

The Time Has Come

By David Horos, P.E., S.E., LEED AP



“*The time has come for all good men to come to the aid of their country.*”

This famous quote resides somewhere in my brain, and as I start my tenure as NCSEA President, it recently resurfaced. Not that it is applicable word for word. And in the current geopolitical environment, this phrase has much more serious connotations. But maybe substitute “profession” or “environment” for “country” and exchange “people” for “men.” With those edits, this phrase seems to suit my mindset well.

I have spent the last ten years on the Boards of the Structural Engineers Association of Illinois (SEAOI) and NCSEA. When I think back to the fateful phone call asking if I would consider joining the SEAOI Board, one thought went through my head: “Maybe now is the time that I give something back to our profession.” I was not overly active in professional organizations before that time but decided it was time for me to contribute.

Fast forward, and now I am helping to lead one of our profession’s three major organizations (maybe I overdid it?). I only hope to live up to the example put forth by my predecessors.

I am a military brat who has lived in 9 states and two foreign countries. I have worked in partnerships, corporations, and small businesses, have owned a business, and have practiced in consulting engineering, AE, and EA firms. My personal and professional experience leads me to view our profession from many different perspectives. From those perspectives, I see NCSEA as an association of associations (the state SEAs), each of which has its own unique perspective, strengths, needs, and place in its professional community. It is what provides NCSEA with the richness that we appreciate and creates some of our challenges. How to represent and serve the wide range of our member SEAs.

NCSEA also operates in conjunction with our two national allied organizations, CASE and SEI. Many of us are involved with two or even all three of these organizations. Beyond that, our profession operates in the intertwined AEC industry, including many related professions that work together to create the built environment. At one level, it can make your head spin. On another, however, the organizations create multitudes of ways to get involved.

As for this coming year, NCSEA continues to support and move forward our strategic plan through the work of staff, committees, and SEAs, including but not limited to:

- our external marketing/messaging efforts, currently manifested as the **We SEE Above and Beyond** campaign,
- **public outreach/media interaction**, the importance of which we were made acutely aware of in the aftermath of the event at Surfside,
- our **diversity, equity, and inclusion** initiatives,
- the birth and planned growth of the **NCSEA Foundation**.

I also would like to challenge us to find our voice and increase our impact on sustainable design and how it relates to resilient

communities. Climate Change has been politicized, and discussions around sustainability have gone on for some time. While some of us may be tired of hearing about it or do not believe it deserves much attention, Climate Change is a complex subject where knowledge evolves rapidly. With an increasing focus on embodied carbon in structures and the growing SE2050 Commitment, I believe that now is the time for structural engineers to increase our engagement in sustainable design.

The time of relying solely on experts has passed. The topics of sustainability and resilient communities must now be fundamental subjects familiar to all structural engineers. We have the knowledge and wherewithal to lead practicing engineers to include sustainability in our workflow and integrate it into our designs. Efficiency is critical, but we must extend beyond efficient design.

I also believe that the relationship between sustainability and resilient communities is not well understood. There are opportunities to lead in explaining and communicating the interconnectivity between the two.

While I am not an expert, I believe that the topics of sustainable design and resilient communities will continue to increase in importance in the coming years in ways we can’t imagine. However, if structural engineers do not prepare for the conversation, engage in it properly, and lead it, and if we don’t adapt our education and practices accordingly, we will lose stature and relevance to professions that do.

More optimistically, there is an opportunity for individual structural engineers, SE firms, and our profession to do more when it comes to efficiency, the strategic use of new and established materials, and partnering with contractors and other designers within the AEC community to create a more sustainable built environment and more resilient communities.

“*The time has come for us all to contribute to the profession of structural engineering. The time has come for us all to contribute to sustainability and resilient communities.*”

Maybe these quotes are not quite as memorable as the original version. My challenge is for each of us to determine the right way to work to better the profession and the built environment. However best, each of you can contribute as many opportunities exist to get involved. And for those who have done and continue to do so, thank you. Please continue your excellent work.

By the way, I now recall the where and why of the quote I used at the beginning of this column. Do you know?•



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