

Editorial | Strategic Planning at the Structural Engineering Institute

By Donald O. Dusenberry, P.E., SECB, FSEI, F. ASCE



Among its many activities, the SEI Board of Governors (the Board) is engaged in long-term strategic planning. Over the past few years, as part of the planning, the Board has met, conducted surveys, and formed task committees to study specific initiatives. In October 2013, one of the task committees issued *A Vision for the Future of Structural Engineers and Structural Engineering: A Case for Change*, a Vision for the Future Report that focuses on leadership and innovation skills (www.asce.org/SEI). Based in part on that report, in April 2014 the Board advanced several initiatives.

Develop and advocate a fundamentally new education for structural engineers. The education of structural engineers always will need to teach technical topics, but future engineers will also need a broad base of soft skills with more focus on creativity and risk management.

SEI will lead a blue-ribbon panel to discuss, develop, and potentially promote radically new ways to educate future students. We anticipate that fundamentally different formal education models will position structural engineers to be innovators and leaders even as our role in the construction process changes.

Mentoring and continuing education. As the pace and roles in practitioners' offices change, focused and effective mentoring and continuing education will become more important.

SEI will study mentoring and continuing education issues that impact structural engineers, and work toward enhancing both. We anticipate that an enhanced focus on mentoring and continuing education will help structural engineers obtain and maintain the skills they need as our profession responds to, and develops in, the changing environment.

Focus on globalization and international opportunities. We need to find ways to help SEI members remain competitive in the global environment, when technology is changing the world marketplace. We also need to view globalization as a source of opportunities and a new reason to acknowledge global responsibilities.

SEI is planning to form a fifth division – the International Activities Division – that will be the clearinghouse for information and activism for global participation by SEI members. We anticipate that a renewed focus on international and global involvement will position SEI members to lead worldwide structural engineering practice.

Performance-based codes and standards. Few will argue that most of our codes and standards are becoming more complex and more prescriptive. In an age of enhanced realization that our resources are limited, we need freedom to find new ways to solve our constituents' and society's problems.

SEI will study how performance-based codes and standards can enhance our solutions. We anticipate that improvements in our codes and standards will liberate structural engineers and encourage innovation, economy, sustainability, and robustness in our solutions to society's problems.

Summits on matters of common interest. Most science-based professions are dealing with changes in technology and globalization. So why are we not talking with each other, identifying common issues, collaborating to direct research monies to the most important

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common interests, and leveraging our combined strengths to solve shared problems?

SEI will become a lead facilitator for discussions of issues of broad impact by convening regular summits with other professionals with shared problems. We anticipate that our leadership will enhance the visibility of our profession and help to direct resources to the solution of the most important problems.

Promote the structural engineer as a leader and innovator. Structural engineers need to emerge as leaders of relevant technologies, of project teams, and as capable innovators. We need to be consulted first in the conceptualization process and be influential members of the core group of every project team.

SEI is studying ways to promote to our own membership, and to others, the notion that structural engineers are leaders and innovators, that our problem-solving skills, knowledge, flexibility, and leadership are essential to the solution of any problem. We anticipate that the SEI membership embracing this concept will find ways to prosper in the ever-changing future.

Promote Structural Engineering Licensure. In addition to the new initiatives mentioned above, the SEI Board of Governors has been working for the promotion of structural engineering licensure in all US jurisdictions. That effort has led to the formation of the Structural Engineering Licensure Coalition, with several organizations working together to advocate for this advanced credential. We anticipate that consummation of this effort will improve public safety by raising the qualifications for engineers practicing structural engineering in the future.

Stay tuned. These are long-range initiatives that will develop over time, but we hope to give regular updates on progress.

Speak up. SEI is your organization. Please read the "Case for Change" paper and reach out to SEI Director (jgoupil@asce.org) or me (dodusenberry@sgh.com) if you want to contribute to any of these initiatives.

Sponsor. Initiatives authorized by the SEI Board of Governors to advance the profession will incur costs beyond our operating income. You can help by contributing to the SEI Futures Fund at www.asce.org/SEIFuturesFund, which is established to advance the structural engineering profession by investing in its future. ■



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