



## Governance Update

Hi, I'm Penny Wirsing. I've been a member of SWE for over 30 years, and am proud to be the FY16 Director of Strategic Initiatives. I'm going to share some information about the governance structure that has been under review and our path forward.

### Why are we doing this?

- We need to evolve given the changes within the organization.
  - In just the past 10 years, membership has increased by 16,000 members (nearly doubled) and we're global.
  - In that same timeframe, conference attendance has nearly tripled.
  - We've added scores of virtual and face-to-face professional development, expanded our K-12 programs, grown scholarships, and amplified our government relations and public policy efforts on the national stage.
  - All of this requires more staff support and different volunteer leadership structures and opportunities.
- We can and should be providing more meaningful and relevant leadership opportunities and training to our members, which is something SWE has always prided itself on offering since our founding 65 years ago.
- The current structure has become confusing and difficult to navigate, which keeps members from participating and as a result we are seeing many positions going unfilled or filled by the same members resulting in volunteer burnout.
- We need to streamline our bylaws, policies and procedures. The reason people join SWE is not to complete reports, but rather to promote our mission of advancing women in engineering.

### Process to Date

- In FY15 the Board engaged with McKinley Consultants:
  - A firm that specializes in helping professional associations create strategy and structures to maximize member engagement.
  - SWE asked McKinley to help determine the ideal governance structure and volunteer service model to support the organization's growth and globalization goals and to maximize member engagement
- McKinley reviewed available data and conducted in-depth interviews with SWE staff and both current and past volunteer leaders to measure perceptions. They also conducted benchmarking to evaluate other organizations' effective governance and engagement practices to the extent applicable - we realize every



organization is different, but we also realize there are things we can and should learn from other organizations.

- Based on this information, McKinley proposed a number of recommendations and options to optimize SWE's governance structure. For the past several months senators, region governors, board members and longtime members have been working in subgroups, designed to represent multiple points of view
- These groups focused on several areas: Nomination process, Board composition, Region structure, Senate responsibilities, Committee structure, Bylaws, Section structure and requirements – using the McKinley recommendations as a guide.
- This information was previewed at the WE15 Town Hall, and feedback has been incorporated to provide more and more frequent information on why we're making these changes and a mechanism for feedback
- The subgroups have held multiple discussions including F2F meetings in Nashville and at Winter Senate meeting in Philadelphia, as well as regular calls
- All of this collaborative discussion has allowed us to piece together a high level vision of what the future will look like, incorporating what we have heard works and what doesn't work so well

### 8,000 View

- The graphic you see here outlines this high level vision, the “8000 foot level” – but please understand that no graphic can fully capture everything. There are still a lot of details to be worked. And we know a key concern of our members is communication, and that developing, maintaining and strengthening effective communication paths is critical. With that in mind, let's look at the outline.
- Board – remains the governing body of the Society, elected by the members with some appointed special directors; note that voting members will likely include collegiates
- Strategic Body – may be called something other than Senate; made up of 15-20 members elected, probably 3-year terms; basically absorb the current strategic planning process
- HQ – provides support, consistency; performs environmental scans to feed to the strategic planning process
- Committees – strategic focus areas moved to “senate”; provide strong leadership pipeline; to address checks and balances, key committee chairs to be elected by membership (Finance, Audit, Bylaws, Ethics, Nom Com)
- Sections – simplify requirements while maintaining 501(c)3 status; consider additional flexibility similar to international affiliates



- Note that the formal regional structure will be dissolved
- I reiterate, we recognize the need for robust communication between sections and society leadership, and we will continue to incorporate what we're hearing works and doesn't work

### **Next few months**

- Existing groups will identify next steps and these will be consolidated; we'll develop timeline with the "go-do's" now and into the future
- A smaller working group to be created for FY17 recognizing such a large group is no longer needed, many of the current members are rotating off
- Communication will remain key, hearing input, testing ideas, and socializing decisions. This video is an example; [governance@swe.org](mailto:governance@swe.org) to be available soon, to allow folks to continue sharing what works and what doesn't

Please help us identify concerns that need to be addressed in order to make this a success. Visit [governance.swe.org](http://governance.swe.org) to view the Q&A's already there, and pose your questions to [governance@swe.org](mailto:governance@swe.org). I will personally see all those emails.

Thank you for interest and your support.