Re: ABS Support of August 1 Fellowship Start Date

Dear Program Director:

The American Board of Surgery has been concerned for a number of years about the difficulty general surgery residents face in transitioning from residency to fellowship. With roughly 80% of residents pursuing fellowship training after graduation, the tight turnaround from end of residency to start of fellowship has a grave impact on the well-being of these individuals, as well as on surgical education and patient care.

It is with this in mind that ABS leaders have engaged the fellowship community regarding this issue. The solution of shifting the start of fellowship programs from July 1 to August 1 has been embraced already by many fellowship programs.

The ABS strongly endorses a fellowship start date of August 1 for the following reasons:

- It allows residents to fully complete their final year of residency training. The issue of chief residents leaving their final year early is a serious one, forcing residents to use vacation time or other methods to meet the required 48 weeks per year of clinical training.

- It provides residents with time to move locations and for new fellowship orientation activities, including skills “boot camps” if necessary.

- It affords residents time to study for the General Surgery Qualifying Examination without being in training. To support the change in start date, we will be moving the General Surgery Qualifying Examination to July as of 2016: July 19, 2016. Residents would thus be able to complete this phase of the certification process before starting fellowship training.

- It will ensure seasoned fellows are present in the hospital during July to provide coverage and supervision for new residents, improving both patient care and the experience of incoming residents.

- Feedback from residents regarding this change has been overwhelmingly positive. While concerns have been raised regarding the loss of a month’s salary and the need to arrange for health insurance coverage, it is felt that these are far outweighed by the benefits of the later start date.

We hope you will consider transitioning to August 1 for the start of your fellowship program, for the good of our specialty, our patients, and our future surgeons. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely yours,

David M. Mahvi, M.D.
Chair