institute?

I think the creation of the Performance Tested Methods program was actually a watershed for AOAC. It was among the first of several significant, new AOAC initiatives, and I believe the successful launch of this new program created a more receptive environment to the development of other new AOAC programs. AOAC is now well on its way towards achieving its mission of being an organization that advances quality assurance in analytical science. The Performance Tested Methods program was our first step into the future.

Today, you can walk around the AOAC exhibit hall and see the Performance Tested Methods mark displayed on a half dozen exhibit booths. I am told that after we unknowingly ran out of AOAC Method Validation Integration Flowcharts (under the big poster), people were so interested in the chart that they were taking the time to manually copy it.

The question is no longer why do we need the Performance Tested Methods or Peer-Verified Methods programs, but rather how do the programs fit together, and how do we best use the programs we have created to meet the needs of method users? This is a major shift in our collective frame of reference.

So after 6 years of struggling step-by-step up the mountain, we have reached the first of many summits. We are now looking over the range of mountains, with a perspective. We can now see where we are in relation to the other programs, and where Performance Tested Methods fit in.

We still have challenges ahead of us, but I am confident that we have positioned the Performance Tested Methods program exactly where it needs to be, with a solid infrastructure and support system. We still have tough decisions to make and there will still be struggles to get up other mountains, but I am absolutely certain that the program is ready for the challenges ahead of us.

In concluding my report, I wish to acknowledge the dedicated work of the AOAC Research Institute Advisory Board, the outstanding effort of Anita Mishra-Szymanski who has worked tirelessly to advance the cause of the AOAC Research Institute, the AOAC Research Institute Board for their leadership during those dark days, and the AOAC INTERNATIONAL Board for their continued support.