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The guest editor for this issue is Cheryl Power who is the convenor of the ASM Education SIG. Cheryl has many years of experience in education and is a recipient of the ASM David White Award for Excellence in Teaching. She has invited a number of other educators to contribute to this issue, many of whom are recipients of teaching awards from this society or their own teaching institutions.

Students are attracted to microbiology for a variety of personal reasons, but it is the quality of teaching and the experience we provide for them during their studies which determine whether they go on to become microbiologists or move into other fields.

Some of you may have other opinions about where we are going with our teaching, comments on the papers in this issue, or other examples of innovative courses. I would like to invite you to send your thoughts to me at editor@theasm.com.au for publication in the Readers' Forum in the next issue of *MA*.

Letters should be not more than 200 words in length.

It is appropriate that this issue of *MA*, which focuses on education, also contains the Conference Report. The annual conference is the showcase for ASM, highlighting the achievements of microbiologists who have been educated in the many microbiology departments in our universities. This issue also contains a special report that recognises the young microbiologists who entered the competition for the annual BD Student Awards. ASM values the support of BD who each year sponsor this competition for young researchers – the prize for which is all expenses for each of the State winners to attend the Annual Scientific Conference.

Congratulations go to all entrants – the winners and their abstracts are published in this issue. Their work is indicative of the quality of research being done by these young microbiologists and the dedication of their teachers.

Readers' Forum

Don't forget!

You are invited to send your ideas/comments/opinions about this issue or other examples of innovative courses in microbiology education for publication in the March issue of *MA*.

Letters should be not more than 200 words in length and sent as an e-mail attachment to: editor@theasm.com.au before 20 January 2004.

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