

## Questions From ASSE Delegates & Members

This month's governance Q&A features questions submitted by members, including members who serve as delegates. Visit [www.asse.org/restructure](http://www.asse.org/restructure) for additional information about ASSE governance.

### How will this governance restructure help members and chapters?

Chapters and their leaders would be the primary beneficiaries of more time and focused guidance from their regional vice presidents (RVPs). The proposed structure will alleviate the taxing workload created by the current structure and enable RVPs to focus their time and energies on helping chapters thrive so they can deliver an exceptional member experience.

Society-wide elections will increase the member voice in ASSE. Under the proposed model, members would elect all voting members of the Board of Directors (BOD), except for the public director who will be appointed, thereby creating a BOD that is representative of all members. As Erike Young, Region I RVP and a long-time elected school board member, points out, "School districts are moving away from trustee-area elections to district-wide elections because trustees are voting for new programs for 'their schools' and not voting for programs that benefit all students. I see the same benefit for ASSE if it moves to the proposed governance structure."

In addition, recognizing that ASSE members have increasingly limited time to volunteer and that employer support for volunteerism continues to decrease, the proposed model aims to create a more efficient and balanced approach to engaging members in ways that recognize who they are, what they do and where they work. Members will have more opportunities to volunteer in ways that reflect their personal passions and abilities. Ultimately, this improved experience will help the Society retain more members and attract new members, both of which are vital to growing ASSE, enhancing the SH&E profession and increasing the influence of its practitioners.

### Does this proposal pave the way for eventual removal of chapters?

No. Removal of chapters was not discussed or contemplated as part of this proposed change. Nothing in the proposed model changes the commitment to chapters.

### Why would RVPs and council vice presidents no longer be part of the BOD?

Under the current model, these volunteer leaders fill dual roles: one focused on operational issues, one devoted to strategic concerns. While this helps our leaders gain a unique perspective on ASSE and its operation, it also leads to overload. More and more potential leaders are declining to run for office because their employers will not support the extensive time commitment required to fulfill these roles. Additional research and a recent environmental scan indicate that many other member-based associations are experiencing similar trends.

The proposed model would allow region and council vice presidents to focus on operational issues. This focused

volunteerism will better support the member experience. In addition, the proposed model would move operational decision making to the council and region levels, which should improve efficiencies.

Furthermore, under the proposed structure, the RVPs would have a dedicated vice president through the Council on Region Affairs (CORA). This person would serve a 2-year term and could be elected to a second 2-year term. Under the current structure, the Council on Member and Region Affairs (COMRA) is chaired by the senior vice president, who only holds that office for 1 year. This change will create more stability from a volunteer standpoint and allow us to be better able to move things forward.

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### Will ASSE become more decentralized?

The proposed model is intended to shift much decision making to the council and region levels, which will allow initiatives to advance more quickly. This change will enhance the dialogue and collaboration among the councils as well.

### Removing RVPs from the BOD may reduce its geographic diversity. How will the election process be managed to prevent all BOD members from being from one region, for example?

The proposed structure is focused on bringing the best slate of candidates forward to the membership for any election regardless of their geographic location. Under the current bylaws, it is possible that seven of the 15 BOD members (all of the council vice presidents, vice president of finance, president-elect and president) could all come from the same region or even chapter. That has never happened. Diversity is critically important, but geography is only one of many forms of diversity. The Nominations and Elections Committee and the development of strong leadership mentoring will help ensure that the BOD is diverse and reflective of the membership.

### What is the rationale behind these proposed changes?

In the mid-1990s, ASSE's membership was smaller, younger and less demographically diverse. Members were more likely to attend chapter meetings and volunteer for service. Employers were more likely to pay membership dues (maybe even multiple dues to multiple organizations), fund professional development and support volunteer service.

Since then, our membership has diversified. In addition, most members now interact with ASSE based on industry- and practice-specific needs, rather than on their geographic location. This is evident in the growth of ASSE's practice specialties (few and small in 1995, now approaching 20 in total) and emergence of common interest groups (CIGs, which did not exist until 2003).

In 1995, ASSE was only beginning to venture into the virtual world, had a limited website and few digital assets. Today, the Society delivers virtual events throughout the year, has an extensive website and has developed a robust body of knowledge repository.

These changes make one thing clear: Maintaining the status quo and failing to address a governance change today means ASSE would operate under a governance model that does not align with its mission, vision and long-term strategic plan. The proposed model would position ASSE to be more nimble and responsive to the strategic plan, and would enable the Society to address the changing needs of a dynamic and increasingly global profession.

In addition, this model seeks to increase member participation by providing more pathways for volunteer involvement. With more members involved, the Society will be able to develop and draw from a larger pool of potential leaders with varied skills and experience levels to more effectively achieve strategic and operational goals.

It is also interesting to note that the proposed structure is in alignment with ANSI/ASSE/ISO 31000 (Z690.2), Risk Management: Principles and

Guidelines. Following this model, the proposed structure will better position ASSE to identify, mitigate and monitor emerging risks to the organization. According to the standard, risk encompasses not only hazards, with which safety professionals are familiar, but also operational, financial, compliance and reputational risks.

### **How will this affect the CIGs to which I belong?**

Each CIG would have delegate representation at the HOD like each practice specialty, and a vote at the Council on Practices and Standards meetings. This will elevate the voice of CIG members.

### **What is the objective of adding a public director to the BOD?**

Having a public director is now a common practice in both for-profit and not-for-profit sectors. For example, BCSP and Institution of Occupational Safety and Health have public board

members. A public director will bring an outside voice and perspective to BOD dialogue. This will help the BOD focus on strategic issues and prevent group-think. The public director may also have an expertise or experience not commonly found among ASSE's membership.

In addition, much has been said about how to best advocate for the safety profession and safety professionals. It is possible that a public director will offer insight on how to elevate the profession and position its practitioners as valued business partners who are key players in setting organizational policy and strategy.

### **Would it make sense to have five elected Board members to eliminate a tie?**

The proposed BOD consists of 10 members, one of whom (the executive director) has no vote. So, in accordance with *Robert's Rules of Order*, ASSE's BOD would have nine voting members.

## ASSE Professional Development Conference & Exposition

# SAFETY 2015

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## Call for Presenters

ASSE will hold its 2015 Professional Development Conference & Exposition in Dallas, TX, June 7-10, 2015. The program will reflect the breadth and depth of the profession and address the professional development needs of SH&E professionals across the globe. Executive-level and technical sessions geared to high-level SH&E professionals are particularly desired.

Interested professionals are invited to submit a proposal to speak at Safety 2015 **by July 14, 2014**. Presentations should address one or more of the following:

- Key issues and challenges facing SH&E professionals
- Skills and knowledge to address the key issues and challenges
- Emerging issues and areas of interest to the profession

A complete call for presenters is available at <http://asse.callforpresenters2015.sgizmo.com/s3>. In addition, a session on how to submit a proposal to speak at the 2015 conference will be conducted at the upcoming Safety 2014 Conference in Orlando, FL, in June.

**Proposals  
due  
July 14,  
2014**



American Society of Safety Engineers