
ASSOCIATION FOR COMMUNICATION EXCELLENCE



IN AGRICULTURE, NATURAL RESOURCES, AND LIFE AND HUMAN SCIENCES

ACE 2015 Strategic Plan

Strategies and Implementation Methods for 2015-2017

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Submitted by the ACE Strategic Planning Committee

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ACE is an international association of communicators, educators and information technologists. The organization offers professional development and networking for individuals who extend knowledge about agriculture, natural resources, and life and human sciences.

Overview

The strategic plan, crafted every three years by a committee selected by the ACE president, directs efforts to facilitate skill development and build professional relationships among members.

The following avenues for elevating ACE were fashioned during a day-long session prior to the board of director's fall 2014 board meeting. The committee developed goals and suggested avenues to implement those strategies.

In early October 2014, just prior to the Fall Board Meeting, the ACE strategic planning group met in Fort Collins, Colorado to update the strategic plan, which had been last developed in 2011. Strategic plan group members included Brad Beckman, Robert Casler, David Keto, Joanne Littlefield, Steve Miller, Elizabeth Gregory North, Faith Peppers, Bruce Sundeen and Holly Young.

Discussion was shaped by *Race for Relevance*, a book about the changing world of professional organizations. While the book hit home on a number of points, the group was pleasantly surprised to find that many of the recommendations for change have already been addressed by our last major reorganization. It was agreed that we needed to press on if ACE was to remain in step with current trends. A brief [PowerPoint](#) reflects its influence on ACE strategy.

Colorado State University Journalism and Media Communications Professor (and longtime ACE member) Katie Abrams led the group in the strategic planning process. At the end of the day, six areas of focus were identified, and implementation ideas for each area were discussed.

Following that session, ACE Research Director-elect Courtney Meyers constructed a membership survey, with an email invitation to participate sent in November, with a reminder sent in early December. Courtney Myers compiled the results of the survey, which is available online at:

www.aceweb.org/images/2015_January_uploads/StrategicPlanSurveyTopLineReport.pdf

ACE members were able to rank the importance of the six areas (which had been presented in no particular order of importance) in the survey. Therefore, member feedback indicated that this order is most important to them:

1. Enhance the value of membership.
2. Strengthen support to SIGs.
3. Improve visibility of benefits.
4. Develop a stronger presence.
5. Improve the organizational structure.
6. Gather feedback more regularly.

The first four areas were adopted by the ACE Board to form the 2015 Strategic Plan. It should be noted that the areas ranked highest relate to professional development and marketing, while the two ranked lowest relate to internal organization, an area of particular emphasis in the previous strategic plan.

The Strategic Planning Committee members approached its task understanding this document provide a broad, issue-based approach, and discuss implementation steps in general terms. Determining details of implementation is the responsibility of the board officers.

Strategy 1: Enhance the value of membership.

Explore opportunities to provide high-value professional development through all venues available through ACE.

Implementation ideas:

- Explore what other organizations provide.
- Determine what ACE offers that is unique.
- Identify how the financial resources of ACE could be better allocated to benefit members.
- Add a young professional membership category.

Strategy 2: Strengthen support to SIGs.

SIGs are the crux of the organization, but we don't give SIG chairs sufficient training or funds to succeed. Bring them back to the summer board meeting and engage with them on a regular basis.

Implementation ideas:

- Leverage current and emerging technology to better serve membership.
- Offer more opportunities for SIG chairs to discuss and engage with the board.
- Examine funding models for SIGs.
- Provide additional leadership training for SIG chairs beyond explaining their duties.
- Reconsider the value of requiring two reports a year from the SIG chairs. Review ways that SIGs report and explore alternatives that might be more effective, such as a move to online reporting.

Strategy 3: Improve visibility of benefits.

Make the training that we now provide throughout the year more prominent both to members and ‘other’ audiences within our institutions.

Implementation ideas:

- Explore how and where resources are stored (on the website, collaborating with eXtension, paying for Adobe Connect, other memberships)
- Investigate other channels, such as social media, to distribute information.
- Standardize distribution platforms.

Strategy 4: Develop a stronger presence.

Increase awareness of ACE among educators and administrators, as well as other specialized science communications associations, putting ACE in the forefront.

Implementation ideas:

- Evaluate materials that are currently available or create new ones to prepare administrators to act as advocates for the land-grant system.
- Support the President of ACE to attend appropriate organizational meetings to promote and share the value of ACE.
- Create marketing materials not only for ACE membership but also for recruitment and educational efforts.
- Partner or join other similar organizations to help promote the value of ACE.