

# Editorial | On the Importance of Collaboration

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People often say that the whole is greater than sum of its parts, and that is the case when professional organizations collaborate to accomplish more than the sum of their individual efforts.

As you've read in these pages (and elsewhere) for many years, there are multiple organizations that represent engineers in one form or another. Specifically, for structural engineers, the Structural Engineering Institute (SEI) of the American Society of Civil Engineers (ASCE), the National Council of Structural Engineers Associations (NCSEA), the Council of American Structural Engineers (CASE) and the Structural Engineering Certification Board (SECB), each represent structural engineers. These organizations have always shared the following goals:

- To advance and serve the structural engineering profession;
- To promote the profession to the public and within the profession itself.

Now they have embraced the idea of collaboration to improve the level of practice by speaking with one, strong voice to promote structural engineering licensing throughout the United States.

Protecting the public's right to safe, sustainable and cost effective buildings, bridges and other structures is the primary responsibility of the structural engineering profession. Licensure of structural engineers to document their competency is crucial to ensuring that structures are properly designed. At this time, however, only 11 states (IL, HI, CA, NV, OR, UT, WA, AZ, ID, NE, NM) have structural engineer licensing acts. In the other 39 states, SECB Certification is the only option for recognition as a structural engineer.

SEI and SECB firmly believe that SECB certification of structural engineers is an excellent interim step on the path towards structural licensure in all jurisdictions. Similarly, the Model Law Structural Engineer (MLSE) designation recently instituted through the National Council of Examiners for Engineering and Surveying (NCEES) can provide an intermediary step, but it is not an adequate substitute for structural licensure. SEI and SECB, in conjunction with NCSEA and CASE, are the voice of structural engineers and are providing guidance to state legislatures and licensing boards on matters related to SE licensure.

The Structural Engineering Certification Board (SECB) is an independent, autonomous professional organization created to ensure that structural engineers have the credentials and experience they need to protect the public health and safety, and to work safely and productively in their profession. The criteria for certification by SECB include rigorous requirements for primary structural engineering education, continued structural practice, and ongoing professional development. In order to maintain certification, structural engineers must participate in extensive continuing education. SECB continues to hone these requirements with the goal of developing an effective model that can be used to make continuing education mandatory and uniform in all states. The SECB criteria parallel those of the Model Law Structural Engineer designation offered by NCEES, but establish more rigorous standards for education, practice, and professional development. SECB's criteria for certification can serve as the qualifications required for SE licensure throughout the United States.

The mission of the Structural Engineering Institute (SEI) is "to advance and serve the structural engineering profession," which includes state licensure. In October 1999, the SEI Board of Governors passed the following resolution:

Coming together is a beginning, staying together is progress, and working together is success.

– Henry Ford

*The Structural Engineering Institute (SEI) supports separate licensing of structural engineers. SEI will support and encourage activities to achieve this goal in each state and other jurisdictions.*

In January 2010, the SEI Board of Governors adopted SEI Policy Statement 101 on Structural Engineering Licensure:

*The Structural Engineering Institute (SEI) of the American Society of Civil Engineers (ASCE) supports Structural Engineering licensure. It encourages Professional Engineers practicing structural engineering to further obtain a Structural Engineer license in jurisdictions that have any form of Structural Engineering license by complying with the jurisdiction's specified requirements for education, experience and examination, and by meeting continuing education requisites to maintain this license. SEI also encourages jurisdictions to license Structural Engineers as a post-PE (Professional Engineer) credential, and to include in their new legislation an equitable transitioning clause for engineers currently practicing structural engineering.*

In most states, SECB Certification is the only credential available, it is currently the only de facto standard, and it is a way to distinguish structural engineers from the other engineering professions.

Recent changes to the NCEES examination process have triggered some changes in the Certification Application. For this reason, SECB has enacted an open enrollment period for licensed professional engineers practicing structural engineering to attain certification based upon experience and education. The license and/or registration must have been awarded on or before July 1, 2005 and must remain valid continuously through the time of application. The open enrollment period began January 1, 2013. In addition, SECB application fees have been temporarily reduced for SEI members and NCSEA members to encourage more practicing structural engineers to obtain SECB certification. For more information, see the SECB website.

As professional engineers, we have a responsibility to set demanding requirements for our peers to ensure that our industry operates with the highest quality standards possible. We are confident that SECB's rigorous core curriculum and continuing education requirements will raise the bar for our profession. And, we are confident that the ultimate goal of this collaboration – to transform the SECB certification program into the basis for structural engineering licensure – will be accomplished. Both SEI and NCSEA have active licensing committees that will work together to more effectively pursue structural engineering licensing. Once a mandatory, uniform SE licensure program is adopted throughout the country, state legislatures and state licensing boards will look to our organizations for guidance and advice on licensing issues.

Together we will raise the bar for structural engineers to improve education requirements, licensure and continuing education. Structural engineers will be reenergized to promote and support structural engineering licensure. It is clear that the result of our collaboration will be greater than the sum of any individual efforts, and we are excited about enhancing and improving our profession. ■

