



Planning for the Next Chapter of the Acoustical Society of America

I have often referenced the 2015 Acoustical Society of America (ASA) Strategic Leadership for the Future Plan (acoustic.link/SLFP) in my From the President columns (acoustic.link/AT-Sp19-PC; acoustic.link/AT-W18-PC; acoustic.link/AT-F18-PC) when discussing the progress we have made in the four goals outlined in that plan. In my opinion, it has been tremendously beneficial for the ASA to have that map of where we wanted to go so that the leadership could make decisions that navigate the Society toward those goals. Time has passed, and it's now almost 2020, so the ASA leadership team felt that it was time to revisit our priorities for the coming three to five years. Since the fall of 2018, we have worked to define what the ASA should focus on next.

We hired a firm to guide the strategic planning process, and they began by interviewing 30 key stakeholders in September 2018 from diverse backgrounds, employers, and career stages, all of whom were ASA members. This

was followed by a survey sent in October 2018 to all current and former ASA members and nonmembers who had attended meetings in recent years. We received survey responses from 2,635 persons, corresponding to a 36.4% response rate. Next, approximately 60 members spanning diverse technical areas, backgrounds, career paths, and career stages (**Figure 1**) met in Tucson, AZ, in February 2019 for a focused Strategy Summit. This group reviewed the gathered input, defined an ideal future for the ASA, and brainstormed potential strategic initiatives that could help us to achieve that vision.

In April 2019, the ASA Executive Council and staff convened at ASA headquarters in Melville, NY, to further prioritize the strategic initiatives developed in Tucson. The four areas of focus that the leadership synthesized from the gathered data, each of which is discussed below in detail, are

- (1) identification and promotion of emerging scientific areas related to acoustics and its applications;
- (2) better engagement with industry and practitioners in acoustics;
- (3) improved communication, marketing, and public relations on the importance of acoustics; and
- (4) continued member engagement, with a special focus on those who do not regularly attend biannual meetings.



Figure 1. Attendees at the 2019 Strategic Summit in Tucson, AZ. **Top row:** D. Bouavichith, D. Farrell, F. Gallun, J. Lynch, L. Crum, A. Jaramillo, W. Murphy, V. Sparrow, M. Buckingham, E. Reuter, J. Phillips, T. Hoover, B. Moore, L. Kloepper, A. Piacsek, A. Morrison. **Row 3:** K. Jones, B. Schulte-Fortkamp, M. Vorländer, Y. Jing, S. Maruvada, C. Naify, T. Porter, B. Anderson, W. Coyle, S. Dosso, P. Nelson, M. Hamilton, W.-J. Lee, K. Gee, V. Keppens, M. Haberman. **Row 2:** A. Diedesch, T. Jerome, C. Holland, S. Fox, N. Blair-DeLeon, T. Bent. **Bottom row:** A. Lee, J. Gladden, M. Vigeant, D. Kewley-Port, E. Bury, K. Wilson, P. Gendron, L. Wang, S. Sommerfeldt, B. Reeder, J. Miller, J. Dubno, J. Ehl, D. Feit, P. Davies, J. Colosi. **Not shown:** M. Isakson, E. Moran, T. Smyth, C. Struck, P. Wilson.

The qualitative and quantitative responses received from stakeholder interviews and the surveys were clear: the *top* priority of the ASA must be to stay true to our mission of generating, disseminating, and promoting the knowledge and practical applications of acoustics. The Society can better position itself to achieve this mission by proactively identifying and promoting emerging scientific discoveries and their applications in acoustics, more so than we have in the past. The challenges we face in achieving this are varied, including the difficulty predicting what emerging areas will have a long-lasting impact on our field. Also, the existing structures under which the ASA Technical Council is organized and operates may limit scientific cross-fertilization and the ability of the Society to integrate emerging areas nimbly. Although specific tactics toward achieving this goal have not been decided on, potential ones include

- hosting regular workshops on emerging technologies and issues related to acoustics;
- defining a number of interdisciplinary grand challenges in acoustics, similar to those announced by the National Academy of Engineering (engineeringchallenges.org); and/or
- dedicating more time to cross-disciplinary interactions and discussions at the biannual meetings.

We considered this strategic initiative to be most important and will be aggressively moving forward on tactics toward achieving this goal.

The second strategic initiative is to improve engagement with people who do not work in academic institutions, particularly practitioners, consultants, and those in industry. Currently, about 38% of ASA members are employed at a college or university, whereas 32% are consultants or work in industry, 9% are employed by government or government-related institutions, followed by other employer categories with smaller percentages. Responses from the gathered data clearly indicated that those who are not at an academic institution had different perceptions about the role and benefits of the Society than do academic members. Better engagement of those working in the practical applications of acoustics, while continuing to provide great value to those from academic institutions, will help the ASA to stay truer to its mission, as stated above, and can help position the Society to better accomplish the first goal of identifying and promoting emerging scientific areas and their applications. Multidisciplinary in all areas of the ASA is something for which the leadership believes the ASA should strive for because diversity of backgrounds, training, career paths, and career stages brings many

voices to the table, making the Society stronger. Potential tactics in support of this goal could be

- offering technical sessions or workshops in partnership with industry and practitioners, focused on practical applications of acoustics;
- hosting a well-advertised career fair; and/or
- increasing the number of papers that the ASA publishes on the practical applications of acoustics.

The third priority initiative relates to one from the 2015 Plan on Awareness of Acoustics: we seek to improve communication, outreach, and public relations in all areas related to acoustics. We cannot be relevant if no one outside of our Society knows about what we do. The research revealed several key focus areas: communication and outreach to K-12 pipelines, funding agencies, governing bodies that oversee public policy, and society at large. Potential tactics toward this goal could be

- creating a proactive communication and marketing plan aimed at building and sustaining recognition of the relevance of acoustics;
- helping members to become more adept at science communication; and/or
- developing more standards, policy statements, and guidelines in acoustics that are relevant to our communities at large.

Finally, although the ASA has made improvements as to how we approach member engagement and diversity since the last strategic plan (acoustic.link/AT-F18-PC), continued member engagement is still a priority and has been identified as the fourth primary initiative. In particular, the data highlighted the fact that the ASA could improve the engagement of members who are unable to regularly attend the its biannual meetings. (A majority of members do not attend meetings!) Tactics to explore in support of this goal could be

- strengthening the regional chapters program so that members have an opportunity to engage with the Society at a more local level;
- offering more on-line professional development or continuing education opportunities for members at all levels; and/or
- sponsoring pop-up events in between meetings.

I am so grateful to all of you who engaged in the interviews and surveys. Your input has been invaluable in helping the leadership to outline these priority initiatives for the next three to five years. At the Spring 2019 Louisville Meeting, the Executive Council plans to approve the new strategic plan

with these four primary goals, and then we will begin defining and implementing tactics to get this done. Your input and engagement is certainly welcome and needed for this next stage. What tactical ideas do you suggest toward achieving each of the above goals? As with the last strategic plan, we anticipate holding an open “Strategic Champions” meeting at each of the biannual ASA meetings. Please join us at these sessions to help prioritize, implement, and review tactics aimed at achieving these new goals.

If you do not regularly attend meetings, please do still send your ideas and consider engaging in the strategic initiative task forces or ad hoc committees tasked with moving these priority initiatives forward. These groups have typically met via teleconference between meetings, and I expect they will continue to do so. If you’re not sure how to become a member of the task forces or ad hoc committees, please contact me (lilywang@unl.edu) or any other Executive Council member, and we will make sure to include you.

The ASA is a great Society, but we must not become stagnant, imagining that we will remain great in the long term without

any effort or proactive initiatives. The strategic planning process helps to guide how we move forward, and I have confidence that we will have as much success with the coming plan as we did with the 2015 plan.

Finally, by the time this issue of *Acoustics Today* is published, my term as ASA president will have come to an end, and I will have passed the presidential baton on to Victor Sparrow. I look forward to remaining active in the Society, helping to achieve its ideal future as an engaged member. I encourage all of you to become more engaged as well. Send your ideas on potential tactics or participate actively on task forces and groups working toward these strategic initiatives! Visit the “Get Involved” web page (bit.ly/ASA-GetInvolved) to learn more about how to volunteer for other ASA administrative and technical committees. Donate to the Campaign for ASA Early Career Leadership to support a new recognition and leadership development program for early-career members (acoustic.link/CAECL). I’m looking forward to looking back with all of you in 10 years when the ASA celebrates its centennial anniversary and feeling proud about all that the ASA has accomplished in its first 100 years and how it has positioned itself well for the next 100.

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