Good afternoon SSSers.

We understand that there is a lot going on ahead of our annual meeting. There are facts and fears. There are uncertainties and excitements. There are the known and the unknown. Please know that the Executive Committee and the Executive Office have been very hard at work over the past week to discuss, gather information, and prepare for a safe, accommodating, and exciting annual meeting.

This time of year is always rough for people with compromised immune systems as well as the healthy as SSS always has held its annual meeting during the flu season.

**SSS 2020 is still on!**

There are actions we are taking, actions the hotel is taking, and actions that you can take. This email contains our collective thinking on these at this moment.

At this moment **SSS** is taking these actions:

- Promoting SSS 2020 as the *Year of the Elbow-Bump* to encourage refraining from handshaking and hugging within our family. We have heard of other ways too from conferences across the country this week including fist bumps, bowing, peace signs, hands over hearts, and others. We can be creative. We are SSSers!
- We are strongly encouraging everyone to go ahead and register online **now** in order to minimize contacts at onsite registration. You can do that [here](#).
- Relatedly, Executive Office is actively working to create some way to minimize contact during the distribution of nametags at the meeting – whether prestuffing name tags into their holders beforehand, allowing members to print their own onsite, etc. **This, of course, makes it important that you register online before the meeting.**
- For SSS members who wish to avoid contact of any kind (including elbow-bumps) we will have a colored sticker designation where **red** means “preference to avoid contact” – we will all respect this.
- Additionally, we are looking into increased bandwidth and audio services for the potential of using Skype for those who simply cannot attend in person. Presiders and organizers will be directed to coordinate with their session presenters.
- Following CDC recommendations for large gatherings [HYPERLINK].

If you have any concerns, ideas, and accommodations. Please do not hesitate to contact the Executive Office at [brunsmad@vt.edu](mailto:brunsmad@vt.edu).

The **hotel** is taking these actions:

- Cleaning and disinfecting rooms and reception areas diligently
- Providing sanitizer stations in public areas
- Providing hands-free tissue stations on elevator landings
Increased cleaning schedules of all restrooms, restaurants and in general all public areas, including meeting rooms

They have also increased and encouraged usage of gloves for all “heart of the house” employees and increased their hand washing stations in those departments

Offering gloves at the Front Desk

New “wash hands” signs added in the back of the house

Over and above this, we will be asking them to wipe down all breakout rooms during the passage time from one session to the next

EO is in daily contact with the hotel to increase preparations and precautions including precautions for receptions (e.g., no tongs, etc.) and coffee stations.

If you have any concerns, ideas, and accommodations. Please do not hesitate to contact the Executive Office at brunsmad@vt.edu.

As an SSS member you can:
During this time, and during all flu seasons, prevention is everyone’s role. COVID-19 can be dangerous for persons with weakened immune systems, pre-existing medical conditions and those who are older. We are asking each member of our community to:

- Avoid eating or drinking after others or sharing personal items
- Avoid close contact with people who are sick
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth
- Stay home when you are sick
- Cover your cough or sneeze with a tissue, then throw the tissue in the trash
- Clean and disinfect frequently touched objects and surfaces using a regular household cleaning spray or wipe
- Wash your hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds, especially after going to the bathroom; before eating; and after blowing your nose, coughing, or sneezing. If soap and water are not readily available, use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer with at least 60% alcohol
- Refrain from shaking hands with anyone, as this is a primary way of spreading viruses

The SSS Executive Office and Executive Committee are closely monitoring updates from local and national public health authorities concerning coronavirus. We are also actively engaged with our many partners (event management staff, vendors, AV, hotels, etc.) to discuss contingency planning, should the need arise. At present, we do not have any information to suggest there is a risk to the Annual Meeting scheduled for April 1-4, 2020. Please monitor your email, Twitter (@SouthSocSociety, #southerns2020), and our Facebook page for updates.

Even as I type this email, our colleagues are actively registering for the conference, paying their dues, and booking rooms. We are excited about making SSS 2020 a safe and memorable experience for our members.
Sincerely,

David L. Brunsma
SSS Executive Officer