



Recent Actions on Membership Engagement and Diversity

I am honored and excited to be serving as the President of the Acoustical Society of

America (ASA) this year. I've been active in the Society for over 20 years, primarily working in the areas of architectural acoustics and noise. When I learned about acoustics from a high-school physics textbook, I immediately decided that I wanted to be an acoustical consultant. After receiving a Bachelor of Science in civil engineering from Princeton University and a PhD in acoustics from Pennsylvania State University, I conducted postdoctoral research at the Technical University of Denmark, with support from the ASA F. V. Hunt Postdoctoral Research Fellowship. After that, I joined the new Architectural Engineering Program at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln (UNL) as an assistant professor in 2000, and I have enjoyed building my career at UNL as a teacher and researcher of building acoustics.

I recall going to my first meeting of the ASA Technical Committee of Architectural Acoustics (TCAA) in the late 1990s and finding that I was one of only two women in the room. Now when I go to a TCAA meeting, I am pleased to see the increased gender diversity. As a previous article in *Acoustics Today* highlighted (bit.ly/25Years-WIA), this growth is happening across our Society. Many thanks to Arthur Popper, editor of *Acoustics Today*, for dedicating this issue to honor the contributions of women in ASA and STEM fields; I am thrilled to be a part of this issue along with many esteemed female colleagues.

I am now starting my fifth consecutive year on the ASA Executive Council (EC), having served previously as vice president from 2014 to 2017. This has given me a “front-row seat” to the progress that the Society has achieved over the past four years as we developed and began to implement changes in-line with the ASA Strategic Leadership Plan for the Future (bit.ly/ASA-SLPP). That plan encompasses four primary goals, each to be advanced by various objectives. In my first president's column, I would like to draw attention to recent actions affecting membership engagement and diversity.

One of the priority objectives identified was to expand the promotion and participation of early-career members.

Roughly 26% of the Society membership is 40 years old or younger, composed of members (3%), associate members (13%), and student members (10%). A number of initiatives have taken place to learn more about what is important to early-career members who are not students because the Society wishes to retain and recruit members in this group. The ASA sponsored an “Early-Career Acousticians Retreat” at the spring 2016 meeting in Salt Lake City (bit.ly/ASA-EAR), and what we learned from that retreat has informed a number of activities the ASA has undertaken to support early-career members. Some of these happen at ASA meetings (e.g., early-career travel awards to support attendance at meetings, speed networking events, publication workshops), and others aim to engage with those who cannot attend meetings in person (e.g., live streaming of sessions). For more details, please refer to the column written by Executive Director Susan Fox in the fall 2017 issue of *Acoustics Today* (bit.ly/ASA-F17ED).

When the ASA leadership began reenergizing early-career initiatives a few years ago, we sought to redefine the early-career stage as being linked to when one received their last degree (within 10 years of that date) rather than by age. Our discussions ultimately led to modifying the eligibility requirements for the R. Bruce Lindsay Award (bit.ly/ASA-LindsayAward) so that the prestigious award is no longer limited directly by age (formerly, a recipient had to be age 35 or younger). Eligibility may also be extended due to career interruptions that can commonly occur for early-career members, such as family leave or military service. Other updates that affect prizes and special fellowships for younger members, just approved by the EC at the ASA meeting in Minneapolis, include the renaming of the Minority Fellowship to the James E. West Fellowship in honor of the ASA gold medalist and former president who played a large role in the formation of that fellowship in the early 1990s. Jim has been a personal inspiration to me across my acoustics career, ever since I first met him as an AT&T Graduate Research Fellow while working under ASA Fellow Gary Elko's tutelage.

Another significant outcome is that the funds supporting the James E. West Fellowship have been officially transferred by the ASA to the Acoustical Society Foundation Fund (bit.ly/ASA-ASFF) and placed into a restricted account to ensure the long-term viability of the award. The stipends of that fellowship and the Raymond H. Stetson Scholarship

in Phonetics and Speech Sciences have additionally been increased to \$30,000, to be on par with other prestigious national awards. It was indeed a pleasure for me to share the news of these positive changes with this year's West and Stetson award recipients: Dillan Villavisanis (Johns Hopkins University; bit.ly/West-DVillavisanis), Heather Kabakoff (New York University; bit.ly/Stetson-HKakabakoff), and Nicholas Monto (University of Connecticut; bit.ly/Stetson-NMonto). These young awardees are planning to attend at least one of the next two ASA meetings in person, so if you're there too, please keep an eye out for them and offer them your congratulations.

Many of you may also be familiar with the F. V. Hunt Postdoctoral Research Fellowship (bit.ly/ASA-Hunt), one of the only awards for which ASA early-career members who are not still students are eligible. A highlight at last fall's ASA meeting in New Orleans was the 40th anniversary celebration of the Hunt Fellowship. The history and impacts of that fellowship have been captured in a commemorative booklet especially prepared for the celebration (bit.ly/ASA-HuntBooklet).

Last year, the EC newly approved another program to support early-career professionals and future leaders in our Society: the ASA Early-Career Leadership Fellows. The plan is to award two fellowships annually, each on the order of \$6,000, to support activities that enhance the Fellows' leadership skills and/or potential within their profession and within the ASA as proposed by the applicants themselves.

The Hunt Fellowship's 40th anniversary celebration also served as a kick-off for the fundraising campaign to support the ASA Early-Career Leadership Fellows endowment. We have a goal to raise \$300,000 by May 2019. Carl Rosenberg and I are excited to be the co-chairs of a committee spearheading the "Campaign for ASA Early-Career Leadership" (CAECL) along with the support of the Acoustical Society Foundation Board (acousticalsociety.org/foundation-fund). We encourage all ASA members and industry leaders in acoustics to join us as a CAECL supporter. Please visit the campaign's website for more information and to donate (bit.ly/ASA-CAECL). Our hope is to name the first two ASA Early-Career Leadership Fellows in 2020!

Other ASA initiatives that impact member engagement and diversity include the establishment of a new ASA standing committee, the International Liaison Committee chaired by Brigitte Schulte-Fortkamp. The charge for this new committee is to heighten ASA's international collaboration and communication, working in coordination with the Society's ongoing efforts through the Committee on International Research and

Education (acousticstoday.org/cire) to support international research and education. Members of the International Liaison Committee are making plans for a special session on "Excellence in Acoustics Around the World" at a future ASA meeting to discuss recent developments and future plans in acoustics in different countries around the world. ASA Past President Marcia Isakson shepherded this committee's formation and a number of other initiatives around international engagement, including revising the ASA policy to hold joint international meetings (that is, not in North America) around every four years (acousticstoday.org/from-the-president-4). The next planned off-continent meeting is the ASA's 182nd meeting in Sydney, Australia, in fall 2021, jointly with the Western Pacific Commission for Acoustics (WESPAC) and the Australian Acoustical Society. I am looking forward to having the opportunity to listen to a live concert in the iconic Sydney Opera House.

Finally, in the near future, we will be sending out a membership demographic survey. The ASA adopted a diversity statement in 2013 (acousticalsociety.org/policy-statements), asserting the Society's commitment to making acoustics accessible to everyone and providing equal opportunity to all in the field of acoustics. To determine whether our inclusion and equity efforts are effective, we need to be able to quantify better the diversity of our membership. The ASA has worked closely with expertise within the American Institute of Physics (AIP) on the development of the demographic survey, which will include questions that are also being used by other national groups and professional societies to understand membership demographics. The survey is completed anonymously, and data will only be used in reporting the aggregated characteristics across our membership. I hope that many of you will participate in the survey.

I very much want to thank Tessa Bent, EC member and the current chair of the ASA Task Force on Membership Engagement and Diversity, for her role in advancing the demographic survey. To continue the conversation about how principles of inclusion, diversity, and equity can be incorporated into the Society's practices to engage members from a variety of backgrounds more effectively, please join us for a special session on "Inclusion, Diversity, and Equity in Acoustics" to be held at the fall 2018 ASA meeting in Victoria, organized by Dominique Bouavichith, Kelly Whiteford, and Evelyn Hoglund.

As I finish writing this column, I have only been ASA president for a few weeks' time. If you've been reading the ASA email broadcasts, though, you'll already know that I am in-

terested in exploring different approaches to connect and communicate with members as well as with the general public, about how the ASA is striving to achieve its mission. This column is part of the multipronged approach I am taking; I have additionally started an online “ASA President’s Blog” (acousticalsociety.org/asa-presidents-blog) where I am regularly posting on topics pertinent to the Society. I also want to hear from you! If you have any questions or want to share suggestions/comments regarding the ASA in the coming year, please do not hesitate to contact me by email (president@acousticalsociety.org).

And to become more involved with the ASA, visit acousticalsociety.org/volunteer where you can learn more about the Society’s technical and administrative committees and submit a form to express your interest in volunteering. Your feedback and involvement is important and valuable as we all work together on accomplishing the Society’s mission: to generate, disseminate, and promote the knowledge and practical applications of acoustics.