

President's Message

Three years ago, my name was put in nomination as a candidate for vice president of The Optical Society. I was fortunate enough to be elected by OSA's members and assumed the role in January 2019—the beginning of a four-year commitment to serve as part of the society's leadership, including my current term as president.

This year, indeed, marks my 38th anniversary as an OSA volunteer. The relationship began with my participation as a student poster session organizer. It has continued through work on meetings and committees, as a journal reviewer and editor, as a Traveling Lecturer, and in other areas.

In a very real sense, an organization like The Optical Society runs on the contributions of its volunteers. At present, the OSA network comprises more than 432,000 scientists, engineers, students and entrepreneurs. Many of these individuals serve as reviewers; as advocates in areas such as public policy, education, and diversity, equity and inclusion; as student and early-career mentors and leaders of local sections; as technical and corporate experts; and much more.

From the society's founding in 1916 to today, such volunteers have helped the organization grow and evolve in response to the community's changing needs. Today, I view them as a human bridge that binds our science together.

But volunteering is more than just the right thing to do for our community. As pointed out by Alan Willner in a Career Focus column on p. 18 of this issue, it can also be the right thing to do for yourself. Reflecting on his own experience as a long-standing OSA volunteer and 2016 OSA President, Alan mentions that volunteer committee work "has certain aspects that are uniquely advantageous to building a scientific career." "By helping others," Alan writes, "you are helping yourself."

I can certainly attest to the value of volunteering personally. I was able to find friends and colleagues who believed in a common cause, shared the same commitments, and had the same passion for optics and photonics. In particular, I found many who were willing to teach me and help me learn new topics and explore new areas. The long-term bonds I forged in my professional sphere were truly invaluable.

One of the most basic ways to participate and support the society's efforts, of course, is to vote in its leadership elections, and let your voice be heard in shaping the society's future. I encourage all OSA members to review the candidate statements beginning on p. 52 of this issue, and to cast their ballots when the polls open on 21 July!



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—Constance Chang-Hasnain,
OSA President