



Secretary's Board of Directors Midyear Meeting Report Summary

By Dale Andrews
AEG 2013-14 Secretary

Bracing for Positive Change

This Board of Directors' (BoD) meeting, like several of the recent past meetings, focused heavily on the AEG's Needs Assessment. However, what made this meeting different was that after nearly two years of working to identify how we can make the AEG an even better organization, this meeting provided an opportunity to showcase the developed plans that will take us there.

The Needs Assessment study identified four broad areas where the AEG could improve: Communications, Member Benefits, Resource Alignment, and Governance Structure. Last September, four focus group committees were formed to develop strategies to address each of these areas respectively. A workshop, led by **Duane Kreuger**, provided an opportunity for each of the focus group committees to present their recommendations to the BoD. I will summarize each committee's strategy below.

Communications: Broadly speaking, communications includes any form of communication used by the AEG to transfer or share information. **Nate Saraceno** presented this focus group's recommendations to the BoD. Suggested actions included:

- Establish a social media plan to coordinate and disseminate information in a more consistent manner and encourage members to follow the AEG on Facebook and/or LinkedIn;
- Review the technology (software, applications, etc.) that we currently use to manage our files and digital publications to improve efficiency, flexibility, and potentially lower costs.
- Survey our existing publications with our readers, specifically the new *Insider*, to determine if they are meeting our members' expectations.
- Gather and digitize all the past field trip guide books that have been developed over the years for member use.
- Grow our Communications Committee to support the implementation of the above recommendations.

Member Benefits: This focus group recognized that our Association's committees are the predominate means by which we provide unique services to our members. Our committees are why we are able to put on national sponsored meetings, keep our website and publications relevant and strategize for our Association's future; they provide an opportunity for our student members, working members and retired members to work collectively towards shared goals; quite simply, they are the life blood of the Association.

Duane Kreuger outlined recommendations to the BoD that would allow our committees to perform more efficiently and with less volunteer burnout. Committees that had overlapping responsibilities were combined, committees that require constant attention (e.g., website, advertising) are going to be contracted out and have Executive Council oversight. Recommendations were made to strive for utilizing a co-chair model for all committees and to promote chair turnover for all committee chairs to prevent burnout and bring forth new ideas. The focus group also identified the importance of reinvigorating two committees that would directly benefit our members. The first is a continuing education committee that will work to seek out, develop and support activities that provide opportunities for our members to acquire continued education. The second, a committee dedicated to membership growth and retention by facilitating exit surveys with members that decide not to renew, facilitating membership drives and thanking the employers that encourage association involvement of their employees.

Resource Alignment: The primary request of this focus area is to evaluate our Association needs as they relate to our existing vendors/contractors. **Patty Bryan** outlined each of the contracts and committees that we have in place today, and identified their charter. The focus area was not ready to submit a strategy at this meeting, but intends to at the Annual BoD meeting this fall. This information will be very useful for the BoD at that time because the BoD is planning to dedicate time at Annual BoD meeting to revisit all of our current large contracts, outline the services each are providing, assess the value the AEG is receiving from them, determine what is working and what is not working, and potentially move into the future with revised contracts for our existing vendors or new contracts with new vendors. The goal of this effort is to maximize the level of service, member satisfaction, and benefit-to-cost ratio as we move into 2015 and beyond.

Governance Structure: This focus group was tasked with the following: 1) determine if changing how our Association operates would result in more engaged Directors; and 2) determine if changing how our Association governs would provide better opportunities for members that do not reside near their Section's activities... and the answer to both was YES!

Dale Andrews and **Dave Bieber** outlined the recommendations from the Needs Assessment and the options that had been vetted through their focus area committee. From this, the BoD discussed, voted and passed several impactful changes that, with member approval, will significantly impact how the AEG is governed. The changes outlined below are dependent on amending a sentence in the AEG constitution and any change to the constitution requires membership consent by vote. So, this year, along with the Executive Council ballot, all Full Members can expect to have the opportunity to vote to accept or reject the BoD proposed constitutional amendment. The changes endorsed by the BoD are summarized below. An ad-hoc Governance Structure committee, with participation from the Governance Committee, will be providing the needed bylaw revisions and vetted region options for consideration to the BoD between now and the Annual Board Meeting.

- Direct the membership to vote on a constitutional amendment that would separate the election and duties of the Section chairperson and Association Director. As written today, one person fills the two positions simultaneously. The intent is to be able to fill the very different positions with people that are excited and dedicated to each specific role. However, this change would not preclude the possibility of someone from being elected for both positions simultaneously.
- Assuming passage of the amendment, the BoD directed that they be provided bylaw revisions at the fall meeting for them to vote on that would reduce the number of Directors from thirty (30) to fifteen (15). These Directors would be nominated and elected from within the geographic region they reside. A smaller BoD will help ensure a more engaged and nimble Board. Also, the justification for a smaller Board is that the BoD voted to make the Director position a three year

term, as opposed to the one or two year terms that most Directors are elected to today. An added responsibility of regionally elected Directors will be adequately communicating with each of the local Boards within their region and to act as a liaison between all local (within their region) and national activities.

- Assuming passage of the amendment and allowing an opportunity for members to weigh in, the Board will have to adopt a model that separates the United States into ten (10) distinct regions that will act as the new boundaries from which Directors will be individually nominated and elected. Currently, the AEG is made up of twenty-five (25) Sections for this purpose. This reduction in number will likely impact how our Sections are defined today, but are not expected to have any impact on local activities.
- The last change is dependent on the BoD voting, likely this fall, on how Section Dues will be distributed under the new ten region model. Once the finance piece is worked out, the BoD voted to revise the way that Chapters (not Student Chapters) can form. Today, they are dependent on their Section to provide them a portion of the Section dues and they are not guaranteed the opportunity to have a voice regarding national level decisions. Under the new region model, the BoD voted to remove differences that exist today between our Chapters and Sections and allow them to not only operate the same, but have the same title. The consensus seemed to be that under the new model we refer to all local entities as Chapters and eliminate the term Section, but this was not voted on.

Another result of the Needs Assessment was the confirmation that our conferences and field trips are two of our Association's greatest strengths. As such, the BoD discussed a 5-year plan attempting to put on two Shlemon Specialty Conferences per year beginning in 2015 and these typically include an amazing field trip.

As I hope you can see, the AEG is has taken a hard look at itself and, as a result of this meeting, has begun setting the course for very positive change. As such, you can expect a more detailed explanation and justification for the proposed changes this summer. Lastly, speaking for all of us on the Executive Council, we want to thank all of you that have dedicated yourselves to exploring, vetting, and presenting changes that will allow the AEG to better serve its members and the profession.