



## **Meeting Report for the Division of Environmental Chemistry Strategic Planning Retreat**

**August 13 & 14, 2015  
Boston, MA**

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## Summary

This report contains results of a facilitated strategic planning meeting retreat for the ACS Division of Environmental Chemistry (ACSEnv) held on August 13&14, 2015 in Boston, Massachusetts.

## Background

The ACSEnv retreat was facilitated to assess the current state of the organization and membership, determine what success is, and to define goals and tactics.

The meeting purpose was to create a plan so that it is understood, accepted, and committed to by the people who will be accountable for implementing it.

## Retreat Participants

George Cobb  
Dion Dionysiou  
Alan Elzermann  
Jillian Goldfarb  
Sherine Obar  
Peney Patton  
Ashi Savara

## Approach

The ACSEnv strategic planning process started with information gathered in a pre-work survey sent to the ACSEnv executive committee. This information was augmented by the facilitator study of background materials provided by Jillian Goldfarb. Other preparations included phone calls between Jillian Goldfarb and facilitator, and review of the agenda by George Cobb.

## Meeting Agenda

Mission/Vision/Goals/Successful Outcomes

Current State - Context Map. What is the big picture of where ACSEnv operates?

Future Desired State – Who does ACSEnv want to be in 2016 and beyond?

Survey Feedback – What themes emerged from the recent survey?

Success – What does ultimate success for ACSEnv look like?

Strategic Plan Elements – What will it take to reach our future desired state?

Definition of Goals

- Goal prioritization

- Metric definition

- Tactic designation

- Work assignment

Additional Activities

- SWOT Analysis

- Elevator Pitch

## Context Map



### *Scientific Priorities /Trends*

1. Steep decrease in funding for environmental research
2. Increase in product development
3. Decrease in pure/abstract research
4. Shift from funding individual projects to institutional funding
5. Priorities identified
  - Environmental sustainability
  - Water availability
  - Food-water-energy nexus
  - Climate intervention (political hot potato)

### *Political Factors*

1. Issues and influence
  - De-emphasis of science and environmental issues in politics/government.
  - Tension around environmental issues
  - Trying to help define public agenda: assist ACS with lobbying
  - Council of enviro deans and directors has a “lobbying” day
  - SETAC horizons scan
  - What influence do we have on government agencies (NSF)?
  - Internal juxtaposition of industrial v. academics v. regulatory agencies
  - In non-western companies, ACS is revered, but European countries shun American alliance.
2. Funding
  - Government funding
3. ACS initiatives, directives, direction
  - Division leadership shift from Old Guard to future
  - Non-recognition in ACS because we are not a pure-science or lucrative area
  - Need experts giving “state of the science” reports
  - Use ACS Network?

### ***Technology Factors (technology as a tool – not scientific program content)***

1. Web seminar platform options (CEU credits, who attends, who presents, fees)
2. Shifting of social media (apps, Facebook, decline of email)
3. Outreach and engagement:
  - What is an acceptable platform for communication with members and non-members?
  - What are unexplored platforms?
4. Division website and how to optimize
5. Trend of people expecting content pushed to them, rather than searching for it  
Nano

### ***Customer Needs***

1. Members
  - Content and community
  - Publications
  - Meetings
    - Do they need to attend?*
    - How are their content needs met?*
    - What are the financial restrictions that impact attendance?*
  - Networking
  - Collaboration
  - Friendly environment
  - Job opportunities
  - Career enhancement
  - Expanded perspective and collaboration
  - Mentorship
2. Other divisions
  - Outlet for multidisciplinary research
  - Connection with non-specific divisions (BGMT, SCHB, WCC, YCC, HIST)
  - Shared venues increase participation at symposia, collaboration and event support
3. ACS Corporate
  - Depend on division programming and revenue
  - Input on council
  - CEI, SOCED depends on us to provide leadership voice
  - ACS Symposium book series/journal articles
4. International organizations and countries
  - Guidance
  - Dissemination of research

### ***Uncertainties***

1. Communication Platforms
  - Impact and implications of technology platforms
  - The future of in-person meetings
2. Content
  - Dynamics of poster session changes
  - How is information and content sharing changing?
    - Exploration of ideas and how to organize*
    - What formats?*
3. External Forces
  - External pressures: The importance of environmental issues and the impact on society

4. Membership and Partners
  - What are members getting out of ACSenvr?
    - Membership numbers*
    - Perceived value*
    - How to discover*
    - How to support*
  - How to identify and engage with possible partners, what are their interests and what incentives could be
5. Science
  - What is environmental chemistry today? Where is it going? Who leads?

### *Economic Climate*

1. Trickle-down funding structure. Our influence and membership is dependent on government regulatory focus
2. Economy down-turn impact on funding for events and travel
3. Impact from ACS revenue changes
  - ACS revenue model shifting to regional meeting

### *Communication and Content Dissemination Trends*

1. Platform
  - Demand for social media
  - Content is pushed to users
2. Audiences
  - Diverse audience
  - How to reach global audience
  - Recognizing/engaging external customers
3. Messaging
  - What do we want our message to be—internal and external? Who and what are important?
  - We don't effectively communicate with other divisions
  - Vertical communication/engagement with local sections
  - Liaisons with other environmental organizations

## SWOT Analysis

|  |  |
|--|--|
| <p><b>Strengths</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Programming – increasing submissions, # of symposia, leadership selection</li> <li>2. Members on council and committees to influence policy</li> <li>3. Financial resources</li> <li>4. Sought by other divisions and organizations for support/partnership</li> <li>5. Diverse membership for mentoring and networking</li> <li>6. ACS brand and infrastructure</li> <li>7. Large membership (Tier 1)</li> </ol>  | <p><b>Weaknesses</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Stagnation</li> <li>2. Participation Decline               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Volunteer/Officer pipeline is low, inconsistent</li> <li>○ Lack of volunteer planning</li> <li>○ Consistently falling total membership</li> </ul> </li> <li>3. Business/exec meeting is only 2x year</li> <li>4. Too much idle money; no procedural access</li> <li>5. Underutilized technology for communication</li> <li>6. Failure to adequately inform the public and stakeholders about our work</li> </ol>  |
| <p><b>Opportunities</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Infrastructure</li> <li>2. Define the field</li> <li>3. Explore international trends</li> <li>4. Outreach and Connection               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ CEI seeking our input</li> <li>○ Co-programming with other committees/divisions; chance to reach out to new people and international organizations</li> <li>○ Sponsorship from corps and funding agencies</li> <li>○ Match up job providers with job seekers</li> <li>○ Enhanced local engagement at each meeting</li> <li>○ Engage other disciplines of science</li> <li>○ Capitalize on public needs, i.e., drinking water development, clean air</li> </ul> </li> </ol> | <p><b>Threats</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Competition               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Competitive conferences drawing members and participants, presenters, cosponsors; no time—overloading</li> </ul> </li> <li>2. Lack of funding/support               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Funding for research is not available</li> <li>○ Employers not encouraging or supporting leadership involvement</li> <li>○ Lack of funding for service involvement, meeting attendance</li> </ul> </li> <li>3. Shifting trends               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Rapidly advancing nature of the science; shifting landscape of scientific disciplines, trends and scope. Presents challenges to respond by adjusting:                   <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Programming content</li> <li>Communications</li> <li>Membership services</li> </ul> </li> <li>○ Specific issues/trends become so large that they splinter off into their own field, i.e. green chemistry, nano</li> <li>○ Undergrads are pushed out of our field and into competing disciplines</li> </ul> </li> <li>4. Public pushback and disinformation</li> <li>5. Lack of role models</li> </ol> |

## The Future – Who do we want to be in 2016 and beyond

Recognized as  
premiere/indispensable  
organization for programming,  
information, communication,  
and resources for EC.  
Accessible, welcoming,  
encouraging

Fiscally sound and “creative”

For future leaders to consider  
us as premium organization  
and as their professional home

Influence and direct science  
and science policy

Facilitator of idea exchange

Forum/beacon for new and  
impactful ideas

## Survey Results Themes & Discussion

Important to provide opportunities to:

- Exchange technical information

- Represent the field to the public

Regional v Division programming

Joint/cosponsored presentations is high value

Awards/recognition is lower value

## Strategic Plan Elements

### 1. Programming

- Notable speakers
- Emerging trends & topics
- Collaboration and sponsorship
- Large attendance at national meetings
- Member involvement as presenters and organizers
- Local/regional
- International
- Integrated programming plan (5-year skeleton topics)
  - *Barriers: broad/diverse field*
  - *Need: active committee, follow-through*

### 2. Policy and Influence

- Influence decision makers
  - *Government agencies*
  - *Education*
  - *Industry*
- Public Influence

### 3. Membership and Member Experience

- Increased involvement in
  - *Leadership*
  - *Volunteering*
  - *Programming*
- Resources for career enhancement
  - *Jobs*
  - *Mentoring*
  - *Networking*
- Member recognition
- Communication/platform considerations

### 4. Resources

- Financial (Funding + Spending) goals
  - *Stable*
  - *Creative*
  - *Not recalcitrant*
- Supplemented from external sources
- Expand collaboration with other societies and divisions
  - *Cosponsor*
  - *Collaborate*

### 5. Reputation

- International network
- The premier professional home for environmental chemistry and related fields

### 6. Re-evaluation

- Certificate of merit
- Support of others
- Undergraduate posters
- Officer election – multiple candidates
- Role of member-at-large



## Goal Prioritization

| Priority | # votes | Issue  | Strategic Plan Element           |
|----------|---------|--|----------------------------------|
| 1        | 6       | Create programming plan  | Programming                      |
| 2        | 5       | Increase involvement in leadership, volunteering, and programming  | Membership and Member Experience |
| 3a       | 4       | Influence decision makers  | Policy and Influence             |
| 3b       | 4       | Explore communication and technological platforms  | Membership and Member Experience |
| 4a       | 3       | Financial (funding and spending): ensure stability and non-recalcitrant, find creative expenditures and fundraising, explore external sources of funding | Resources                        |
| 4b       | 3       | Institute resources for career enhancement   | Membership and Member Experience |
| 5        | 2       | Establish international member network   | Membership and Member Experience |
| 6        | 1       | Establish ACSenvr as the premier professional home for environmental chemistry and related fields  | Reputation                       |
| 7a       | 0       | Expand collaboration and cosponsorship with other societies and divisions  | Resources                        |
| 7b       | 0       | Increase public influence  | Policy and Influence             |
| 7c       | 0       | Increase membership cross-pollination  | Policy and Influence             |
| 7d       | 0       | Improve recognition programs   | Membership and Member Experience |

## **Elevator Pitch**

For environmental scientists, who want access to emerging topics and trends, ACSenvr is a welcoming, dynamic, and diverse professional community that provides new and impactful ideas in all facets of environmental science. Membership plugs you into this network and provides access to premier programs.