Editorial

Updating the Vision for the Future of Structural Engineering

A Challenge for Younger Professionals

By David Cocke, S.E., F.SEI, FASCE, SEI President-Elect

We are facing critical challenges that will affect the future of our profession. For our younger professionals – what should we be doing to make the Structural Engineering Profession not only survive these changes, but thrive for the duration of your career and for those that follow?

Ten years ago, the SEI Board of Governors recognized these coming challenges and took steps toward addressing them. The first step was to conceptualize the vision of the profession in the future. They created this Vision Statement. It, in part, states:

In 2033, The Structural Engineering Profession will be:

• A unique, fully engaged profession with a strong identity,
• Recognized for the contributions of the profession,
• Stewards of the built environment, and
• Attractive to the best and brightest.

The second step was to identify potential changes and develop initiatives to help us achieve our vision. In 2011, the Board formed a follow-up Task Force to specifically identify topics and strategic issues to consider for action. The document, A Vision for the Future of Structural Engineers: A Case for Change, was the result. That group identified several initiatives:

• Reform structural engineering education.
• Improve mentoring and continuing education.
• Strengthen our role as global leaders in the structural engineering profession.

A Vision Statement, was the result. That group identified several initiatives:

Ten years have now passed since SEI adopted the Vision Statement, and five years since the Board accepted the Case for Change report. How much progress has been made? Are we on the right track? Does the vision need to be modified? What needs to be done to make it happen? Those are among the questions that we must continue to ask as we march forward from where we started in 2008.

In the fall of 2017, another Board of Governors’ Task Force was formed to review, check progress, and update the Case for Change document, and I am honored to be chairing that group. Our approach has been to first review the activities to-date associated with each of the initiatives identified in the document. Also, we have conducted a survey of the conference attendees. We have completed personal interviews of the original Case for Change task force members and have engaged with the specific groups that are responsible for each of the initiatives listed above.

The initiatives included in the Case for Change document are far-reaching. It has also become apparent that some additional initiatives may need adoption, including support of diversity and more emphasis on technology changes.

It is extremely important to continue to monitor our vision and adjust as necessary. The world is changing, especially with the ever-accelerating advances in technology and our “shrinking” global industries. SEI especially needs help with the initiatives involving mentorship, technology, promotion of SEs as leaders and innovators, and diversity.

This is where YOU come in. We need your help, your energy, and your perspective. Some of us “seasoned” professionals will undoubtedly be retired by 2033, so it is even more critical for those that will still be practicing – and leading our profession. We not only need our young professionals’ input but, even more, your leadership. Will you accept the challenge?

Would you like to get involved, or do you have some comments? Contact SEI Director Laura Champion at lchampion@asce.org or SEI President-Elect David Cocke at dcocke@structuralfocus.com. Check out a Case for Change at https://bit.ly/2M1QVXq and SEI Futures Fund efforts to support the Vision at www.asce.org/SEIFuturesFund.