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BY JOHN P. HARRISON, CAE, CMP



The Power of A

GSAE members visited Washington, DC March 15–16 for American Associations Day to advocate for vital association issues. The collective focus of these visits was the value of association meetings to the economy and society and association tax issues. The Power of A video is available on our GSAE1917 YouTube channel. Mark your calendar to join the Georgia delegation in 2018, March 21–22.



Left to right: Sen. Johnny Isakson's office, **Jay Sulzmann**, **Dahlia Williams**, **Betsy Reid**, **Wendy Kavanagh**, CAE, **Cheryl Delk-Le Good**, **Steven Echard**, IOM, CAE, **Emily Howard**, Sen. David Perdue's office, **Gerald Huang**, **Gabriel Eckert**, FASAE, CAE.

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AENC, FSAE, GSAE, SCSAE, TNSAE and VSAE are hosting an attendee reception on Monday, August 14 before The Classic. Drop by the Amsterdam Brewhouse between 5:15 and 6:30 p.m. for the opportunity to connect with your Southern SAE peers and industry partners. Check GSAE's online calendar for directions to the reception.

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Save the Date for GSAE Events in 2017

To help you plan your professional development year, GSAE's calendar of events is available below. We will offer more than **25 hours** of CAE-matched programming this year. GSAE is a Preferred CAE Provider through the CAE Commission. Our list of events is always available online at www.gsae.org (Learn/Calendar View). Various Shared Interest Group meetings and webinars will be added throughout the year. We look forward to seeing you soon!

- July 12 Summer Luncheon at Holiday Inn & Suites Atlanta Airport North—Sponsored by Jekyll Island Authority/Convention & Visitors Bureau
- September 20 Luncheon at DoubleTree by Hilton Atlanta Downtown, The Abit Massey Lecture Series—Sponsored by Augusta Convention & Visitors Bureau
- November 15 Gala—Sponsored by Richmond Region Tourism
- December 6 or 13 Holiday Luncheon, Awards Show & Silent Auction—Sponsored by Jekyll Island Authority/Convention & Visitors Bureau and Discover DeKalb

CAE Study Group Announced

GSAE's Study Group will meet this summer at the Georgia Association of Water Professionals. You must complete the CAE Study Group registration form online to participate. The schedule will include the following dates: June 15; June 29; July 13; August 3; November 2. Cost is \$89 for GSAE and SAE members.

The class uses ASAE's CAE Study Guide, Kathleen M. Edwards, CAE, Executive Editor; price is \$100. The guide includes an official CAE Practice Exam.

GSAE Sponsorship and Hosting Opportunities

Luncheons are the primary venue for networking in GSAE. About 200 members generally attend each luncheon, which is preceded by a 30-minute networking reception. Your exclusive sponsorship includes an exhibit table during registration and the networking reception, 2–3 minutes of podium time, rights to leave a brochure or flyer on each seat, luncheon registration for 5 people, recognition in promotional materials and post-event attendee mailing labels. Additional sponsorships are available for the November gala.

The **host property** of each luncheon will receive an exhibit table during registration and the networking reception, the opportunity to place material at each place setting, podium time, significant exposure and an attendee mailing list following the luncheon. This is a great opportunity to showcase your property! All GSAE luncheons are on Wednesdays. November gala and Holiday Luncheon are available.

Please visit www.gsae.org (Support/Sponsorships) or call the GSAE office at (404) 577-7850 for more details.

GSAE Live Webinars and On Demand Learning—Approved for 1 CAE Hour

All live webinars are 60 minutes (2–3 p.m.) and cost \$45 for members.



Getting the Most Out of LinkedIn—June 1

With more than 450 million users, LinkedIn is the premier social networking site for business professionals. However, most users sign up and then wonder, "Now what?" Discover practical ways to leverage LinkedIn for your association, to connect with potential sponsors and members, and create meaningful business relationships.

Write Like a Rock Star—June 20

Let's face it—you are what you write. Are your member communications topping the charts? Or do your members hear elevator music when you appear in their inbox and social feeds? Association communicators often dis-proportionately try to sell the association and its strengths, rather than helping the member realize "What's in it For Them?" If members aren't reading what you send, your messages may be the problem. You can fix this! This workshop will inspire and teach a few proven steps to have your writing content sizzle, not snooze.

Additional fun fact: Up to half of your CAE renewal hours (40) or CAE application hours (100) may be completed online with qualifying courses. Visit education.gsae.org to view the full catalog of upcoming live webinars and more than 90 self-study courses!



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Tim O'Donnell, CIC:

A Leadership Sum Greater than the Whole of Its Parts



O'Donnell was able to translate his success at PIAG to GSAE, where, together with Moody, he helped raise the high standards of GSAE even higher, to ensure its relevancy into the new millennium.

LEADING AN ASSOCIATION is not like leading any other organization on earth. As many have found out—often the hard way—association management is a distinct discipline of its own, and the challenges an association executive or elected leader face are unique to associations. Many say that if you want to measure the health of an organization, you need to look no further than to the relationship between the chief staff officer and the chief elected officer: the former is responsible for implementation, and the latter—with the rest of the board of directors—for strategy and vision. So, simply put, if your chief staff executive and your chief volunteer officer don't work well together, your organization could be in trouble. But when they do work well together—or even better, when they work phenomenally well together—it sets the tone for operational and strategic excellence and helps ensure the organization's longevity.


Tim O'Donnell, CIC, who was president of GSAE during the critical years of 2001 and 2002, said that the success the organization enjoyed during his tenure owes an awful lot to the great working relationship he and then-executive director, **Jim Moody, CAE**, cultivated.

"Jim was a tremendous resource," O'Donnell said, noting that both he and Moody obtained the Certified Association Executive (CAE) designation from the American Society of Association Executives (now ASAE: The Center for Association Leadership). Both

O'Donnell and Moody intimately understood the specific challenges that associations face, helping them develop an agile GSAE, ready to meet new challenges.

As GSAE president, O'Donnell brought a wealth of knowledge gained from working for the Printing & Imaging Association of Georgia, where he was vice president of insurance. "This was the only position I ever held while in the association management field," O'Donnell said. "I spent most of my time administering the organization's self-funded group health plan and insurance agency."

O'Donnell, who left PIAG in 2004 to work in the insurance industry itself, learned a lot about how to successfully run an association during his tenure there. To successfully manage one of the organization's key programs, O'Donnell had to learn everything there was to know about how PIAG worked and, more generally, how associations themselves worked. O'Donnell was able to translate his success at PIAG to GSAE, where, together with Moody, he helped raise the high standards of GSAE even higher, to ensure its relevancy into the new millennium. During his tenure, GSAE also saw its first out-of-state meeting, held in Biloxi, Mississippi.

When asked what he cherished most about his time as GSAE president, O'Donnell said, without hesitation, the interactions he had with staff and members. "They worked very hard and always found the answers for any issue we encountered," he said. "The year flew by." 

A Big Change but a Smooth Transition for Bill Anderson, CAE, LEED AP



"I enjoyed and really admired the professionalism, strong ethics, and integrity that the GSAE board and members exhibited. It was truly amazing to see this firsthand as GSAE president."

BILL ANDERSON, CAE, LEED AP, president of GSAE from 2007 to 2008, brought significant experience in association management to the growing society.

Anderson, president of Associated Builders and Contractors of Georgia, had also held positions as an associate director of a health care association and a communication associate at an association management company, before becoming GSAE's elected leader. Over the course of his career, he had already seen, and successfully met, challenging situations and navigated significant changes in associations.

This experience served him well during his tenure as GSAE president, as he would be instrumental in overseeing a significant change for that organization as well.

"During my term, we decided to change GSAE's fiscal year to a calendar year," Anderson said. Since one of the organization's greatest income producers—the annual meeting—was at the very end of the fiscal year, Anderson explains that the change from a fiscal year to a calendar year would help with GSAE's annual budgeting and financial process, creating a more predictable flow of revenue and expense.

"We planned well but never realized how much behind-the-scenes work was involved," Anderson said. He added that communication and close, coordinated work between the GSAE staff and board of directors ensured that the shift went seamlessly, thanks in part to both Anderson and another

volunteer leader, **Beverly Black, CAE**, going the extra mile.

"The change in fiscal year required Beverly, who was GSAE president immediately prior to me, and I to work very closely on GSAE's strategic goals and planning," said Anderson. "Beverly and I also agreed to serve another six months longer in our terms to help the transition period to the new fiscal year."

Anderson said that his main goal while serving as GSAE president was to ensure that it remained one of the strongest SAEs in the nation, a quality that he says always attracted him to the organization. "My most important goal was continuing the strong momentum that GSAE had established the years prior to my term as president. GSAE was a high-performing association when I became president, so I wanted to ensure it was still at this level or even higher at the end of my term."

Said Anderson: "I enjoyed and really admired the professionalism, strong ethics, and integrity that the GSAE board and members exhibited. It was truly amazing to see this firsthand as GSAE president. I also enjoyed hearing all the members talk about the great things GSAE had done and was doing for them, their associations and their companies for so many years."

The proof of GSAE's greatness and durability can be seen in how much GSAE members believe in the organization and make it what it is. "The amount of time the members volunteer to help out GSAE is proof how much they believe in it," Anderson said. "It made me really proud and honored to be GSAE president." <

Robin B. Gray Jr., JD: Continually Honing His Craft



Under Gray, GSAE began using a long-term strategic plan, with quantifiable, definable measures of success. "Rather than abstractions, we have numbers, we have insight, we have something that can be measured and tracked."

ROBIN B. GRAY JR., JD, has never been a bystander in association management. Whether he was working in Chicago, Washington, D.C., or Georgia, Gray has always been involved in SAEs, continually honing his craft as an association executive and, in the process, becoming a respected volunteer leader, serving as GSAE president from 2005–2006.

"Whether I was in D.C. or Chicago, I've always been involved in association management as a profession, not just as a job," Gray said. Before moving to Georgia, Gray was active in the Association Forum of Chicagoland, where he was on the leadership track for the board of directors.

Upon moving to Georgia, he joined GSAE and volunteered for the conference planning committee. Soon, Gray found himself in positions of greater and greater responsibility within GSAE's volunteer leadership. Having experienced both national and local SAEs, he is firmly convinced that local SAEs are more relevant.

"As a volunteer, I was really able to jump right in and get things done," he said. "I was able to get more done in one year as a GSAE volunteer than I would have in four years elsewhere. It is incredibly rewarding, and it made it even more rewarding when I served as president and was able to see, from that point of view, the work that I and others had done—and to see that work continue."

Gray noted that most of the items on his "wish list"—things he wanted to do or change with

GSAE—had been accomplished while he was a board member or volunteer with the organization. He did, however, have a clear vision for his tenure, an even bigger change—or rather, a change in mindset.

"We had been doing the same sort of strategic planning exercise for years," Gray said. "It had become an ad hoc process, repeated every year: a consultant would come in, and we would repeat the same variation of a 'strategic planning' exercise that never resulted in definable objectives."

Under Gray, GSAE began using a long-term strategic plan, with quantifiable, definable measures of success. "Rather than abstractions, we have numbers, we have insight, we have something that can be measured and tracked," Gray said. "If your members have a need that you as an association can meet, you won't discover that through abstractions. You'll only discover that through data. We wanted to change the entire process we used for strategic planning to focus on concrete actions and goals, and we did well."

Gray said that "finding insight and relationship building" are the two most important things in association management. "I still get those two things from my GSAE community," he added. "There is a group of us who regularly have breakfast and exchange insights and just discuss what's going on in our organizations. That's why we exist, to foster those relationships." ◀



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Georgia Partnership for Educational Excellence: A Culture of Continuous Improvement

BY MARY LOU JAY

IT'S EASY FOR an association to fall into a habit of holding a meeting or providing a service just because it's something that they have always done. The Georgia Partnership for Excellence in Education, which is celebrating its 25th anniversary in 2017, however, has developed an organizational culture where no program is sacred and all activities are subject to stringent review every year.

"We've always had a continuous improvement mindset, and when **Steve Dolinger**, our president, came on board 14 years ago we became even more deliberate about assessing what we were doing and seeing if it was still adding value and if it was a good investment of time and resources," said **Diane Hopkins**, CAE, the Partnership's vice president.

The organization is a 501(c)(3) created by business leaders from the Georgia Chamber of Commerce and the Georgia Economic Developers Association. It works to impact student achievement by informing and influencing the state's leaders through research and non-partisan advocacy. The goal is to sustain and grow Georgia's economic viability by ensuring that each child in the state has the opportunity to receive a quality education to become college- and/or career-ready.

Although the "Partnership" (as it is often referred to) has no members, its partners include

education, business and local community leaders, as well as legislators and others in the government sector. Its funding comes from private foundations, businesses and individual donors.

Ongoing Evaluation

The organization has many annual events and activities. There's the yearly report on the *Top Ten Issues to Watch* in education, which is rolled out during a media symposium that attracts around three dozen journalists. Three times a year the organization holds what it calls a Critical Issues Forum, a free public event that focuses on some topic of current interest to education stakeholders.

Each year, the Partnership conducts an Education Policy Fellowship Program that provides potential education leaders in the state—members of its stakeholder communities—with the training, knowledge and networks they need to advance the core issues of education policy. "Annually we build another class of 20 to 22 leaders who can become advocates for education in their sector and across the state," Dolinger added.

While these programs and others have been successful, the staff at the Georgia Partnership never miss an opportunity to try to make them better. "After every one of our programs or initiatives, we conduct



what we call a plus/delta analysis," said Hopkins. The staff discusses what went right at the event—the pluses—and what could be changed or improved to make the initiative better—the deltas.

Staff members also engage in an annual strategic planning retreat. "We take an in-depth dive into each of our programs to see if we are getting a return on our investment of time and resources, including actual costs," said Hopkins.



In addition, Dolinger and Hopkins have made it clear to key stakeholders, such as the funders, board members and Partnership council members that they welcome and value their opinions on all activities. "They are pretty open to giving us that kind of feedback, and it's been very helpful to us," Dolinger said.

The continuing review process often leads to positive programming disruptions. For 21 years, one of the

organization's signature events was a bus tour that showcased several high-performing schools around the state. These schools displayed best practices in a particular area, such as technology use or STEM (science, technology, education and math) instruction. In the early years, the event lasted a week and attracted the key stakeholders the Partnership needed. Through the evaluation process, the staff realized the trip was too long and

shortened it. After many successful years, however, the staff found the program was no longer delivering a good return on investment and wasn't attracting the targeted audience. They discontinued what had once been a signature program.

"Some of our primary stakeholders have been with us since our inception, and it would have been very easy for them to say, 'Don't get rid of this best practices tour' or 'We feel strongly about the teacher newsletter, don't stop it.' Because we proved that such program changes were well thought out and based on sound data, we were able to take emotion out of making some of those tough decisions," said Hopkins.

While the Partnership discontinued its bus trip, it found ways to keep it going by encouraging local jurisdictions throughout the state to hold similar programs for their own key education stakeholders and by occasionally visiting excellent schools as part of the Critical Issues Forums.

The Right Culture is Key

The plus/delta process has been so deeply ingrained in the organization that staff members are always thinking in terms of what could be improved. "We'll be in the middle of a forum and a staff member will say 'I have a plus/delta,' meaning 'This hasn't gone well, we need to make it better,' or 'I just heard several people say something really positive, so we need to make sure that we do that again next time,'" Dolinger said.

"When you build that culture internally, then staff knows if someone comes up with a suggestion that's not acceptable to everybody else, it's okay. They're not going to be criticized. The attitude is 'Let's honestly think of what we can do to make this project, this publication or this communication better,'" he added.

One of the organization's recent chairs, Shan Cooper, then vice president and general manager of Lockheed Martin Aeronautics Co., Marietta, took the continuous improvement philosophy even further. "She would regularly gather a small group of board members together with the staff. That helped people who might have hesitated asking a question or even just making a comment before the larger board. They are much more comfortable in a smaller, more relaxed setting. The results provided us ideas and insights we might otherwise have missed," said Dolinger.

One of these small groups suggested a change in direction, which the Partnership team embraced. "We had been, up to that point, more of a behind-the-scenes organization, sometimes not taking credit for some changed legislation or some implemented policies that

"After every one of our programs or initiatives, we conduct what we call a plus/delta analysis," said the Partnership's Vice President Diane Hopkins, CAE. The staff discusses what went right at the event—the pluses—and what could be changed or improved to make the initiative better—the deltas.

related to education. This group suggested that we be bolder. When our next staff retreat came along, we talked through what that meant for us. We felt comfortable being able to look closely at some of our initiatives and saying, 'This really isn't doing what we need it to do,' or 'We should think about implementing this initiative in a different way to take that bolder step,'" said Dolinger.

Out of these discussions, for example, came a new collaborative effort with key stakeholders who are assisting the Partnership in putting more emphasis on pressing issues. Recently, this collaboration helped defeat legislation that

would have prohibited the use of student data to monitor achievement in favor of a bill that ensured student's privacy while using data appropriately and constructively. Dolinger stressed this new board-generated direction "has proven to be a winning formula for us."

The culture of continuous improvement has made the Georgia Partnership for Excellence in Education more agile and dynamic, he added. "It has helped us stay relevant. One thing is certain—whether it is in the business, association, or other non-profit worlds, you can't afford to fall asleep." <



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Questioning the Orthodox

Beliefs of Association Governing

BY JEFF DE CAGNA, FRSA, FASAE

IT HAS NEVER been more vital for association decision-makers to think deeply about the future. Powerful forces of transformation are reshaping the world, creating profound shifts that will irrevocably alter, for both better and worse, the trajectories of their organizations, their fields and their stakeholders' lives. To anticipate and prepare for how these forces may unfold in the years ahead, association boards need to focus their attention on learning with the future as much as possible through the consistent practice of foresight.

By embracing this duty of foresight, association boards can capitalize on the opportunity to build governing mindsets and mechanics better suited to the challenging work of making sense, making meaning and making decisions around the increasingly complicated issues they will confront in the years ahead. Standing in the way of making this essential transition, however, is the wide range of orthodox beliefs that underpin association governing. In this context, orthodox beliefs are deep-seated assumptions about how governing is *supposed to work* that can interfere with designing and experimenting with next practices and fresh approaches. Let's examine a few of these orthodox beliefs.

Association Governing Should be Based on a Government or Political Model

Many associations have built their governing structures with inspiration from the example of the U.S. government: a president (or chair) at the top, with other officers in the line of succession, and overall board composition determined by the representation of local, state or regional constituencies. Larger boards often have what amounts to a "cabinet" of senior officers who hold specific functional portfolios, such as meetings or membership. Some associations operate with a separate "legislative branch" in the form of a house of delegates or general assembly. These models also tend to include competitive elections, featuring active campaigning, endorsements from key association influencers and candidate forums.

Despite its pervasiveness, this orthodox belief suffers from an obvious and inescapable flaw: *associations are not governments*. The U.S. government is a complex entity that must manage extensive economic, diplomatic, military and other interests around the world, as well as serious ideological disagreements between two major political parties at home. Associations could not be more different in terms of their reasons

for being, as well as the scope and scale of their activities. To become adaptive and resilient in the years ahead, associations must move beyond their past preference for more bureaucratic and insular government-style structures that encourage risk aversion in favor of open, inclusive and flexible governing systems that enable collaboration, learning and innovation.

Board Presiding Officers (BPOs) are More Important than Other Directors

Consistent with the choice to build the work of governing around a political metaphor, most association boards place special emphasis on the role of the president or chair. The "chief elected officer" enjoys outsized influence within the association, usually including direct oversight of the chief staff executive, and the ability to shape both board and organizational activities based on personal priorities. In addition, chief elected officers represent their organizations at local, national and international association events, industry or professional conferences, government hearings and with the media. The unique status and privileges accorded to the individuals who occupy this role can convey the impression that chief elected officers are the first among equals on their boards,

and other directors should defer to their wishes.

On the one hand, the effectiveness of the board presiding officer (an umbrella term I use to cover all possible titles), is a critical element in the effort to nurture strong boards and thriving organizations, but not for any of the reasons listed above. As the term implies, the BPO's principle roles must be to guide the board's work in partnership with the chief staff executive, build overall board capacity and ensure high performance among all directors. On the other hand, no matter how significant these responsibilities are, board presiding officers have no greater claim to determine the substance or direction of the board's work than any other director, and certainly not a simple majority of the board. Each director is a steward in his/her own right, and while respect for the challenge of serving as the board presiding officer is appropriate, deference is neither necessary nor in the best interests of the organization and its stakeholders.

Boards Need to Drive the Work of Strategy

For many decades, association chief staff executives have worked with their boards to pursue strategic planning exercises, despite their uncertain value and the tendency in some organizations to set aside the documents they produce in favor of doing "real work." The association world's commitment to strategic planning endures, however, at least in part due to the powerful orthodox belief that argues associations *need* to have strategic plans. Why? Because that's what associations are *supposed to do*. And as the most senior decision-makers in their organizations, it makes intuitive sense for boards to drive the strategic planning effort, either through the board's presiding officer or a strategic planning committee appointed by

and operating with the delegated authority of the board.

In today's fast-moving environment, however, the primary purpose of strategy for associations is building mutually beneficial relationships with stakeholders to learn how to co-create value that can help them address short-term problems, intermediate-term needs and long-term outcomes. For the most part, board members are neither the primary beneficiaries of strategy, nor well-equipped to contribute in meaningful ways to value creation for current "digital first" stakeholders. Instead of boards driving strategy, associations should invite the actual stakeholders with whom they wish to build relationships to take the lead on strategy development and business model design, while boards focus their attention on building a consistent practice of foresight. These conversations must inform each other, and they can make more sustained and substantive progress by moving forward on separate yet interdependent pathways.

Short-Term Concerns are More Important than Long-Term Thinking

The orthodox beliefs of corporate governance exert substantial influence in the way association boards function as well. Chief among these assumptions is the corporate sector's focus on short-term concerns, including daily stock prices, quarterly earnings reports and maximizing shareholder value. While associations are not publicly traded enterprises, their boards are no less anxious about short-term matters, particularly the performance of membership recruitment and retention efforts. Many, if not most, association boards use the monthly rise and fall of membership numbers as a proxy metric for overall organizational health, yet another orthodox belief worthy of closer scrutiny.

It is difficult to blame association boards for their short-termism, and not just because of the

considerable sway of corporate governance practices. Prioritizing what is happening today over what feels like a distant and unknown future is an understandable human reaction, and a reasonable choice for individuals to make for themselves. When it comes to the work of stewardship, however, association boards have a fundamental responsibility to their stakeholders that must supersede personal interests. Devoting board attention to exploring the long-term implications of societal transformation for their associations, stakeholders and the fields they serve is a function of governing that is at least as, if not more, important as any short-term item on the board agenda.

In the words of Ruth Benedict, a pioneering 20th century cultural anthropologist, "We grow in time to trust the future for our answers." Unfortunately, associations, like most nonprofit organizations, tend to look to the past for their answers, and the continued commitment to orthodox beliefs is evidence of that inclination. Relentless societal transformation demands that association boards, board presiding officers and chief staff executives collaborate to free themselves and their organizations of these counterproductive constraints and the devastating inertia they can combine to create. By designing the future of governing around the duty of foresight, association boards can anticipate what comes next, unleash their stakeholders' full potential and build their organizations to thrive in the years ahead. ◀



Jeff De Cagna, FRSA, FASAE is executive advisor for Foresight First LLC, located in Reston, Virginia. He can

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The Future of Education and Employment

BY SHELLY ALCORN, CAE



GEORGIA TECH WAS recently in the news for something amazing. Dr. Ashok Goel teaches classes in artificial intelligence. He decided to conduct an experiment and deployed IBM's "Watson" as one member of his team of teacher's assistants. The first semester was a training ground, but in the second semester the names of all the TAs were disguised. At the end of the class, students were asked to identify which of the TAs they had interacted with had been an AI and which ones had been human. Only 50 percent of the students specializing in the field got it right (even after being told to look for it), and 10 percent of students incorrectly identified one of the humans as the AI instead.

As the above story demonstrates, we are standing on the verge of a completely new era in our shared human experience. Disruption is a popular term that is in danger of being overused. Still, it is the only word that accurately describes the state of affairs in the world today. Between the advent of machine learning, the rise of artificial intelligence, implantable and ingestible electronics, 3D (and now

4D) printing and true quantum computing right on the horizon, we are being faced with a veritable tsunami of advancement. More importantly, these developments are exponential and systemic in nature.

When one major advancement takes place, there is a corresponding cascade of change that moves through all connected systems, and the education to employment system both here in the United States and in the larger global community is no exception. Deep changes are typically sparked when wicked problems show themselves in a systemic context. The future demands a concerted, collective effort on the part of all association professionals who are interested in educational advancement and the health of the industries and professions we represent to understand and to position themselves to provide new solutions in a new context.

In our white paper, *The Association Role in the New Education Paradigm*, my co-author Elizabeth Weaver Engel, M.A., CAE and I (with assistance from our contributors and those we interviewed) outline some of the

key changes that are underway and discuss what associations can do to help. Here are some quick snapshots of just a few of the biggest trends we believe associations should consider when thinking about the futures of their industries and professions.

The K-12 System

K-12 educators are in an increasingly challenging situation. School districts are being tasked with overhauling K-12 to incorporate the tools, technologies and innovative learning environments befitting the 21st century, while operating in an environment shaped by decreasing funding, increasing class sizes and high-stakes testing. In the meantime, advances in artificial intelligence are projected to be able to provide each student with access to a personalized, educational tutor that will allow these students to proceed at their own pace regardless of what grade level they are in and transforming teachers into "knowledge acquisition facilitators" rather than instructional providers. Due to these and other concerns, parents are increasingly opting out of the

K-12 system, and the traditional feeder systems into post-secondary training or the employment sphere are breaking down. Association professionals need to think critically about where future members are coming from, and how we can help individuals successfully transition into employment in our industries and professions.

The Post-Secondary System

High levels of student debt (currently \$1.3 trillion and not dischargeable via bankruptcy) is poised to surpass the housing bubble that preceded the economic crash of 2007–2008. A sharp increase in the time it takes to get the degree is leaving more and more students behind. There is an argument brewing about what the purpose and value of a degree is, and how well it will serve students going forward. Employers are bemoaning the fact that the graduates they are inheriting are deficient in skills such as

critical and systems thinking and hyper-complexity. Associations have a role to play in helping individuals entering the workforce in our industries and professionals “skill up” in these critical areas.

The Employment System

The swath of automation that cut through agricultural and blue-collar jobs was bad enough. Now, with the rise of intelligent machines, jobs in sectors such as accounting, law and medicine are at risk. Oxford University, among others, estimates that 47 percent of the employment sphere in the United States (69 percent in India, 77 percent in China), is set to be radically enhanced or outright replaced within the next eight years. Your members, and our entire global society, are going to depend on you to help them cope with integrating new tools in the workplace or skill up so they can move laterally into new positions.

These are just three aspects of the education to employment

sphere that are creating a perfect storm for associations. Although they have long considered themselves providers of professional development, we now have opportunities to create new revenue streams by enhancing and retooling our educational efforts to help serve a new population of learners who have specific needs that aren't being met by the current system.

Download your free copy of *The Association Role in the New Education Paradigm* at <http://bit.ly/29CIquL>. <



Shelly Alcorn, CAE is a principal in Alcorn Associates Management Consulting. She is a 2017 GSAE

Annual Meeting Keynote presenter (“Dispatches from a Disrupted World”) and will also lead a breakout session on “The Integral Association.”

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Building Organizational Resilience

BY LOWELL APLEBAUM, CAE

OVER THE PAST few weeks, I have spoken with volunteer and staff executives who, facing an age of an ever-increasing rate of change, feel like they are struggling to be nimble in their attempts to keep up. As we dove deeper into what factors were emerging, the conversation kept coming back to a focus on how to approach daily evolution from a place of strength. Working with these various groups, a seven-point process emerged that could guide an organization to build a foundation of resilience to better negotiate a constantly changing landscape:

1 Recognize Foundational Strengths

There are reasons that you have members and that you've been able to support your profession or cause for as long as you have. If you did a quick poll asking where the organization excels, these areas would come up time and time again. As you enter into discussions of "what's next," make sure you are also focusing

on what continues to serve as the foundation of value that you create, and then promote and further invest in those efforts accordingly.

2 Ongoing Environmental Shifts and Norms Input

While a single environmental scan can produce a comprehensive picture of a moment in time, today associations are looking to supplement those reports with ongoing input. Create proactive, specific asks to your partners and stakeholders—inquiring into what they see strengthening and shifting on the professional horizon. Listen with intent for pattern identification, so that when you start to hear the same answer from a number of sources you can turn strategic attention in that direction.

3 Ask the Right People the Right Questions

Of course, change isn't only based on external factors. Create a system of ongoing input from

internal stakeholder segments—and tailor what you are asking based on who the member/customer/volunteer is. Just as you create segmented value to account for specific demographics (career planning for those early-career, virtual discipline communities for a global audience, etc.), asking for internal reflections should account for that same background—people want to know that you want to hear *their* voice, not just *any* voice.

4 Listen and Incorporate Reflections to Your Evolving Vision and Goals

Your organization's vision of impact and accomplishment and the goals you set to mark your progress in pursuit of that vision need to be part of your everyday conversation. As you receive the input from numbers 2 and 3 above, the conversation that follows should be based on current organizational efforts, and whether those efforts need to be modified based on the new information at hand. Pivoting

to modify goals and success metrics based on shifting priorities allows an organization to still identify progress even if the path takes a different route.

5 Communicate

The lynchpin of success in resiliency isn't just the ability to adapt your goals, but to adopt a culture of inclusive communication. As your organization pivots to new criteria, it is essential that those changes are not only shared with staff and volunteer leaders (who also do the work), but that wherever possible, the work carried out by each individual/group is tied back to the new goal, explicitly identifying the impact their efforts will make.

6 Recognize and Celebrate Achievement

As our strategy and its implementation become ever fluid, there is an increased priority to recognize the successful accomplishment of milestones

towards the larger goals. Positive recognition of forward progress can serve to reinvigorate those making the efforts, reinforce progress even if hurdles or challenges are encountered, and serve as a moment for a reflective pause to make sure that the organization's efforts are still in line with the goal/mission it is striving to achieve. Last, but certainly not least, these may be moments where success can also be shared with the larger membership base, making the efforts of the organization a journey where they are a participant and not just an audience.

7 Create Amazing Experiences

When organizations laser focus on an ongoing assessment of need and the piloting/creation of high-quality solutions to answer those needs the piece that is often forgotten is the end-user experience. The best program/product/service will still fall short if the experience of utilizing that

solution is a poor one. Including the customer experience as an ongoing practice in execution and evaluation is key to refining and maximizing the impact of efforts made by an organization.

We will never be able to predict every shift that will affect our organizations. What we can do is have the best approaches in place to respond and adapt to those changes from a place of strength and stability. ◀



Lowell Aplebaum, CAE is a strategic advisor and facilitator who will be leading two breakout sessions during

the 2017 GSAE Annual Meeting: "Creating the Member Story" and "Membership Case Studies." He is also one-third of our beer aficionado trio leading the Beer Tasting Foundation Fundraisers.



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Pictured left to right:
Marcus Urquhart,
Sarah Banks,
Erica Martin and
Gene Stinson, CAE,
PCED, CECd, HLM.

My Internship with the Southern Economic Development Council

BY SARAH BANKS

WHEN I ACCEPTED an intern position with the Southern Economic Development Council (SEDC), I had no idea what to expect. As a senior business student, I wanted the opportunity to get firsthand experience in management, event planning and any other facet of business I could, before I venture into the job market come graduation.

During my time at SEDC, I was afforded these opportunities and more. I quickly became accustomed to the broader tasks that accompany a small business—an environment I've never been in before. Every day was different, and the position enabled me to get a comprehensive view of how the Southern Economic Development Council works. Although smaller in staff, SEDC membership is large and the job requires a lot of

hands-on work. I was impressed with both the scope and size of things accomplished each day in order to continue maintaining the association.

The bulk of the tasks I worked on concerned SEDC's 2016 annual conference held in Kansas City. It was through these tasks that I learned about event planning and the type of work it requires. What I discovered quickly was that no detail goes unnoticed, from organizing the speakers to positioning flags—a wide range for certain, but both of examples of the details which I had a hand in planning.

The conference itself was exhausting, but also completely rewarding. Seeing some of the work I had done come to fruition was the highlight of my internship. One of my favorite tasks involved

creating an app for the conference. Having creative control over how it would work and benefit attendees was exciting, and doubly so when I could watch it in action at the conference. While there I also got to meet SEDC members. I learned a lot from interacting with them and enjoyed putting faces to the names I had seen countless times.

And, of course, I loved getting to know the SEDC staff. Gene, Marcus and Erica were extremely welcoming and helpful with any and all questions I had. I was never made to feel like a coffee-fetching intern; instead, I was assigned tasks that had a real impact on SEDC's membership. I can't thank them enough for my time there; I truly enjoyed it. <

Sarah Banks is a member of the University of Georgia Class of 2017.

February Luncheon



WE KICKED OFF 2017 with Ron Rosenberg's *Quest for Community: Creating a Brand that Connects, Engages, and Energizes your Members!* Prior to lunch, attendees enjoyed Ron's workshop, *Outrageous Association Marketing: How to Dominate Your Market Niche*, a New/Prospective Member

Orientation and networking reception at the beautifully renovated Hilton Atlanta Northeast. We also celebrated three of our 2016 award recipients: the Stephen Styron Award—**Sheryl Ehlers** and **Meg Caldwell, CMP** and the Sharon Hunt Emerging Leader Award—**Erin Hall**.

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Shared Interest Group Leaders **Janell Martin, CAE**, **Michael "Sully" Sullivan, JD** and **Jasmine Okafor, M.Div.**, answered questions about their respective SIGs during the Participation Fair.



Beer aficionados **Lowell Aplebaum, CAE**, **Mike Pennington, CAE** and **Russ Webb** announced the 2nd Annual GSAE Foundation Beer Pour at the 2017 Annual Meeting in Macon, GA. Several CVBs will donate local beer for attendees to enjoy.



Lisa Tennison is pictured with GSAE Board Chair **Tara Morrison, CAE, CMP** and **Kathie Eddy**.



GSAE's newest Certified Association Executives were celebrated: **Terry Izaguirre, CAE**; **Janell Martin, CAE**; **Jan Price, CEAP, CAE**; **John Roch, CAE**; **Val Smith, CAE**; and **Jacob Wilder, CAE**.



Sheryl Ehlers, **Russ Webb**, **Karyl Hanisch**, **Mike Pennington, CAE** and **Ashley Calhoun** enjoyed catching up during the reception.



Ron Rosenberg's keynote presentation explored the importance of community, a great topic during GSAE's 100th anniversary year.

April Luncheon



KEYNOTE SPEAKER WILLIAM PATE, president and CEO of the Atlanta Convention & Visitors Bureau, is in charge of maintaining tourism as one of the city's top economic drivers. He shared exciting updates on the city's upcoming meetings and events,

and answered burning questions from the audience. Attendees also enjoyed a New/Prospective Member orientation, Telework SIG and Tech Ninjas meeting prior to lunch, as well as a tour of the new Mercedes-Benz Stadium after lunch.

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Jasmine Okafor, M.Div., joined on stage by **LeeAnne Minnick**, Foundation Chair, shared her experience utilizing the GSAE Foundation internship grant to hire a summer intern.



Luncheon sponsor, Jekyll Island Authority/Convention & Visitors Bureau and their partners, gave away a fabulous door prize! (Pictured left-right): **Heather Hamilton**, **Myra Jacob**, **Kevin Udell**, winner **Matthew Gambill**, Georgia Association for Career & Technical Education, and **Maria Weiss**.



Regina Robuck, **Julia Boyd, CAE**, **Mike Pennington, CAE** and **Ashley Goodin, CAE** enjoyed a hard hat tour of the new Mercedes-Benz Stadium after lunch.



William Pate, CEO, Atlanta Convention & Visitors Bureau, talking with GSAE Luncheon attendees about what sets Atlanta apart.



Abit Massey, CAE and **Karla Yeck**



Kevin Priger and **Carol Hall**



5 Questions: Are You Creating an Event Experience?



WHAT CAN MAKE or break the best events? The guest list! Without attendees, *there is no event*. What have you done lately to ensure their event experience is everything they hoped it would be? Ask yourself the below questions and see how you measure up.

1 Are You Social?

You can enhance the on-site experience for your members by using the power of social media to connect them before the event, essentially creating a virtual mixer where networking can happen ahead of schedule. Instead of just meeting *new* people at the first-night cocktail party, they can have F2F drinks with the folks they've been networking with in the months leading up to the event. You can engage members by asking questions to start conversations and then keep the chatter going. Select someone on your staff to moderate and keep things on topic and moving.

2 Are You Tech-Forward?

Maybe you were into the Pokemon Go craze. Maybe your

kids were. Either way, it was an undeniable sensation that used virtual and augmented reality—two forms of tech that are ripe for more incorporation into meetings. Virtual product demonstrations, industry- or topic-relevant scavenger hunts (that's what Pokemon Go was, after all!), gamification and more can be enhanced by this new and evolving technology.

3 Are You Making Them Think?

When it comes down to it, your attendees are most likely at your event to learn. After all, continuing education and professional development is one of the top reasons that people give for attending conferences and events. But are your speakers bringing new ideas to the table? Look for speakers who will ignite and inspire your attendees—and keep them thinking long after they head back to their offices.

4 Are You Introducing Them to New Things?

Your attendees are already away from home and the office,

so take them even further outside their comfort zones. Whether it's working with F&B to offer something new for their palates (hello, dragon fruit!) or the local CVB who will make sure your evening reception takes place at the hottest new venue, give your attendees the chance to try something new. It could just be that one thing they go home and can't stop talking about!

5 Are You Giving Attendees the Power to Make Change?

Your attendees have a good idea of what they'd love to see and what they'd love to see change. Having a place where they can tell *you* that info in real time can seriously improve their experience—and your team's approval rating. Give your attendees the ability to express their opinions with survey tools they can access in the moment via your event management software. And then, where possible, make the changes to improve their experience while the event is still in motion. ◀

Venues Highlight Georgia's Southern Charm

GEORGIANS ARE LOADED with Southern charm. So, too, are many of its venues. Here are a few you may not have heard of...

The Library Ballroom—Macon

Southern architectural history meets southern rock history at this unique and beautiful venue. Constructed as a library in 1888,

the building went on to house what was called the College Discotheque in the '60s. This was where a then-little-known band called the Allman Brothers got their start. Today, its warm, inviting history is bolstered by all the modern conveniences, from a state-of-the-art sound system to plasma TVs. What's more, it's suitable for events of 200-plus.

Manor House Pub at Merry Acres Inn—Albany

Merry Acres, a 110-room boutique property, was built in 1952 and oozes Southern hospitality. On its grounds, you'll find the Manor House Pub with its alluring double veranda, pub fare and live music on the patio several

continued on page 30

What's New: Macon, Albany and Valdosta

Macon

Host to the 2017 GSAE Annual Meeting, Macon is a city with soul. It's mix of rich history and a modern vision for its growing downtown make it an area to visit and revisit time and again.

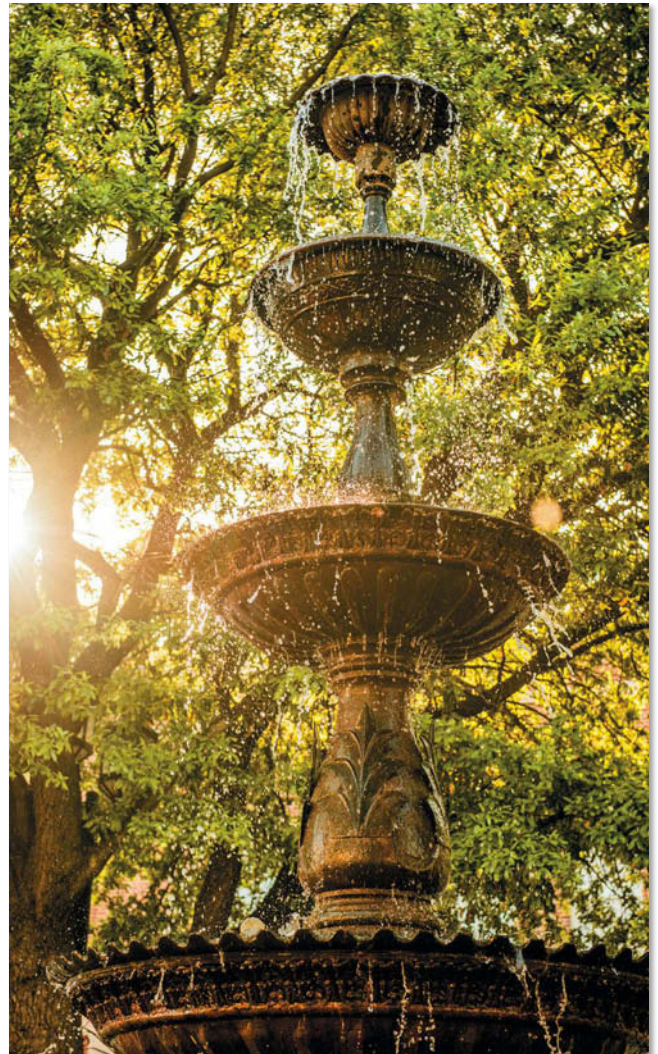
While you're in town, hop on two wheels to tour the city's historic industrial district. The new self-guided tour "Pedaling through the Past" was recently developed by Mercer University students with a route that mimics the old "Sunday drive." Stops include the birthplace of Crisco shortening, the Coca-Cola Bottling Co. and Capricorn Studio, which now anchors a major loft project on the site of the old Union Depot. Overall, there are nearly two dozen landmarks that will take visitors—and locals alike—off the beaten path and back in time.

On the horizon, association planners will want to make note of a proposed mixed-use project in downtown, which includes plans for a new 120-room boutique hotel, along with a public walk, retail shops and a restaurant with meeting space. The Exchange Block would be bound by Poplar, Second, Plum and First streets and could add new event hot spots close to the city's core, an area that's already expanding quickly as more residents move in and require new offerings that also appeal to visiting meeting attendees. Construction will start later this year.

Albany

Albany boasts more than 200 hotels, flexible meeting space to accommodate 20 to 2,500, and historic sites, but it's the city's unique nature offering that make it stand out for meetings and groups. Lying below the land around Albany is the Floridan Aquifer, an ocean of fresh water that feeds the area's rivers and creeks and fuels its economy, making outdoor adventure a must next time you're in the area.

In fact, just last fall, the Albany Flint Riverquarium was named one of the Top 10 Southern Aquariums on The Blog for Lifestyle & Travel. The BLT blog called Flint Riverquarium a "one-of-a-kind experience" with its Blue Hole replica and more than 120 different species native to the Flint River area. Its interactive exhibits and face-to-face encounters with the creatures and fish native to South Georgia truly do make it unlike any other venue. Plus, the



Downtown Macon.

Riverquarium's Skywater Room is available as an event venue for large parties.

Valdosta

Valdosta will also be home to a new downtown 150-room, Wyndham-branded hotel and conference center in the coming years, the design of which will tie right in with the city's historic look and feel. The hotel design will feature columns, gardens and green space, and a fountain, so it will be both a beautiful and functional addition to the city center. <

Wisdom and the Pendulum



BY JOHN P. HARRISON,
CAE, CMP

I HAPPEN TO believe that everything is ultimately theology, and what's not is economics. Let me explain. Even if you believe in nothing, that's still a theology (and then Nothing, I suppose, really is sacred). I've been lucky enough to live in a couple of different "doms." I've lived in Islamadom, Judaidom, and what's left of Christendom, but what I fear most is Nothingdom (it has the worst track record yet).

Nothingdom is really a self-inflicted aspect of Judaidom and Christendom in that they allow for debates over pluralism, which can lead to some other "doms." They don't like such debates in the other "doms," especially Nothingdom. This is what is not being appreciated: the freedom of thought which is based on Graeco-Judeo-Christian civilization (and that is just a politically correct name for Christendom, by the way). Even the mosaic American model must have a mortar board, and that mortar board is what we used to call a Melting Pot toward a common set of values, and that Melting Pot derives from a unique rabbi's vision of an identity paired with peaceful inclusion, articulated a couple of millennia ago. Appreciate what the world looks like now compared to what it might have looked like if that Rabbi from long ago had been a man of the sword instead of a man of peace.

What's also to appreciate is economics. There is a debate now on what our national budget is to look like. It looks like the current president has shoved out there—bare-naked—the concept of "here's what we really have to pay for, let everything else speak its worth." Now this makes a lot of well-meaning groups very nervous; some fighting mad. Let us appreciate the fact that there's an open season and curse not the debate. A budget should have some relation to mathematical reality. Do we want to fund Project X? It's a great project and the right thing to do. Now, do

we want to borrow money to fund Project X? For that's really the question.

And we should debate these things. Perhaps it will lead us to come to grips with entitlements eventually—but as always, not now—if the next generation is to prosper at all. My Social Security will need to be cut; I will not run from that math. We can only hope facing those bare-naked economics sooner rather than later may be today's saving grace. And if it is, my great-grandchildren, whom I will never meet, will not read—if the written word is still around—of the current buffoonery in Washington, but of the tackling of an impossible deal.

There's a lot of venom in politics these days. We've seen this before, and frankly, I don't care which side you're on. We're better than this. We really are. If you need someone to blame for the increased partisanship, it's really Ross Perot. I say this because Bush 41 was our last truly qualified president from a resume perspective; he's the only one of the past several who would have been hired by a non-biased hiring board as having the appropriate credentials. Bush 41 was handed a defeat by Perot who split the non-Clinton vote—Clinton being the first of the Boomers and relative to the Greatest Generation, somewhat of a dodgy character (and not just the draft).

That's when the modern hatred pendulum really kicked up: hatred from the right, and then hatred from the left, and so on. The pendulum's been swinging since—and blessed are those who are rational, non-hating, and guileless when the pendulum moves fro instead of to. I worked for six years in the liberal arts academia during both Clinton and Bush 43, and the venom of the liberal artists and the conservatives (what few there were in the academia) was something to behold. I have no baseline venom metric from which

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CHOICES *continued from page 29*

to analyze (it was in the liberal arts after all, which is based on opinion citing an earlier opinion), but my guess is there is plenty of nasty, self-serving serum to lubricate the pendulum at each amplitude.

Maybe the loss of the Greatest Generation is the problem. I have a 90-year-old neighbor, who's now become a shut-in. He fought in the Pacific. I've tried to get him to ride with the other few remaining WWII vets in the local July 4th parade; he says maybe to the invitation each year, but always cancels. He doesn't want to make a show. He served in a "dom" greater than Nothingdom, and it led to Freedom instead of Selfdom. Something to appreciate while watching the pendulum swing. ◀

MEETINGS THOUGHT LEADERSHIP *continued from page 27*
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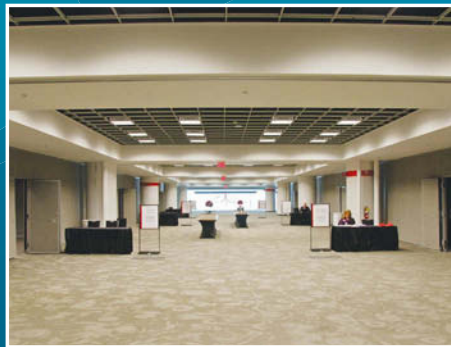
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