

STAN R. CALDWELL, P.E., F.ASCE, F.AEI
Candidate for ASCE Technical Region Director



The changes that have been made to the governance of ASCE, including the creation of the Technical Region, represent a good first step toward creating a more dynamic organization. However, these changes will not be effective if real or perceived boundaries are allowed to remain between the geographical and technical interests of the membership. To move forward as a robust organization, ASCE must adopt a seamless culture, the culture of the “one-organization” organization. At the same time, it must increase support for the institutes as they continue to develop ASCE’s invaluable technical knowledge base. These are the burdens and the opportunities that will greet the first Technical Region Directors. Their performance on the ASCE Board of Direction will be critical in successfully transforming the culture of ASCE.

I believe that there are three reasons why I am particularly well-qualified to serve as the first Technical Region Director: experience, perspective and vision.

Experience

Over the course of my career, I have been privileged to serve on 23 boards and committees, primarily in a leadership role. This experience has included private business firms, professional organizations and government agencies. Many years ago, I developed ten rules for personal conduct which have allowed me to serve these organizations quite effectively. In January 2005, ASCE added these rules to their “Leadership Development for the Engineer” seminar series and received a very favorable response. Here are my rules of conduct:

- Thoroughly prepare before every meeting; studying during meetings does not work.
- Treat everyone in the room as your equal; egos are always detrimental to progress.
- Keep your focus on the big picture, not on the details; set policy, not implementation.
- Focus on the core issues of the matter at hand, leaving peripheral issues for others.
- Practice intensive listening; nobody has ever learned anything while talking.
- Organize your thoughts before speaking, stay on topic, and be brief.
- Speak selectively and infrequently; talk only when it is an improvement on silence.
- Disagree without being disagreeable; visible emotion is never appropriate.
- Be willing to compromise when necessary; partial progress is better than no progress.
- Selectively inject humor to alleviate tension.

Perspective

ASCE is persistently challenged to build the membership and increase its level of participation. The institutes were created, in part, to attract new members who might otherwise have little interest in joining ASCE and to foster new activities that would stimulate member involvement. As the founder of the Architectural Engineering Institute (AEI), I believe that I bring a unique perspective to the ASCE Board of Direction. AEI was created to attract building design professionals practicing outside the realm of traditional civil and structural engineering, such as mechanical engineers, electrical engineers, and architects. Over time, it is anticipated that the majority of AEI's membership will be comprised of these individuals and that many of their activities will push into newly emerging fields of practice. In this way, AEI is increasing the number of professionals working under ASCE's umbrella and extending ASCE's influence within the design community. This is a good example of an institute leveraging ASCE's influence while creating a more dynamic culture.

Vision

Effective directors on any board must have the vision to look beyond current operations. Vision is based on ideas. It is ideas and the ability to act on them that distinguish leaders from managers. In February 2004, I conceived of an entirely new ASCE organization that would enhance public safety by promoting building security. My idea was to create a Building Security Council (BSC) which would be very similar to the highly-successful U. S. Green Building Council, except addressing security rather than sustainability. After developing the idea, I presented it to ASCE senior staff. They asked me to establish a Task Committee on BSC, charged with thoroughly evaluating the viability of the concept and developing a comprehensive business plan. I recruited a blue-ribbon panel of security experts and put them to work. After many months of planning and effort, BSC is now becoming a reality. This should substantially enhance public safety in the built environment; greatly benefit building owners, lenders, and insurers; and dramatically increase the prestige, membership, energy, and revenues of ASCE.

With more than 137,000 members and 152 years of history, ASCE is truly the granddaddy of all professional engineering organizations. This can be both a blessing and a curse. If complacency prevails, it is a curse. On the other hand, if ASCE uses its stature to lead all engineering organizations with bold initiatives like the Body of Knowledge and the Building Security Council, it is a blessing. ASCE will flourish if it is able to continually embrace change, recognize trends, and foster compelling new activities. I am confident that ASCE will do so and I pledge to work toward that end.

I would appreciate your vote. However, it is important that you cast your ballot even if you do not support me. The level of participation in past ASCE elections has been about 5 percent. That is simply abysmal. With online voting now enabled, it has never been easier to vote. If 25 percent of the membership votes in this election I will be very pleased, regardless of the outcome.

Stan Caldwell earned BSCE and MSCE degrees at the University of Wisconsin and has gained 35 years of experience as a structural and architectural engineer, including 30 years as a manager. He is a licensed professional engineer in 6 states and has supervised the analysis and design of more than 700 projects, including bridges, buildings and special-purpose structures. Stan has served as project manager for an industrial corporation, branch manager for a structural engineering analysis firm, and founder and president of a structural engineering design firm. Since 1988, he has served as a principal and group leader at Half Associates, a multi-discipline design firm. His professional experience has included numerous leadership positions in ASCE, AEI, NCSEA, SEAoT, CEC-T and TBPE. Stan has been married for nearly 35 years and resides in Texas, where he has been actively involved in youth sports, diabetes awareness and fund-raising.

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