

From the President

Peggy Nelson



It's a great pleasure to write this column as the new Acoustical Society of America (ASA) President. The ASA has meant a great deal to me both professionally and personally. I have been a member of the Society since I was a graduate student, proudly publishing my dissertation work on psychoacoustics and speech recognition by listeners with hearing loss in *The Journal of the Acoustical Society of America (JASA)*. Since then, I have served on the Standards and Women in Acoustics Committees and recently as vice president. I'm committed to supporting the Society so that it can support others as it has supported me.

As I write my first From the President column, we have just concluded the Denver ASA meeting, only our second in-person meeting since 2020. One of my first tasks was to serve as one of the hosts of the acoustics school for Summer Undergraduate Research or Industry Experience in Acoustics (SURIEA) students (see acousticalsociety.org/suriea), which also took place in person. My experiences at both the meeting and the SURIEA school brought to focus the optimism that I sense about our Society. I hope that you will take a moment to read this, reflect on a few issues facing the ASA, and perhaps reach out to let me know your thoughts. Here are the fundamental strengths that I see in our Society.

- First and foremost, we remain an *exemplary* scientific society, promoting the best of the science and practice of acoustics. In Denver, I attended exceptional talks and viewed outstanding posters. Every month, I read our journals and know that I will find the best acoustics work there. Now between meetings, I continue to enjoy the webinars and journal clubs that also promote the best of our discipline. I'm proud to present and publish my own best work here in the Society, and I hope you all feel the same. We excel at promoting the best in both acoustic science and practice.
- Next, we are *resilient* and well prepared in the face of some formidable recent challenges. It is a clear understatement to describe the past few years as extremely challenging. We have weathered those challenges and

(crossing my fingers) are coming out on the "other side" of the pandemic. How are we able to do so? We are building on the strengths of the generations before us. Leaders of the past have brought us well into the twenty-first century and have left us in a position of strength. Recent leaders (in particular, Past Presidents Vic Sparrow, Diane Kewley-Port, and Maureen Stone) have steered us through the months dominated by the global pandemic. The staff at headquarters has always been exceptional and has faced the challenges of the past few years with creativity and hard work. We've experienced some financial shortfalls, as have many societies, but we're emerging now in a position of good health. Careful stewardship over the next few years will be critical, but we have terrific optimism that we will be solid for generations to come.

- Third, we are *embracing change* and helping to lead the way toward more inclusivity in science. The past two years have seen upheaval and great discord in the world. Within the ASA, we have faced potentially divisive issues, with strong statements backed by action. The ASA is seeing the emergence of early-career members who are leading the way, and this is the key to long-term growth of the Society into its next century. (See the column by immediate Past President Maureen Stone about the approaching 100th anniversary of the ASA at bit.ly/ASA-100.) Many members met the students from our inaugural SURIEA cohort at the Denver meeting. These students are truly impressive and give us great hope for the Society's future. After considering applications from more than a hundred undergraduate students, our second SURIEA cohort members were similarly, but uniquely, impressive. Their talent and excitement for acoustics is further evidence that ASA is benefiting from meeting the challenge of racial equity and justice with bold action. The program will continue, and we hope that next summer even more ASA members will apply to become SURIEA mentors. Through the ASA Committee to Improve Racial Diversity and Inclusion (CIRDI) (see tinyurl.com/3p8hecdm) and the outstanding leadership of Tyrone Porter, we are embracing inclusion and challenging bias. The ASA Executive Council recently

voted to established long-term funding to continue our efforts in these areas. Although there is a long way to go, I am thrilled that we are on a clear path to improving diversity and equity.

These trends leave me hopeful and excited to help lead the Society over the coming year. New challenges will most certainly arise, and some will no doubt surprise us. We have some big decisions to make about future meetings and the role of virtual technology. We are excited to try special sessions in hybrid format at the next two meetings, and we will look forward to getting your feedback on that endeavor.

We must also tighten our fiscal belts in the near term so that we leave the Society just as strong for the next decades. We're still experiencing annual deficits and we are challenged to rein those in. Immediate Past President Maureen Stone has guided us to more fiscal responsibility and to turn our large ship toward a balanced annual budget. Nevertheless, there

is also good fiscal news. The Society has in reserve enough funds to maintain operations for several years, much more than is seen in many organizations. The Acoustical Society Support Foundation (see bit.ly/3we52wg) under the leadership of Jim Miller has continued to grow and expand its programs for grants, fellowships, and opportunities to support the Society's goals. In important news, we will now be able to accept donations directly to these marvelous programs from you, our members.

I hope you share my optimism and that you will continue to invest in our Society by maintaining your membership, coming to meetings if you are able, and donating to the causes that mean the most to you. Already, we are preparing for the next century of leading the discipline of acoustics. I'm grateful to be a part of that and I welcome you to join me. I hope to see you on a webinar, at a committee meeting, and again in Nashville, Tennessee, in December. Let me know (peggynelson@umn.edu) what you think we can do together.



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