My Vision for NSPE for 2013-14
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President

I look forward to serving you this next year as your president. In the words of Isaac Newton, “If I have seen further it is only by standing on the shoulders of giants”. There have been many great presidents before me and I hope to merely build a little upon the foundation they have created. Much of what we do will be the same as we have done in the past year. The Race for Relevance is something Past –President Dan Wittliff and I saw eye-to-eye on and the race is not over. As I work for you this next year, these are some of the things I plan to focus on.

Restoring and strengthening Trust
The key to any relationship—whether it is a personal relationship, a person’s relationship with an organization, or between two organization—is trust. I believe we have trust amongst ourselves but it has suffered some in the past—especially between the state and national organizations. We must collectively work to strengthen this trust between the organizations. We are all interested in improving the engineering profession and can do so much more effectively as a team as opposed to individually.

The visits of national officers to the states and territories are important for several reasons and we will continue with the visits. It is during those face-to-face visits that the national officers are able to meet the individual members and better understand the issues they believe are important. It is also a chance to interact with the state leadership and staff. It is during these visits that the work of your national society is effectively communicated to the states and the work of the states is better communicated to the national organization. As a national team, we visited 47 states this past year, some of which had not been visited for several years. We will continue with these visits while also being mindful of the budget. If there is an event in your state that you think having a national officer attend, please contact NSPE headquarters and make the request.

Three-tier Membership
One of the foundations of NSPE is the rather unique federation of society’s models. State and national organizations exist independently but in confederation with one another. An individual is, with the exception of state-only membership states, a member of their local chapter, their state society, and the national society. This somewhat unique membership model has, by and large, served the profession well over the years and the NSPE leadership is committed to encouraging and strengthening this model. It is my hope that members in the “state-only” states will once again see the value of this membership model and become three-tier members once again. I also hope that those who have opted to only join the national society in the state-only states will see the value and rejoin their state societies.

I am searching for a better name for three-tier membership. Words having meaning and those meanings in turn shape our thinking. The idea of “tier” implies that one organization is superior to another. It leads one to think that states serve national or that national exists only to meet the needs of the state societies. As NSPE Executive Director Mark Golden so capably discussed in his remarks in Minneapolis, we are not so much tiered as we are interrelated and interdependent. So, while the NSPE leadership fully supports three-tier membership, I want to find a term that more aptly captures this interdependence. I want us to quit thinking that one
organization exists to serve the other and start thinking that together we serve the members and the profession.

**Capitalize on our Strengths**
I believe in knowing your strengths, developing those strengths, and then using those strengths to be more effective. Focusing on weaknesses generally results in expending inordinate amounts of time and money with only marginal improvement in the weak areas. Now there are some things you have to do, even if you are weak in them, but the goal should be to become marginally competent in those areas and not to convert them into strengths.

We have strengths as individuals and as organizations. We should strive to realize and understand those strengths and then capitalize on them. One of the advantages of our federated organization is that if one organization lacks strength, another one likely has it.

NSPE has several strengths that we will make stronger and become a more effective voice for our members and the profession. Examples of these include legislative advocacy, review and maintenance of the code of ethics, monitoring and proposing qualifications to practice engineering, information technology, and marketing skills and capabilities.

The NSPE Legislative and Governmental Affairs Committee and the Licensure and Qualifications to Practice Committees have long been active and engaged. They have developed position statements, responded to proposed legislation, worked closely with NCEES, and developed a Body of Knowledge detailing the knowledge and engineer needs to have in order to practice professionally. The NSPE Body of Knowledge mirrors those developed by the various technical societies but ours is focused on the professional knowledge needed rather than the technical knowledge.

The NSPE Code of Ethics is recognized as the definitive ethical code for engineers. The NSPE Board of Ethical Review works tirelessly to ensure it remains pertinent and timely. Their review of possible ethical violations and publication of their findings make the Code a living document that is accessible to all engineers.

Information technology is critical to any organization and NSPE has taken steps to improve its IT capabilities. Once a new IT Director is hired we will look into ways that this national capability can be leveraged to assist the states. Some things I would like to investigate are the option of hosting state society websites, providing video-conferencing capabilities, and hosting webinars.

**Strategic Plan**
Our year-long Race for Relevance efforts were the beginning of process; the building of a foundation. However, the race for relevance is not a one-time exercise but is instead an ongoing process that will continue for years to come. We need to think of this as journey and not merely a destination.

Our initial efforts focused on what I call internal relevance—what did we need to do in order to become more relevant to our current members. This was the appropriate place to begin and through the effort of many members, over 3,000 volunteer hours, we found many areas for change. Some of the recommended changes have already been made, others are in the works, and there are some that still need some more effort. So we have sunset several of the task forces and continued others with slightly modified charges.

When we began the race for relevance efforts we realized that our strategic plan was out of date. We decided that it did not make sense to work on the race for relevance and the strategic
plan at the same time so we postponed work on the strategic plan. This year we will develop a new strategic plan using the race for relevance findings as a guide. The strategic plan, when complete, will, in conjunction with the race for relevance findings, guide our future investments of money and time.

While the past year focused on our relevance to members today, we also need to focus on our relevance to future members. We need to look at what do we need to do in order to be relevant to those external to the society: potential members, other organizations such as ABET, AAES, NCEES, etc. We need to find ways to be relevant to policy makers. This will involve several areas including external communication, outreach efforts, and our currently on-going strategic partnerships task force.

This process will be co-led by Immediate Past President Dan Wittliff, President-Elect Harve Hnatiuk, and me. But we will not work in a vacuum; we will involve the entire House of Delegates. We will think long-term while developing near-term goals that are achievable and measurable. I would like for many of the goals to be achievable within the term of a Delegate. All too often strategic plans are created with goals and objectives that cannot be achieved until after someone leaves office. Human nature makes it difficult to invest time and effort in an effort for which you will not see the results. I want us to be able to see results.

By developing a strategic plan we will essentially be setting our destination. We will decide where we want the organization to go and what we want to accomplish along the way. Once the destination has been determined the route to get there will become obvious.

To be successful we need to have buy-in from the states and the individual members. I think we can accomplish this by actively engaging the House of Delegates and providing avenues for input into the planning process. The goal is not develop a plan that will be placed on a shelf but to develop a plan that will be used daily to guide the organization. We will look at the core definition of what NSPE is and what we want to be in the future.

**Legislative Affairs**

In his keynote address during the closing session of the conference, Dr. Jerry Emison spoke on the topic of duty and the fact the we have a duty to our profession. I believe part of our duty is to actively engage the policymakers and for some to become policy makers. If we as engineers do not get engaged with the legislative and policy development processes then we are relegating those tasks to others. Ignoring them does not make them go away; it merely allows others, perhaps others who are less qualified, to step in and set policy that we as engineers must then follow. If we do not do this, then who can?

NSPE is uniquely poised to be effective in this process. First, we represent all professional engineers. This allows us to speak to a greater range of topics. Second, we have a good reputation in Washington and especially on Capitol Hill. Our reputation allows us to speak with authority and the policy makers know who we are. Third, we have good working relationships with other organizations in Washington which allow us to speak with a louder and even more authoritative voice. This is an area in which NSPE can and will make a difference.

Many societies have legislative fellows who work in the offices of senators or representatives or on Congressional committees. This gives Congress ready access to technical experts, gives the organizations increased visibility, gains greater insight for the profession, and provides an excellent training ground for those interested in careers in policy. Having such a program is not an inexpensive undertaking but the pay-offs can be large in terms of greater influence alone. I
will have a group investigate the feasibility of NSPE establishing such a fellowship for the future. It will not be without its difficulties, financial limitations being one of them, but it is something we should investigate.

The activities of the Licensure and Qualifications to Practice Committee (L&QPC) are central to the mission of NSPE. This committee concerns itself with what it means to be a professional engineer. They actively engage with ABET and NCEES on testing and licensure issues. They are concerned with what is necessary to practice as a professional engineer and are finalizing their body of knowledge (BoK). The BoK details the non-technical issues of being a professional engineer such as public policy, ethical conduct, business practices, etc. They monitor the industrial exemption that is in many state licensure laws and are committed to having those exemptions repealed. They also share concerns with the Legislative and Governmental Relations Committee on Qualifications Based Selection (QBS).

Board of Ethical Review
NSPE is committed to the ethical practice of engineering and no committee is a more visible sign of that commitment than the Board of Ethical Review (BER). The NSPE Code of Ethics is found in many engineering text books and it may well be the first exposure engineering students have to NSPE. The BER keeps the Code current by proposing modifications when needed but also by the review of ethical dilemmas submitted to them. After discussion and analysis, these cases are published for the engineering community to read.

One educational and outreach activity the BER does is host the Milton F. Lunch ethics competition. This annual competition presents a case for review. Individuals then determine whether the actions in the case were ethical or not, document their findings, cite the applicable sections of the code of ethics, and submit their opinion for review. While there is only one winner, the exercise is the important part of the competition and every engineer should read and review the case and come to their own conclusions even if they do not plan to enter the competition. It is a convenient reason to break out the NSPE Code of Ethics at least once a year, review it, and practice your ethical reasoning.

Membership
Growing the membership of NSPE is of primary importance. Members are the lifeblood of the organization; they provide financial resources, ideas, volunteer work, and give the organization credibility. Increasing membership is a job for everyone but it is not an easy one. We have many generations of engineers in our membership and the most effective ways of recruiting them vary. Older engineers are enticed by some factors while younger engineers gravitate towards other factors. Membership messages must be customized to each of these groups.

Over the next few months we will take the work done by the Membership Race for Relevance Task Forces and implement them in a membership recruiting campaign in conjunction with the states. Our focus will be on three-tier membership and working with the states. This is a task where working together will yield better results than working individually.

We are also stepping up our efforts to reclaim those members who have allowed their memberships to lapse. We will make some initial contacts from the national society and then ask the states to help with those we have not been able to convince to renew. Our initial results have shown that we are able to get about one fourth of those we contact to renew their membership. With states and local chapters doing additional follow up we should be able to get a number of the remaining seventy-five percent to renew.
Our Young Engineers Council has been doing some great work over the last several years in providing meaningful training, education, and networking opportunities to young engineers. The can also play a key role in recruiting new members. The leadership training they receive not only makes them better employees, it makes them better leaders within the organization. We need to involve more of them in leadership positions in the national, state, and local organizations.

We also need to increase the diversity within our organization. Diversity is important not because it is politically correct but because it provides diversity of ideas within the organization. The engineering profession is lacking in diversity and NSPE reflects this lack of diversity as well. We are working on a partnership with the Society of Women Engineers and hope that will increase not only the number of women in NSPE but also in the profession. We all need to do more for the longevity of the profession.

**Image of the Profession**
We have struggled with our image as a profession for many years. We have focused on it in the past and were only able to change the image slightly. The difficulty we have is not so much what the profession is, but rather how it is portrayed and perceived by ourselves and others. We need to do what we can to change these perceptions in order to attract new people to the profession.

As engineers we solve problems and we need to continue our focus on that. The problem solving skills we learn in engineering have value in our fields in addition to engineering. Instead of seeing losing people to these other fields as a failure, we need to see them as successes. Engineering is a versatile and viable area of study and is being called by some the new liberal arts degree. Society will benefit by having lawyers, doctors, accountants, and others with an engineering mind-set.

One area that could benefit greatly from having more members with an engineering education is the area of policy. As our lives become more and more complicated as a result of technological innovations, our policies will need to be adjusted to keep up with the change. Imagine how much better those policies would be with engineering educated people involved in developing them.

Naturally our position is to increase the number of licensed engineers so it seems counter-intuitive to sell ourselves as a profession that provides entre’ to other fields. But it really isn’t. Right now we are not getting anywhere near all degreed engineers to become registered; we are only getting a percentage. If we keep the percentage the same but increase number of degreed engineers we will increase the number of licensed engineers. And along the way, we just might convince some of those who entered the field as a stepping stone to other areas to stick with engineering a little longer.

**Outreach**
As we focus on becoming more relevant to external parties, we will certainly reach out to and work with other organizations. Our Strategic Partnerships Task Force is continuing their work in reviewing and renewing partnerships with other organizations.

We will be working more closely with the Society of Women Engineers. They are a great partner to work with in getting more women interested in engineering. Both SWE and NSPE have certain areas of expertise and resources that can be brought to bear on this issue and by working together we can better complement each other and have a greater impact. I also think that we can work on developing new initiatives to reach younger girls and interest them in
engineering. One thing seems clear and that is that what we have been doing in the past has not had a significant impact on the percentage of women in the profession.

We also have and will continue our healthy relationships with NCEES and ABET. These two organizations are at the heart of developing professional engineers and we must continue our work with them, especially as we attempt to bring the NSPE Body of Knowledge into the mainstream. Perhaps we can even get more NSPE members to be ABET visitors and attempt to interject more “professional” topics into the engineering curricula.

NSPE is the voice of all engineers in the United States. We represent all licensed engineers and not merely one or two disciplines. This presents us with both the opportunity and responsibility to engage our international partners. As engineering becomes more and more global, it is imperative that we work on ensuring that the health, safety, and welfare of the public is protected as engineers from other countries practice in the United States and as US engineers practice abroad.

**NICET**

Engineering technologists are an integral part of the engineering team. Just as we expected our medical teams to have all members licensed and/or certified, we should be willing to accept nothing less from all members of the engineering team. We are fortunate to have the National Institute for Certification of Engineering Technologies (NICET) as an integral part of NSPE.

Make no mistake about it; NICET is a valued part of NSPE. They make significant contributions to the NSPE budget and to the engineering team. By encouraging technicians and technologists to seek certification we not only improve the professionalism and competence of the engineering team, we also improve the financial stability of NICET and NSPE.

The NSPE leadership will continue to focus attention on NICET in our visits; we will highlight them in our publications, and will increase their visibility to all of our members.

**Corporate Infrastructure**

NSPE is fortunate to have own our headquarters building that has more space than we need for current NSPE operations. The location is desirable for many professions and we are able to lease a significant portion of the space to others. This strengthens our financial position and gives us a wonderful building in a great location.

However, our infrastructure needs some work. The décor is dated and needs to be updated. This will require some financial resources and we may well not be able to address the issues this year but we will continue the planning.

We also have some potential to expand and improve our information technology infrastructure. We will continue to review these possibilities with the idea of being able to more and better service to the states and the individual members as discussed above.

**Conclusion**

The future of NSPE is bright and I look forward to the next year. We will all need to work on increasing membership and the leadership needs to hear from the members on issues they think are important. Please feel free to contact headquarters with any questions or concerns. You are also welcome to follow me on Twitter @Robert_A_Green, friend me on FaceBook, robert.a.green, and on LinkedIn at robertagreen1.