

From the President

Barbara Shinn-Cunningham



As I step into the role of president of the Acoustical Society of America (ASA), I am filled with both pride and humility. My journey with the ASA began when I started graduate school under the mentorship of dedicated ASA members whose guidance and collaborative spirit profoundly shaped my professional and personal growth. For over three decades, this Society has been more than just a professional association to me; it has been a cornerstone of my career, a source of lifelong friendships, and a wellspring of scientific inspiration.

Recognizing the immense responsibility of this role, I am committed to steering the ASA forward, honoring our rich legacy while embracing the challenges and opportunities ahead. I am particularly enthusiastic about ongoing initiatives to diversify our membership and nurture the next generation of acousticians. This includes our Committee to Improve Racial Diversity and Inclusivity and our Summer Undergraduate Research or Internship Experience in Acoustics (SURIEA) program (information about how to get involved as a SURIEA mentor is at acousticalsociety.org/suriea).

Ensuring the ASA's vitality over the next 30 years requires fiscal responsibility and innovative thinking. Unlike many societies that profit from meetings, the ASA faces unique financial challenges due to our structure of simultaneous, parallel sessions. The need for many small meeting rooms limits venue options and escalates audiovisual costs, presenting ongoing fiscal hurdles.

To address these challenges, discussions have begun across all levels of the Society to explore creative solutions. During the recent Ottawa, Ontario, Canada, fall meeting, the Executive Council and Technical Council initiated discussions on ideas aimed at mitigating meeting costs while recognizing and honoring the diverse needs of our technical committees. Ideas, such as shifting some oral presentations to poster sessions and optimizing session scheduling throughout the conference week,

were presented at individual technical committee meetings in Ottawa to get feedback and inform future plans. We recognize that each technical committee has different needs and that any particular suggestion may not work across all committees. Rest assured, we are committed to respecting the unique needs and cultures of each technical committee and will introduce changes only gradually, guided by our members' needs.

Another proposal is to move from two annual meetings per year to one; however, this cannot be implemented for a few years given already planned meetings, many of which are joint. A less drastic alternative would be to hold occasional fully virtual meetings instead of traditional in-person gatherings. Although such virtual sessions cannot fully replace in-person conferences, they provide inclusive, cost-effective engagement opportunities and help reduce our environmental footprint. Our upcoming virtual meeting in November will serve as a testing ground for this idea, allowing us to evaluate different virtual session formats. We eagerly await your feedback to guide future decisions.

In late July, around 60 society members from every technical committee and spanning all levels of seniority gathered for an ASA Think Tank. The goal was to lay the foundation for an updated strategic plan to guide our society forward. A professional strategist facilitated discussions, which culminated in identifying three primary areas of focus for the next five years: Meetings, Member Support, and Education and Outreach.

Meetings have always been central to the ASA's identity. They serve as critical platforms for sharing knowledge, fostering interdisciplinary collaboration, and building our community. Maintaining the vibrancy of these meetings is essential — yet we must ensure they don't impose financial strain on the society. We discussed the growing competition from specialized meetings that vie for our members' time and travel budgets. Creative ideas emerged, such as holding 1–2-day interdisciplinary workshops or enhanced regional meetings to complement our

traditional large-scale events. These approaches offer exciting possibilities for augmenting our existing meeting structures in the coming years.

Member Support is another crucial area that encompasses all the activities we undertake to advance our members' careers and provide valuable services. During our discussions, there was a strong emphasis on the need to better support early-career investigators. These individuals represent the future of our society, and their success is vital to our long-term health. Additionally, we recognized the importance of continuing and expanding efforts to increase diversity within our membership. By fostering a more inclusive community, we can ensure that the ASA remains a vibrant and welcoming organization for all.

Education and Outreach emerged as the third key area of focus. There is significant potential for the ASA to expand its efforts in advocating for our science and promoting scientifically informed policy, particularly with government agencies. We also discussed the importance of engaging with K-12 education to inspire the next generation of scientists. Creating online resources to educate professionals on key topics and developing a coherent communication strategy for the society were also highlighted as important goals.

The Executive Council (EC), most of whom attended the Think Tank, will soon draft a consensus report on these discussions, which will be shared with all members. Stay tuned for more details, and don't hesitate to reach out to your TC chair or any EC member (including me) with your thoughts!

As we embark on this new chapter, I invite you to engage with the ASA's initiatives, share your insights, and consider volunteering your time and expertise. Together, we will navigate the challenges ahead, ensuring that the ASA remains a vibrant, innovative, and inclusive community for generations to come.

Thank you for your trust and support. I am honored to serve as your president and am excited about the accomplishments we will achieve together.

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