

The Geological Society of America (GSA) Strategic Plan

Approved by Council 8 October 2008

Mission

GSA's mission is to be a leader in advancing the geosciences, enhancing the professional growth of its members, and promoting the geosciences in the service to humankind and stewardship of the Earth.

Vision

GSA will be a broad, unifying scientific society

- Fostering the human quest for understanding Earth, planets, and life;
- Catalyzing new scientific ways of thinking about natural systems; and
- Supporting the application of geoscience knowledge and insight to human needs, aspirations, and Earth stewardship.

Goals

1. To attract and sustain a dynamic, dedicated, diverse, and viable membership and to be responsive to this membership.
2. To increase the quality and vitality of meetings and conferences.
3. To increase the quality and vitality of publications.
4. To promote geoscience in the service of society – education and public awareness.
5. To promote geoscience in the service of society – geoscience and public policy.
6. To optimize the governance and organizational structure, both functionally and strategically, in order to emphasize flexibility and willingness to evolve in a timely manner from a local to global level.
7. To maintain Geological Society of America and the Geological Society of America Foundation as financially viable entities.

GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

1. TO ATTRACT AND SUSTAIN A DYNAMIC, DEDICATED, DIVERSE, AND VIABLE MEMBERSHIP AND TO BE RESPONSIVE TO THIS MEMBERSHIP. WE SET THE MEMBERSHIP PROGRAM TO

- A. Increase GSA membership to 30,000 by 31 December 2011 by
 - a. Identifying and marketing to non-members via direct mail, email, new technology, and other marketing techniques and expanding the prospect database to 50,000 qualified prospects by 31 December 2011;
 - b. Developing and promoting incentives to join throughout the year;
 - c. Identifying and pursuing new member benefits;
 - d. Using electronic journals as a tool to attract and retain members;
 - e. Strengthening the Campus Representatives Program;
 - f. Targeting pre-college Earth Science teachers.

- B. Work with the International Secretary and International Secretariat to increase membership of non-USA members to 5,000 by 31 December 2011, with emphasis on Canadian and Mexican geoscientists by
 - a. Extending section boundaries throughout Mexico;
 - b. Encouraging section meetings in Canada and Mexico and using these meetings as membership marketing opportunities;
 - c. Establishing an International Section for members outside the USA, Canada, and Mexico;
 - d. Actively marketing membership at field trips and conferences held outside of the USA;
 - i. Consider reduction of registration fee for first-time GSA members
 - ii. Recruit at International Section Meetings;
 - e. Tasking the GSA Foundation to develop funding dedicated to a graduate student research grant program for international members ;
 - f. Exploring and pursuing mechanisms to make it easier for international students and professionals to join GSA (overcoming obstacles of getting the funds to the USA or the cost of membership itself):
 - i. Develop an online membership sponsorship program to support and engage students and professionals worldwide, with concentration on those individuals in developing countries

- C. Increase two-year college membership to 1,000 by 31 December 2011 by
 - a. Expanding the Campus Representatives program at two-year colleges and by encouraging Campus Representatives at four-year colleges and universities to partner with appropriate faculty at two-year colleges;
 - b. Providing attractive options for two-year college faculty.

- D. Continue efforts to maintain student growth and retention by

- a. Strengthening the Campus Representative program and using this program as one of the foci for increasing membership:
 - i. Identifying and recruiting Campus Reps to reach 90% of degree-granting institutions in the USA (710 US Reps);
 - ii. Identifying and recruiting Campus Reps outside of the USA with concentration on Canada and Mexico;
 - iii. Developing an incentive program for Campus Representatives based on recruitment success.
 - b. Recruiting Earth and Environmental Science Education majors.
- E. Explore new technologies for interfacing with membership (wiki, blog, facebook, etc.) by supporting and working with the eGSA initiative;
- F. Actively encourage the participation of women, minority, and persons with disabilities in geosciences by partnering with organizations who serve these groups by
- a. Having a booth at National Association of Black Geologists and Geophysicists (NABGG) & Society for Advancement of Chicanos and Native Americans in Science (SACNAS) meetings.
- G. Increase membership of applied geoscientists (as measured by non-academic members: industry, self-employed, and government) to 7,500 by 31 December 2011 by
- a. Reaching applied geoscientists through the section meetings, including advertising at companies near the meeting location;
 - b. Running one-day workshops for applied geoscientists at section meetings or independently, with continuing education credits (CEU);
 - c. Advertising the availability of CEU credits for all section and annual meetings
 - d. Focusing on associated societies with applied geoscientists;
 - e. Creating a pilot Workplace Representatives program, parallel to the Campus Reps program, to recruit within companies.
- H. Increase membership of scientists in related fields by
- a. Increasing the number of Associated Societies (geography, chemistry, biology, environmental, etc.);
 - b. Developing a mechanism at the Division level to stay in touch with people who are interested in the Division's activities but who might not be ready to join GSA;
 - c. Linking an "invitation to join" on Division Web sites, and consider making Division newsletters available to non-members.
- 2. TO INCREASE THE QUALITY AND VITALITY OF MEETINGS AND CONFERENCES. IN THESE MEETINGS, WE SET THE PROGRAM IN ORDER TO**
- A. Advance the dissemination of geoscience knowledge by

- a. Identifying and aggressively acquiring emerging fields and top-quality science for GSA meetings through, among other means, GSA's Divisions and Associated Societies;
 - b. Expanding the range of geoscience that is considered to be part of GSA;
 - c. Presenting science in innovative ways and by continually adding diversity, flexibility, and innovations to vary and enhance the presentation of science at GSA meetings;
 - d. Being proactive in enabling Penrose Conferences and Field Forums;
 - e. Using Specialty Meetings to expand GSA's scientific scope;
 - f. Making full use of science presented at GSA and other meetings through post-meeting publications, electronic postings, and/or other media;
 - g. Holding, sponsoring, or co-sponsoring international meetings, and ensuring GSA visibility and presence at these meetings;
 - h. Utilizing themes and research areas to develop meeting scientific programs to attract and include voluntary abstracts, proposed theme sessions, as well as proactively invited presentations;
 - i. Engaging local decision makers in GSA meetings with
 - i. Local hazards trips;
 - ii. Receptions;
 - iii. Speaking opportunities.
 - j. Increase Associated Society's sponsored sessions at GSA meetings.
- B. Catalyze cooperative interactions among earth, life, planetary, and social scientists who investigate natural systems and the interaction of human systems with them over varying scales by actively developing opportunities to incorporate related sciences and other disciplines into GSA meetings;
- C. Actively recruit and bring back core geoscience disciplines that have disappeared from GSA;
- D. Expand offerings at all meetings for pre-college teachers;
- E. Increase Section Meeting attendance by 25%;
- a. Sections should implement recommendations of the Section Ad Hoc Committee Report
 - b. Engage Divisions and Associated Societies in building the technical program
 - c. Increase K-12 and 2-year Section Meeting attendance by 25%.
- F. Aggressively investigate resources for electronic conferences, short courses, and field trips that can duplicate as nearly as possible the important social interactions of annual meetings while allowing members and non-members to avoid the expense of travel;
- G. Develop a strategic plan for transitioning to electronic conferences in an orderly fashion as resources improve, member attitudes evolve, and the costs to attendees of physical conferences continue to rise.

3. TO INCREASE THE QUALITY AND VITALITY OF PUBLICATIONS. IN THESE PUBLICATIONS, WE SET THE PROGRAM IN ORDER TO

- A. Advance the dissemination of geoscience knowledge by increasing GSA's visibility to the general public, educators, students, and the greater scientific community through publications:
 - a. Investigate and pursue a vehicle that will reach, educate, and inform the general public about geoscience and environmental issues with the goal of building an informed citizenry;
 - b. Inventory GSA's current practices regarding indexing, archiving, searching, formats, and availability of publications, and disseminate this information;
 - c. Ensure accessibility, quality, and archiving of publications;
 - d. Ensure consistent, clear branding and discoverability of GSA publications in light of the way online publications are now reached and used;
 - e. Sponsor sessions at non-GSA meetings (European Geosciences Union (EGU), Goldschmidt, International Geological Congress (IGC), etc.) that specifically tie into *Lithosphere*, *Geology*, *Geosphere*, and *GSAB* (books too);
 - f. Be open to developing new journals
 - g. Encourage more disciplinary diversity *Geology* and *GSA Bulletin*.

- B. Increase the use of meetings (GSA Annual and Section Meetings, Penrose Conferences, Field Forums, other) to obtain journal article submissions and book proposals:
 - a. Expand current system of soliciting papers from session chairs to include targeted inquiries with specific response options, and expanded follow-up from GSA;
 - b. Explore ways to bring in more proposals and submissions from applied disciplines;
 - c. Provide specific information on submitting papers and proposals.
 - d. Aggressively pursue proposals for field guide volumes from meetings and investigate ways to publish (annually) individual trips held by GSA and Associated Society members, vetted through an appointed science editor for Field Guides.

- C. Explore how GSA can better serve authors from under-represented countries in its publications in order to achieve and maintain balance, and a diversity of papers published:
 - a. Identify resources that could be made available to non-native English speaking authors to help them improve their otherwise (scientifically) sound papers;
 - b. Explore potential partnerships with GSA Associated Societies in offering resources to authors from under-represented areas.

- D. Explore and evaluate the current and potential systems for publishing maps in the context of emerging digital capabilities.

**4. TO PROMOTE GEOSCIENCE IN THE SERVICE OF SOCIETY –
EDUCATION AND PUBLIC AWARENESS. WE SET THE EDUCATION
AND OUTREACH PROGRAM TO**

- A. Communicate the importance and relevance of the geosciences in a global context through education and public awareness to by
 - a. Providing internship opportunities for members while providing geoscience expertise for government agencies;
 - b. Coordinating mentoring opportunities for members, both as mentors and as participants, at GSA conferences;
 - c. Providing professional development opportunities for members through coordinating short courses and workshops;
 - d. Supporting K-12 and 2-year. college educators in their earth-science teaching through providing resources, training, and field experiences to increase their knowledge, understanding and willingness to promote the geosciences;
 - e. Participating in Earth Science Week through providing materials for distribution and encouraging GSA member involvement;
 - f. Leading and promoting programs that actively involve the global community in geoscience activities;
 - g. Encouraging and supporting members to respond effectively to requests for geoscience information from the media and other community groups, including providing public information at conferences;
 - h. Ensuring that all GSA programs are inclusive and encourage participation by under-represented groups.
 - i. Expand GSA university programs that enhance participation of minorities.

**5. TO PROMOTE GEOSCIENCE IN THE SERVICE OF SOCIETY –
GEOSCIENCE AND PUBLIC POLICY. WE SET PUBLIC POLICY
ACTIVITIES TO**

- A. Work with the GSA community to increase member involvement in the public policy process:
 - a. Setting up clear and effective lines of communication with GSA members and organizational units;
 - b. Utilizing GSA's regional structure to obtain better participation in the public policy process;
 - c. Helping educate and prepare GSA members to participate in the public policy process.

- B. Provide leadership in U.S. public policy as well as active involvement in public policy decision-making and implementation processes by
 - a. Monitoring public policy issues and participating in information sharing and educational efforts directed toward the legislative and executive branches of government:

- i. Tracking relevant laws, policies, and regulations and participating in information and education efforts for U.S. Congress and federal agencies.
 - b. Working with the GSA community to increase member involvement in the public policy process:
 - i. Setting up clear and effective lines of communication with GSA members and organizational units;
 - ii. Utilizing GSA's regional structure to obtain better participation in the public policy process;
 - iii. Helping educate and prepare GSA members to participate in the public policy process.
 - c. Promoting adequate funding for science at the national level;
 - d. Promoting the use of science in public policy decision-making:
 - i. Initiating and leading efforts on public policy issues for which GSA is uniquely positioned;
 - ii. Collectively participating in coalitions that support and promote science.
 - C. Working with GSA's International Secretariat, International Secretary, and International Section, GSA will explore opportunities for expanding international activities at the interface between geoscience and public policy.
 - a. Work with Canada and Mexico on transboundary issues;
 - b. As appropriate, work with members in their country on their national, regional and local issues.
- 6. TO OPTIMIZE GSA'S GOVERNANCE AND ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE, BOTH FUNCTIONALLY AND STRATEGICALLY, IN ORDER TO EMPHASIZE FLEXIBILITY AND WILLINGNESS TO EVOLVE IN A TIMELY MANNER FROM A LOCAL TO GLOBAL LEVEL. WE SET STRUCTURES TO**
- A. Periodically review the definitions, roles, relationships, strategies, and procedures of all of the components of the society by *ad hoc* committee reviews of:
 - a. Council (by HQ staff, membership, and Council and former Councilor in 2010);
 - b. Sections (this was done in 2005; it is suggested that the next one take place in 2012);
 - c. Divisions (this was done in 2007; it is suggested that the next one take place in 2014);
 - d. Associated Societies (this was done in 2007; it is suggested that the next one take place in 2014);
 - e. Committees (It is suggested that this take place in 2009).
 - B. Analyze the effectiveness and value of the above;
 - C. Implement changes for improvement based on the results of the analysis and review of the above;

- D. Integrate improvements identified as needed across all components of the Society including;
 - a. Provide training sessions;
 - b. Conduct Executive Committee and key staff retreats;

- E. Integrate student perspectives into GSA governance and administration;
 - a. Tap in student geology clubs
 - i. Invite leaders to events at GSA meetings
 - ii. Invite students to GSA Leadership meeting
 - b. Develop student communication tools, blogs, wikis, etc

- D. Improve communications on GSA's activities, programs, etc., among all components of the Society;
 - a. Create an *ad hoc* committee to evaluate how to improve and implement communications on GSA's activities, programs, etc. among all components of the Society;
 - b. The Executive Director will report and make recommendations to Council on the progress of the Strategic Plan;
 - c. Council will hold strategic discussions during regular meetings and retreats, including evaluation of the Strategic Plan;
 - d. Create a repository of all governance and organizational documents (e.g., by-laws; "how to" manuals, "best practices" tip sheets);
 - e. Create a committee that addresses how GSA's governance and organizational structure relates to overarching themes of science and stewardship through service;

- E. Internationally GSA will;
 - a. Participate in International Union of Geological Sciences (IUGS), International Union of Soil Sciences (IUSS), International Union of Geodesy and Geophysics (IUGG), International Geographic Union (IGU) and other appropriate international unions;
 - b. Participate in various international meetings including the EGU and IGC;
 - c. Participate with other societies around the world;
 - d. Co-sponsor conferences held outside of North America (ala the "Backbone" meeting);
 - e. The Washington, DC office will coordinate with other scientific organizations to advocate and assist with the visa approval process for visiting scientists.

7. TO MAINTAIN GSA AND GSA FOUNDATION AS FINANCIALLY VIABLE ENTITIES. WE SET PROCESSES TO

- A. Promote communication and collaboration between GSA and the GSA Foundation (GSAF) to reach mutual financial goals and needs;

- a. GSA Council or GSA Executive Committee should prioritize its list of greatest needs annually in consultation with GSAF, and GSAF should develop and update a plan for meeting those needs;
 - b. GSA leaders (GSA Councilors, Officers, Division and Section management boards and chairs of standing committees) and GSAF Trustees should identify contacts who are potential donors so GSAF representatives can follow up;
 - c. GSAF and GSA should use a team approach in contacting potential donors, wherein a person who knows the potential donor joins a GSAF representative in asking for the donation.
- B. Exercise due diligence in management and expenditures of Society assets;
- a. Keeping a diverse portfolio and modify it with changes in the economy;
 - b. Creating formal monitoring of GSA's strategic spending;
 - c. Building a risk-based multi-year budget (similar to what the GSA Publications Committee does) adding the perceived long-range impacts and risks of globalization;
 - d. Charge the Investment Committee with periodical (annually or biennially) review of the Investment White Paper to conform to GSA's vision, mission and goals;
 - e. Strive for sufficient transparency and simplicity in financial reports so that Councilors can easily carry out their fiduciary responsibilities.
- C. Maintain an active development program that ensures supplemental financial support for GSA programs and activities.
- a. GSA and GSAF will set progressive goals for financial development, including donations through GSAF and sponsorships and grants through GSA;
 - b. Set a goal of increasing the percentage of GSA members who donate to GSAF from the current 25% to 50% in five years (by 2013);
 - c. Strive for and achieve 100% participation of GSA leaders (see above) and GSAF Trustees in annual donations to GSAF;
 - d. Pursue innovative approaches for donations (e.g. having the default set to "contribute" on the dues statement by mail and online).