

The future of MRS Governance



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During the last 45+ years, the Materials Research Society (MRS) has evolved from a grassroots organization, whose founding volunteer scientists and engineers depended on a fledgling Headquarters staff to provide basic logistical support for its meetings, publications, and membership services, to a full-service professional Society. Today, a highly experienced and professionally trained Headquarters staff manages a multitude of programs and initiatives created to serve the needs of MRS' members and the broader materials community in the areas of technical programming, publications, career services, government affairs, public outreach, membership management, awards, and more. An engaged professional staff with proficiency in association management enables MRS to be a community-driven, volunteer-led organization in a world where volunteer time is at a premium, and technologies and regulations are increasingly complex.

As scientists and engineers, we frequently rely upon partnerships and collaboration to further our causes. We also understand that for partnerships to be successful, there must be clearly defined roles and expectations, open dialogue, and mutual respect for the experience each party brings to bear. The same holds true within our Society.

To sustain and advance MRS' goals, a strong and collaborative partnership with the Headquarters team is key to our success. However, our organizational culture and workflow processes have remained relatively unchanged since the early days when staff provided basic support. Our now-mature Society requires a culture that equally values the contributions of volunteers and professional staff and clearly defines the roles of each, starting with the Board of Directors and extending throughout the association. We recognize that elimination of any hierarchical or bureaucratic approaches to Society governance and operations provides an opportunity for increased agility, clarity, and engagement of volunteers and staff alike in our Mission. In the coming months, the Board, in collaboration with volunteers and staff, will reassess MRS governance in order to better articulate the responsibilities, accountabilities, and communication pathways between members of the Board, the volunteers, and the staff.

The MRS Board of Directors is committed to promoting a culture of transparency and trust. At its core, we believe that relations between volunteers, staff, and leadership are based on mutual respect, openness, and accountability. As your Society's leaders, we intend to set the example of our cultural shift in behavior, and we hope you will appreciate and embrace this new spirit of equal collaboration with your Headquarters team in your own volunteer interactions on a day-to-day basis.

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