

August 2020

Dear Members,

As summer enters its final weeks, I write to you all from my home office once again. For several months I have resisted the use of the term “new normal” with a steadfast optimism that this is not normal and merely a temporary inconvenience. After nearly five months of roller coaster policy changes, health guideline evolution, travel restrictions, and self-quarantine recommendations, I’ve come to realize that there truly is a “new normal”. The normal that I’m talking about is not driven by fear and misinformation nor is it settling for a less than ideal quality of life. It is not a normal of isolation or surrender. Rather, it is a normal consisting of innovative ways to solve problems; a resolve to find new ways to collaborate and communicate; a new outlook on the workplace environment and structure; and a renewed awareness and focus on diversity and inclusion.

The “new normal” that I’m describing is something that we should embrace. As engineers and scientists, we must pioneer how the future unfolds and what we do with the gift of adversity. Adversity is truly a gift as it provides the necessary disruption to initiate change. It can serve as stimulation to pull us from complacency. I believe that this time in history necessitates the collaboration of the great minds within the membership of ASCE. I predict that there will be a lasting change in the way that we do business, design and construct our infrastructure and the way that we treat and interact with others and the environment. I am optimistic that we can emerge as a stronger more united community on the other side. We have the ability to control how generations to come reflect on this moment in history.

I encourage all of you to read T.R. Witcher’s article *Collaboration Among Professionals: The Role of Civil Engineers in Public Health* in your July/August issue of *Civil Engineering* magazine. This excellent article discusses the historical role that engineers played in public health and how the engineer’s role has decreased over the years with more prominence by the medical community. An interesting fact that I learned is that the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) was originally staffed by entomologists and engineers; of the CDC’s original 369 employees, only seven were physicians. And the CDC’s first leader was Mark Hollis, an engineer. The article highlights the renewed awareness of the role civil engineers must play in designing infrastructure that prioritizes public health and the need for more holistic approaches to solving health crises.

With that message in mind, ASCE Government Relations [needs your help](#) developing the annual State & Federal [Priority Issues Lists](#) which guide ASCE's lobbying efforts. As the COVID-19 pandemic becomes part of the policy norm, [tell ASCE what policy priorities](#) we should have on the radar in 2021. Please take the [2021 Priority Issues Survey](#) and help develop the annual Priority Issues Lists. *You will need your six-digit ASCE ID number to complete the survey and we can help you look that up if you don't have it handy.* If you have any questions about Government Relations or are interested in becoming a Key Contact, please reach out to Greg Scott our Government Relations Chair at scottgf@cdmsmith.com

We should never stop learning and ASCE is constantly working to provide opportunities for you to gain knowledge from the experiences of others. The Geo-Institute has partnered with the University of Pittsburgh's Center for Impactful Resilient Infrastructure Science & Engineering (IRISE), the Association of Engineering Geologists and the Pittsburgh Geological Society to conduct a series of virtual seminars focused on various aspects of the landslide issues in Southwestern Pennsylvania. The *Landslide Capacity Building Virtual Seminars* will be held on Friday, September 4th and Friday, September 11th. More information on these seminars can be found through the [Section's Events Calendar](#) and you can register for the event [here](#).

Lastly, as most of us continue to use virtual meeting platforms as our primary mode of communication in the workplace, ASCE has developed backgrounds to enhance your meeting appearance. [Click](#) to Download ASCE desktop wallpapers that can be used as backgrounds for your next virtual meeting (instruction for applying them to Zoom and Teams are provided). I'm showing off one of my favorites below!

Thank you for your continued support and involvement in ASCE. I continue to seek your guidance to help the Board govern our activities. Please feel free to contact me anytime at jshimko@mckimcreed.com.

Sincerely,

Jonathan Shimko

President

ASCE – Pittsburgh Section

