



STRATEGIC PLAN AND PLANNING RETREAT SUMMARY

The Biophysical Society, June 2-3, 2017

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Council of the Biophysical Society met June 2-3, 2017, in Charlottesville, VA, to draft the society's first formal strategic plan. The proposed vision positions the society to take full advantage of the interdisciplinary edge biophysics has as a coherent discipline with powerful quantitative methods that others need. The goals affirm that the society will work globally to enhance knowledge exchange, advocate for the value of biophysics, and support an increasingly diverse next generation of scientists.

During the retreat deliberations, we identified a number of additional revisions or clarifications to the proposed plan. These are included in the draft plan that follows and explained in the commentary that follows each section. Council members will be invited to review and comment on the proposed strategic plan in a shared Google drive. The final plan will be presented to Council for approval in October. This summer the BPS staff will develop an implementation plan identifying the resources and infrastructure investments needed and detailing the specific steps and timing for achieving the plan's goals and objectives.

The Council also identified possible metrics for each goal that can serve as a way to monitor progress toward achieving this plan. If the society is not getting the desired results, the Council can make necessary course corrections in the objectives and initiatives. In this summary report, the proposed metrics are listed after each goal and its objectives for easy reference as the Council evaluates their utility. These metrics don't have to be included in any published strategic plan, as they are primarily intended for the Council's use.

During the retreat, the Council selected a few objectives and initiatives as near-term priorities and identified challenges within the society's structure, processes and culture that must be resolved to successfully execute this plan. We also acknowledged the difficulty of defining what biophysics is and concluded this ambiguity can be accepted as a strategic advantage in a dynamic and evolving scientific field. These discussions are summarized in this report.

BIOPHYSICAL SOCIETY STRATEGIC PLAN 2017-2021

Vision

Biophysics is identified and recognized as the interdisciplinary scientific discipline that develops the quantitative methods and techniques needed by scientists as they seek fundamental understanding of the biological, chemical, and physical mechanisms of life and work to unlock answers essential to curing disease, solving biological problems, and discovering basic scientific insights.

Mission

The Biophysical Society convenes and connects a global community of scientists working at the interface of the physical and life sciences and creates, shares, and advocates for biophysical knowledge and methods through programs and communities that support biophysicists.

Values

- Scientific excellence
- Integrity and transparency
- Diversity and inclusion
- Community building

Goals and Objectives

- I. Sharing Knowledge in and about Biophysics. The Biophysical Society will strengthen the identity of biophysics as a distinct and integrative discipline that underpins the understanding and evolution of life science.**
 - a. Set a vision and relevant alignment for the *Biophysical Journal* and other society publications to better serve the interests of the global biophysics community.
 - b. Become the digital hub and educational resource for exchanging biophysical knowledge.
 - c. Set a vision and relevant alignment for the Annual Meeting to ensure that its program is developed to attract existing biophysics communities as well as scientists that do not yet identify as biophysicists but use biophysical techniques; ensure that the Meeting addresses the needs of all attendees with particular attention to students and early career scientists; expand the reach of the meetings for members throughout the year.
- II. Fostering a Global Community. The Biophysical Society will be recognized as the global organization for the exchange of information in and about biophysics.**
 - a. Increase the number of non-US members.
 - b. Ensure the international nature of BPS is represented throughout all Society programs.
 - c. Establish mutually beneficial relationships with international societies.
 - d. In addition to thematic meetings, establish reoccurring topical meetings outside the US to increase global presence.
 - e. Provide engagement opportunities for members throughout the world that extend beyond the meetings and publications.
 - f. Support people in diverse careers throughout the world.

- III. **Supporting the Next Generation. The Biophysical Society will continuously improve the mechanisms to engage, support, and retain the next generation of biophysicists.**
- a. Commission a survey for existing BPS early career and student members and prospective members in biophysical laboratories to assess what is working in our current programs, and their additional needs and interests.
 - b. Conduct focus groups during the Annual Meeting to further explore needs and interests.
 - c. Develop programs and goals to address results from the survey and focus group research.
 - d. Engage current and former Biophysical Society members who are in non-academic careers to help us build a program to provide information and tools about these career opportunities.
 - e. Increase early career representation on Society committees as well as representation from members in non-academic careers.
- IV. **Advocating for Biophysics. The Biophysical Society will develop programs to help members communicate the value of biophysics.**
- a. Motivate and mobilize members to communicate the value of biophysics including through the development of a toolkit to help train and equip them.
 - b. Expand Biophysics Week as an outreach tool.
 - c. Evaluate and align our social media and web presence with our goals in engaging the members and public.
 - d. Advocate for governments and other funding bodies to take responsibility for supporting fundamental research.
 - e. Advocate that biophysics research should be part of the portfolio of diverse funding agencies, especially outside the United States.

RECOMMENDATIONS ON STAGING THE PLAN

The Council recommended the staff give top priority to the following objectives in the implementation plan:

- **Set a vision and relevant alignment for the *Biophysical Journal* and other society publications to better serve the interests of the global biophysics community.** This issue has been identified in past Council and Member Services Committee discussions. With the Journal reorganizing under the leadership of a new editor, this is a critical point in time to set a clear course.
- **Become the digital hub and educational resource for exchanging biophysical knowledge.** BPS is working to establish an online education journal. This initial work can be redirected into and aligned with this concept of a digital hub and educational resource. This also can be an important platform for increasing member engagement beyond the annual scientific meeting.
- **Motivate and mobilize members to communicate the value of biophysics and develop a toolkit to help train and equip them.** Many members are concerned about the current US political climate and are eager to have an organized way to defend science and promote the value of biophysics. BPS can seize this passion to motivate and mobilize members. Additionally, BPS can help members become ambassadors for the field by providing tools, workshops, and resources they can use to communicate their science to non-biophysicists.

- **Commission a survey for BPS early career members and prospective members in biophysical laboratories to assess what is working in our current programs and how best to engage with them.** Getting the survey results is essential to knowing how to improve programs to better serve member needs and interests.
- **Establish a subcommittee to review the subgroups and their alignment with the strategic plan.** Subgroup subcommittee charge is to review the existing relationship between the Society and its subgroups and make recommendations for changes.
- **Establish a subcommittee to review the Society's committees, their charges, and alignment with the strategic plan and goals.** The subcommittee charge is to review existing member services committees (Early Careers, Education, International Relations, Inclusion & Diversity, Membership, CPOW, Public Affairs), their charges and programs, determine if changes are needed to their charges, determine if their current programs are effective and aligned with the Society's goals and objectives, determine if some committees and/or programs should be eliminated or if resources could be better allocated.

THE BIOPHYSICS IDENTITY

Throughout the retreat, we struggled with and ultimately worked around the lack of a clear and coherent definition of what biophysics is. Yet the Council decided the Society can exploit the strengths biophysics has as a dynamic and evolving discipline within interdisciplinary science. This ambiguity may be an advantage as biophysics is seen as open to emerging fields. This is how we decided to frame the biophysics identity in the vision statement and the sharing knowledge goal.

Strategically it may be better to answer what biophysics is by describing its purpose and scope rather than defining its boundaries. The Society may also find this identity question can be an energizing and exciting discussion to continue when members gather. We talked about how biophysicists are heroes of their own stories of scientific endeavor. BPS leaders agree that biophysics and its quantitative methods are key to unlocking fundamental answers in science. Continuing to focus this identity conversation on what biophysics is *doing* rather than *what it is* may generate more opportunities for the Society to grow and thrive in the future.