TO: NSPE Board of Directors

FROM: Mark J. Golden, FASAE, CAE
Executive Director

DATE: 16 September 2014

RE: Board Update: September 1-15, 2014

Labor Day (September 1st this year) marks the official end of the summer vacation season and is usually marked by a noticeable increase in the pace and intensity of professional, personal and family commitments. True to form, I know I have noticed things get even busier in the past two weeks. But I also know that for the board, officers and staff, and many volunteers even deeper in to the committee structure, we never got to enjoy a summer slowdown in activities. Things got busy leading up to the annual meeting, and have only intensified ever since. But I take that as evidence of the building momentum behind NSPE’s Race for Relevance and renaissance as an organization.

The officers continue their work with the committees to craft and refine charges in alignment with the new strategic plan. Staff liaisons are working with the committee chairs to translate these charges into specific work plans. The committees are beginning to meet and attack the work assigned them, even as this “paper work” is finalized.

At next month’s meeting, the board will have an opportunity to take a holistic view of the state of play of these efforts. And I have established a regular committee reporting calendar that will ensure regular updates to the board throughout the year.

This work isn’t glamorous or easy, but it is critical to achieving the kind of focus and concentration that the membership told the board it wanted, and that the House of Delegates unanimously committed to in Washington this summer.

Work is also progressing on preparations for the October board meeting, which will offer focused opportunities to take the next step forward in translating broad strategic direction into concrete action. In a conference call on September 15th, your president, president-elect and vice president reviewed six specific “mega issues” that need to be addressed, and will be providing me specific input to help frame those issues for productive discussion at the board meeting.

1. Member Value

On September 2nd I attended a regular meeting of the American Association of Engineering Societies (AAES) International Activities Committee (IntAC) here in Washington. IntAC is the vehicle for US engagement in both the World Federation of Engineering Organizations (WFEO) and UPADI (The Pan American Federation of Engineering Societies). Although NSPE lacks the
resources and does not place the same priority on international activities that some of the larger technical societies do, our involvement is critical to sustaining an environment where NSPE can monitor activities, has input and has an opportunity to exert influence, when it is required.

At this meeting, IntAC formally acknowledged and thanked NSPE again for its vital role as the designated US representative to UPADI and for our operations as the secretariat. NSPE has several representatives serving at their own expense in various capacities on different UPADI and WFEO task forces, including Dan Clinton, Jose Guerra and Bob Kersten, further strengthening our ability to remain plugged in and to efficiently leverage the active international engineering community.

2. Advocacy

One major area of advocacy in promotion and support of the professional engineer has been future workforce development, or the so-called “pipeline” issues, thereby: ensuring young people are aware of career opportunities in engineering; get the kind of encouragement and preparation they need in school (pre-school, primary and secondary) to consider math, science, technology and engineering as educational and career paths; are supported (financially and otherwise) in their post-secondary education; get adequate preparation for licensure; and, ultimately become engaged in the engineering field. The NSPE Educational Foundation, MATHCOUNTS, EWeek and Future City are just a few of the more visible aspects of this effort.

Closely aligned with these activities have been efforts to increase diversity within the profession. In particular, the under-representation of women in engineering and the high percentage of women entering and even completing engineering programs who leave the profession has long been recognized as an issue. NSPE, directly and through coalition efforts with other engineering organizations, has invested serious effort in this area. Last year, then President Dan Wittliff publicly committed to an effort (in cooperation with the Society of Women Engineers) to develop, fund and implement a plan to double the number of female undergraduates to 40,000 by the year 2023. Discussions were held with NCEES (and in particular, its president, Patty Mamola, who shared Dan’s passion for the issue) and other strategic partners.

There is no lack of recognition of the issue. There is no lack of sincerity in the commitment to do something about it. There is a lot of good work going on, with beneficial results on a limited scale. However, all of us who have been involved in this issue inevitably comeback to the same conclusion: we have all been talking about it for thirty years. We have all been doing useful and worthwhile things. But the numbers have not changed.

AAES, made up as it is by all the major engineering societies, has determined to devote its fall assembly (November 5th) to focusing on this issue of diversity, and translating good intentions into real outcomes. I will be closely following their development of the agenda, and looking for ways to weave NSPE’s programs and goals into this broader, coalition effort. The NSPE president and president-elect are directly engaged in AAES, as NSPE’s representatives on the AAES General Assembly, and, as noted below, Treasurer Julia Harrod was recently appointed to the AAES Finance Committee. So we will be well represented in any discussions and will take full advantage of any opportunities to increase our reach and impact that might open up for us.
I struggled as to whether to include this next item under “Advocacy” or “Content.” It fits equally well under both. It is a real world example of how NSPE’s content management strategy connects and amplifies NSPE’s mission across multiple strategies and media channels.

A social media post on “Why #Engineers Get Professional Licenses” builds on the cover story in the June PE magazine. (Twitter-savvy readers will recognize the hashtag form of the word “engineer,” ensuring that the story will pop up for millions of users who track the Twitterverse for news and information on the profession.).

How much can you say in the character-limited format of Twitter? Quite a lot.

The tweet from @PE magazine includes a link to content we didn't create that reinforces our advocacy message: bit.ly/1qZouYO

(And it’s a great piece of content, in a format tailor-made for short attention span, busy, plugged in, mobile, young information consumers: short, easy to read and absorb, whether you are reading on a desktop, laptop, tablet or phone.)

The tweet then also links to NSPE’s earlier tweet on the same topic, now archived on our website: bit.ly/1m60LGh

This a similarly mobile-friendly and succinct message statement, that serves as a gateway to all the other licensing resources collected online by NSPE.

This is but one example of strategic leveraging of content, relentlessly repurposing content to reinforce and remind consumers about NSPE, its commitment to licensure, and its role in supporting, promoting and protecting the PE license.

3. Content

We are making progress on the AAES salary survey project. As you may recall, NSPE eliminated its own salary product last year (as part of the Race for Relevance Program Prioritization Task Force.) It was our hope at the time that the AAES product could be tweaked to better meet NSPE’s unique needs and preferences, so that a comprehensive database on salary (including data that might be used to establish a correlation between licensure and earnings) might remain available to those members who value the product. AAES has faced some challenges of its own in sustaining their product, but I believe they may now be on the right track. AAES has floated a proposal that would allow a deep discount for NSPE members on Engineering Work Force Commission’s salary surveys, and access to the data from our own constituency.

4. Collaboration

The State Society Executives Council (SSEC) held its first meeting of the year on September 3rd. New SSEC Chair Joe Simonetta has established a regular schedule of conference call meetings throughout the coming year, and reserved a major portion of each call’s agenda to discuss in depth one of the six strategies in the new Strategic Plan. (On the September 3rd teleconference meeting, we discussed the “Member Value” strategy.) The call was well attended, and allowed for
national staff and the state executives to get down to brass tacks in its discussion on what we are each doing, and what we should be doing, to translate the strategy into a reality.

Last year, NSPE invested some focused effort on outreach to some of the state societies which are struggling to remain active, including a meeting last fall in Phoenix with a number of the southwestern states. One of the fruits of those efforts has been an invitation from the New Mexico society for national to be a major part of their November “Issues Conference” in Albuquerque. We are working to arrange for NSPE Director Karen Farley to deliver a QBS seminar and NSPE update, and Art Schwartz to offer an ethics seminar. This is a significant step forward, since it has been many years since NMSPE had a national representative (other than local NM members) at their meeting, and is hopefully an early indicator of additional activity and engagement.

Congratulations to NSPE Treasurer Julia Harrod, who has been appointed to the AAES Finance Committee. Harve Hnatiuk previously served in a similar role.

Tennessee SPE Executive Director Candy Toler has made it official, announcing her plans to retire April 30, 2015. In her fifteen-plus years at TSPE, Candy played a role in development and funding for the Tennessee Engineering Center, the “home” of six Tennessee engineering associations, which significantly increased ongoing communication among the founding groups. Candy has been a volunteer docent at the Parthenon in Nashville for about 10 years and she plans to devote more of her time to her avocation. A constant and energetic presence in SSEC, she has always been a contributor, whose presence will be missed.

5. Member Engagement
The Position Statement (PS) and Professional Policy (PP) Development Task Force held its second conference call meeting on September 8th, and is beginning to refine a growing consensus. The task force has agreed in principle on the need for a process for adopting and reviewing professional policies and advocacy positions that:

- Provides a voice or opportunity for members to be heard;
- Increases the level of awareness and communications;
- Respects state and regional differences;
- Is timely and nimble; and
- Provides additional levels of scrutiny on the relatively few instances where there is close division and strongly held differences of opinion.

It is also considering whether NSPE PSs and PPs should have automatic sunset dates.

The task force is on track to present recommendations to the board for consideration at next month’s face-to-face board meeting.

6. Professional and Leadership Development for the Licensed Professional Engineer
The White House Office of Science and Technology Policy is currently accepting applications for its Spring 2015 Policy Internship Program. (The application deadline is October 17th). Students who are US citizens and who will be actively enrolled during the spring 2015 semester are eligible to apply.
More information and application instructions can be found at:

http://www.whitehouse.gov/ostp/about/student/

We are pushing this information out to PEG, PEHE and student communities, via all appropriate social media channels.

7. **Finance, Administration, Operations and Staff Alignment**

NSPE has improved its member/customer service response system, recently completing a smooth and transparent transition to a new ticketing system. This system allows for better tracking and analysis of member and state society issues and requests, increasing staff’s ability to respond quickly and reliably.

We are nearly finished finalizing year-end financials, which will be circulated to the board after review by the Treasurer. This is also the last major step in preparation for the annual audit, which is scheduled to begin in October. I have recently increased the time authorized for our interim, financial consultants at Tate & Tryon to ensure that we have as much data on the new fiscal year for the board to review at its October meeting in Alexandria. (They will also be assisting in a “Non Profit Finances 101” workshop with the board at that meeting.)

As I have previously reported in these updates, NSPE has succeeded in upgrading its telephone and computer infrastructure, and stabilized our critical membership data base system (our Association Management Software, or NetForum). NetForum is now stable and reliably performing the critical functions we need it to. However, while we have achieved a remarkably stable and sustainable *status quo*, no one would argue that the system is as user-friendly or simple as it could be. It is also rigid and labor intensive. Moreover, while it is doing what we actually need it to do in terms of membership data administration and dues billing, it is *not* capable of providing much in the way of business intelligence that could be used to build new member service, engagement and revenue streams.

Accordingly, I have a staff task force working to develop a business case for investing in bringing the current AMS system (NetForum) up to its most current version. The Return on Investment analysis this team is doing will tell us for sure, but it appears likely that the opportunity costs (the inability to perform business analysis and the high labor cost of operating the current system) may indeed warrant additional upgrades and improvements in data reliability, ease of access, integration of reporting, and possibly even ability to make the system available to interested states societies for their own use.

Progress on the Budget Committee’s charge to develop a more proactive investment policy for NSPE reserves has been put on hold, pending hiring a new Senior Director of Finance. However, we have taken steps to take our current reserves and place them in temporary investments in a laddered CD account. This preserves our liquidity, increases the investment revenues generated, and perhaps most importantly, gets everything into FDIC insured vehicles until more comprehensive investment guidelines can be established.
8. Governance

Just a reminder: the September 24th board conference call has been canceled. It is likely that another call will be scheduled prior to the October 17-18 face-to-face meeting to review that agenda and strategic discussion issues.

Finally, please remember that access to NSPE leadership resources is always available to you in the Leadership Toolbox at www.nspe.org/toolbox. You will need to log in with your user name and password.

You can also review a detailed calendar of NSPE and state society events on the Web site at: http://www.nspe.org/Calendar-of-Events