

## New Vision and Mission Guide NCSEA's Direction in 2020 and Beyond

By Susan Jorgensen, P.E., SECB, F.SEI, F.ASCE



It is an honor to address you as the 2020 President of the National Council of Structural Engineers Associations (NCSEA). This is going to be an exhilarating year as we follow through with some significant changes. We are hosting the first-ever SEA Leadership Retreat in May, bringing together the leaders of the organization. We have changed our fiscal year to run from April 1<sup>st</sup> to March 31<sup>st</sup>. And, the Board of Directors is looking forward to further coordination and cooperation with our counterparts at the Structural Engineering Institute (SEI) of the American Society of Civil Engineers (ASCE) and the Council of American Structural Engineers (CASE) of the American Council of Engineering Companies (ACEC).

As announced at the NCSEA Structural Engineering Summit on November 13, a group of leaders in the organization worked together in 2019 to develop a new strategic plan for the organization. The new vision statement, which describes our desired future state, is, ***“Structural engineers are valued for their contributions to safe structures and resilient communities.”*** The new mission statement, which articulates the organization's role in achieving the Vision, is ***“NCSEA, in partnership with its Member Organizations, supports practicing structural engineers to be highly qualified professionals and successful leaders.”*** To achieve this, the group developed four goal statements and supporting strategies that will be the guidelines for NCSEA's direction for the foreseeable future.

The goals fall into three categories: Education and Training, Perception and Professionalism, and Codes and Standards. There are two distinct goals under Perception and Professionalism: Advocacy (External Communication) and Collaboration (Internal Communication). The NCSEA Communications Committee, which was reorganized a few years ago, will have a big hand in helping us achieve these last two goals, which are the ones that I am most excited about.

When I was growing up, my mother worked for the Bureau of Reclamation, so I was introduced to the civil engineering profession. My uncle and a close family acquaintance had attended the South Dakota School of Mines and Technology, so I was familiar with their programs. I also had a great deal of encouragement from family and friends. Unfortunately, not all potential engineers are as lucky. Many engineers seem to think that future engineers will come from STEM programs and will be the best and brightest of the class. While this will be true, there will be others who could become outstanding engineers who may not have the encouragement and support to be steered toward engineering.

We spend much time focusing on how young women are not being encouraged to pursue engineering, but, as my husband points out – Steve is both a professional geologist and a professional engineer – these same efforts need to be directed to young men as well. As structural

engineers, what more can we be doing to encourage young people to join our profession? For one thing, the NCSEA Young Member Group Support Committee has done a great job of developing tools to help advocate for structural engineering. I encourage you to log onto the Member Portal for access to these documents.

The NCSEA Structural Engineering Engagement and Equity (SE3) Committee has also done a great job of gathering information on the current state of our profession. Its surveys of structural engineers from across the country include overall career satisfaction and retention, career development, pay, and work/life balance. The findings help us understand opportunities to enhance our profession. I look forward to the SE3 Committee being able to use this information to help develop tools and guidelines for how we can encourage engagement, equity, and diversity.

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Advocacy includes educating the public about the value that structural engineers provide to society. To do this, we need to be able to step up and be leaders, not just of our firms, but in the community. As most of you know, I have been a vocal advocate of structural engineering licensure for a very long time. NCSEA plans to develop tools that its Member Organizations and individual engineers can use within their communities to demonstrate the value that we can bring.

In December, NCSEA conducted a webinar providing details on the strategic plan, presented by members of the Board of Directors. If you were not able to join that webinar, I encourage you to watch the recorded version at <https://bit.ly/2FvU8tr>. There are also several documents mentioned in the webinar that are available for download from the member-only pages. If you have questions, reach out to one of the Board members; for example, your Member Organization's designated liaison ([www.ncsea.com/members/organizations](http://www.ncsea.com/members/organizations)).

What is next? A strategic plan is only valuable if there is follow-through. It does not do any good to go to all this effort if we just put the resulting document on the shelf. At its January meeting, the primary agenda item for the NCSEA Board of Directors was to determine which initiatives will be our focus for 2020. These are actionable, measurable tasks that we can strive to accomplish within the next year or two.

I am looking forward to getting started and further advancing this organization. ■



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