One focus area during my year as ASIS&T president is recruiting student members and fostering their continuing engagement in our Society. I have a long-standing interest in student involvement in ASIS&T. When I joined the faculty at Illinois in 1977, I worked with master’s student Barbara Rapp (now chief, Office of Planning and Analysis, National Library of Medicine) to establish a student chapter, and in 1979 then-president James Cretsos appointed me special consultant to him on student membership. My goal then, as now, is to identify more ways in which student members can benefit from and contribute to ASIS&T.

So what does ASIS&T offer students? A close look at various ASIS&T units and activities demonstrates that ASIS&T already offers numerous opportunities to learn, contribute and receive recognition.

- Almost 40 ASIS&T student chapters give students an opportunity to plan and participate in programs and activities. While master’s students lead many of these chapters, undergraduate and doctoral students may also be involved. Students can also participate in chapter activities if they live in an area served by one of the regional chapters.

- Students can compete for one of several awards, including the Thomson Reuters Doctoral Dissertation Proposal Scholarship, ASIS&T/ProQuest Doctoral Dissertation, Pratt-Severn Best Student Research Paper and Student Chapter-of-the-Year.

- Students can contribute to program planning and communications activities of SIGs.

- Many students find opportunities to share their research and project results through posters, papers, panels and demos at ASIS&T Annual Meetings.

- The Bulletin of the American Society for Information Science and Technology includes a student member on its Advisory Board, and students can submit papers for potential publication in both the Bulletin and the Journal of the American Society for Information Science and Technology.

The 2010 ASIS&T Annual Meeting pioneered two new ways for involving student members.

Under the leadership of Barbara Wildemuth, professor and associate dean for academic affairs at University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, a student design competition was held. Several cross-institution design teams formed at the beginning of the meeting, and team members worked together for the next few days to come up with a solution to the assigned design problem. Their efforts culminated in presentations of their work to a panel of judges at a special session of the conference, at which they demonstrated their creativity and enthusiasm.

The other new initiative, the New Leaders Award which is described in more detail elsewhere in this issue of the Bulletin, features students who have already been involved as leaders in their student chapters and now have an opportunity to contribute their talents to SIGs, committees and regional chapters.
One of the challenges facing student chapters is the dramatic increase in online education, so that potential members are no longer co-located. At Illinois, for example, more than half of our master’s students earn their degrees through our online enrollment option. But just as technology enables such students to study at a distance, it can also facilitate participation in student chapter events. As one example, Illinois student chapter president and master’s student Adam Rusch organized a meeting on December 2, 2010, exploiting web-conferencing technology to enable students in Champaign and remote locations to hear, see and interact with Cassidy Sugimoto, ASIS&T Chapter Assembly Director and faculty member at Indiana University’s School of Library and Information Science, as she discussed her research on the MPACT project (www.ibiblio.org/mpact/).

While Cassidy joined the group from a neighboring state, the same technology could be used to reach speakers and involve students from around the United States and beyond.

Just as the student design competition demonstrated the benefits of cross-institution collaboration, multiple student chapters could collaborate in exploiting web-conferencing technology in delivering programs that would benefit students from more than one institution. This is just one example of networking and collaboration that could go beyond the face-to-face activities possible at ASIS&T Annual Meetings. I welcome more ideas for strategies to involve student members and foster their continuing engagement with ASIS&T as they graduate.