Dear Academy Members,

It is hard to believe that it is already the end of the year, it seems like yesterday that we were just breaking out the warm weather clothes because Spring was just around the corner.  I hope everyone has had a great year overall.  I know several people have had surgeries, marriages, babies and even new jobs (kudos to Stephen for a new job and a new climate change, I don’t know if I could leave warm weather and go cold).

First and foremost, I want to say **Thank You** to all of the Members of the Board for all the work that you have put in behind the scenes as well as all of our committee members.  The Academy sincerely appreciates your dedication and drive to expand our specialty and make our profession stronger and more knowledgeable.  I also want to thank our new members, Laura Ruterbories and Jodi Ternes for choosing the Lab Animal Specialty and congratulate you on passing the exam this year.  I look forward to having you as part of the Academy and hope to have you join a Committee and/or be a mentor for upcoming test takers.

This year has been an exciting year for the Academy, and I want to highlight a few things:

* We added a Mentoring Committee
* Are now a legally separate and incorporated entity
* Have protected our Academy logo and VTS-LAM titles with trademarks
* Our distinct non-profit status is almost complete
* Updated our Board Member Descriptions
* We had two Panel Discussions Accepted at the National AALAS Meeting and Denver
	+ Animal Nursing Challenges in the Research Setting: Communicating, Collaborating, and Coordinating to Achieve Optimal Health Outcomes for All  (Phillip Sullivan, Chrystal Montgomery, Mark Sharpless and Beth Skiles)
	+ Opioid Crisis: Exploring Effective Means to Support Investigators With controlled Substances for Research Activities (Julie Avalos, Larry Young, Rebeccah Wood)
		- Julie was approached by Las Pro magazine to be featured in the fall edition as well!
* We had over 100 people stop by our booth this year at the conference.
* We have only a few more years to reach affiliate status with AALAS.
* We started a blog that we encourage you to submit things to!

A few things that we are working on for next year:

* Additional exam questions to be written
* A new exam to be written
* Additional Sponsors – if you know of a Company and you think they would be a wonderful Sponsor for us, please let one of our board members know or email the Academy email and we will follow up.  We would like additional sponsors as we are working on trying to expand and even try to possibly host a workshop at a local branch possibly.
* Expanding our Mentoring
* Voting on board member spots (President Elect, Member of the Board)
* NAALAS  discussions/talk submission

**Don’t forget to renew your membership!**

As always if you are new to the group or one of our oldies but goodies, please feel free to reach out to a board member for volunteering in a committee or if you are interested in being a member of the board.  Also, as we move towards our next NAALAS meeting, we will be working for speakers to participate.  I encourage you to do this as this is a great way to get the toes wet and have continuing education and meet a lot of new and fun people!   If you have any questions, please feel free to reach out to our board members or myself and we look forward to 2020!

I hope everyone has a wonderful and safe Christmas and New Year’s!

Chrystal