

Editorial | Investing in the Future of Our Profession

By Stan R. Caldwell, P.E., SECB, F. ASCE, F. SEI, F. AEI



Have you ever given any thought to the future of our profession? Not the profession next month or next year, but rather the profession that we will leave to our successors. Driven by automation, globalization, contractor-led procurement, and many other forces, our profession is changing like never before. Will we sit quietly on the sidelines and accept whatever role society crafts for us, including possible obsolescence, or will we actively work to steer the profession toward a thriving future?

The Structural Engineering Institute (SEI) of ASCE, with more than 25,000 diverse members and more than 150 active committees, has deliberately chosen the latter, proactive approach. Each year, SEI undertakes a broad range of activities that advance the art, science, and practice of structural engineering – helping to create a brighter future for the profession. Because some of these activities fall outside the constraints of SEI's annual operating budget, philanthropic support is needed from individuals and organizations.

Launched in November 2013 as the successor to the SEI Endowment Fund, the SEI Futures Fund leverages philanthropic contributions to support vital SEI activities and initiatives. Managed by its own Board of Directors, the SEI Futures Fund has established four strategic areas for funding. Gifts to the SEI Futures Fund will help:

- Promote student interest in structural engineering.
- Support younger member involvement in SEI.
- Provide opportunities for professional development.
- Invest in the future of the profession.

These priorities will ensure a strong future for the structural engineering profession by attracting the best and brightest students, creating pathways to encourage creativity and innovation by young professionals, and building a vibrant culture of lifelong learning for all of our members. Most importantly, the SEI Futures Fund will invest in new opportunities to secure and expand the role of structural engineers as stewards of the built environment.

For example, SEI recently released a ground-breaking report, *A Vision for the Future of Structural Engineering and Structural Engineers: A Case for Change*, with ten specific initiatives designed to help structural engineers evolve as leaders and innovators in the global economy of the future. The report is currently available as a free download on the SEI website at www.asce.org/SEI. In my view, this is a “must read.” As SEI moves forward with some of the initiatives in the report, the SEI Futures Fund will likely provide critical financial support.

As I write this article, the SEI Futures Fund is less than two months old and its fund-raising campaign has not yet formally commenced. Nevertheless, its message and mission have been spread by word of mouth and are already resonating among those structural engineers with a long view of our profession. An engineer in Chicago has pledged \$20,000 over the next three years. Another, in Washington, has pledged \$10,000 over that period. An engineer in Dallas has mailed in a check for \$7,500. Gifts of \$1,000 or more have been made online or by mail from engineers in Hawaii, California, Florida, Delaware ... and the list is growing. Organizations have stepped up as well. An engineering firm in New York has pledged \$5,000 annually. Another, in Rhode Island, has pledged \$2,000 annually. You get the idea; the SEI Futures Fund is clearly gaining momentum.



ASCE Foundation President Michael Goodkind and SEI Futures Fund Chair Stan Caldwell sign a Memorandum of Understanding.

SEI has the potential to bring tremendous benefits, to you and to our profession, with financial support from the SEI Futures Fund. With your help, the activities and initiatives supported by the SEI Futures Fund will become increasingly significant over time. Please join me in building the SEI Futures Fund. Your gift, along with those of your colleagues, will allow robust financial support in all of the strategic areas outlined above. The future of our profession is not assured, so please consider giving generously. All gifts will be sincerely appreciated and gratefully acknowledged.

Your gift can be made by sending a check to: SEI Futures Fund, c/o ASCE Foundation, 1801 Alexander Bell Drive, Reston, Virginia, 20191. Alternatively, you can make your gift securely online. Please be assured that 100% of your gift will benefit the SEI Futures Fund, free of any administrative burdens. SEI is a part of ASCE, a 501(c)(3) tax exempt organization. The SEI Futures Fund is partnering with the ASCE Foundation, also a 501(c)(3) tax exempt organization, to leverage their expertise in managing philanthropic gifts. Your contributions are therefore tax deductible to the fullest extent of the law, and an acknowledgement with a receipt will be provided. Please check with your tax advisor as appropriate. For questions about making a gift, contact Natalie Zundel by email at nzundel@asce.org or by telephone at 703-295-6347. For more information about the SEI Futures Fund, or to make a gift online, visit www.asce.org/SEIFuturesFund. ■



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