



# President's Message

*International System Safety Society President  
Russ Mitchell*

## There Is So Much to Talk About!

Hi Folks,

I am thrilled to be able to share some of the interesting things happening right now in the Society.

We've had our elections, each of the new officers has taken up their roles and they have been operating to accomplish the Society's objectives. As of August 31, the Executive Council (EC) has met a record five times since the new team has engaged, with some promising excitement and progress. We've formed several operating subcommittees and are chipping away at some really aggressive objectives that I will address here.

Earlier this year, we began to refine a draft strategic plan. Our efforts involved an assessment of the state of the system safety profession, deep consideration of our Society's mission and introspection about the areas where we can improve organizationally, as well as reflection on the opportunities and influence we are positioned to provide in the world. Part of this work engaged Cheryl Ronk, a certified association executive (CAE) who facilitated several exercises, provided support and authored some major business elements that put us on a path to pushing our mission forward in new and dynamic ways.

Cheryl Ronk, CAE, CMP, FASAE, is a fellow of the American Society of Association Executives and is the recognized world leader in association executive training. She has authored a preferred 2025 vision, a business plan and a pro forma budget that the EC has reviewed and accepted. Her ongoing efforts are helping us to clarify our office support needs, our outward-facing business model and also our Intellectual Property (IP) management and delivery models. Doing this allows us to properly leverage our position in industry which, in turn, ensures that members are not bearing an undue fee burden for the benefits they receive and that the international Conference is not overburdened with supporting all of the residual operating needs of the Society.

It is important to keep the demands on the Conference balanced and not too pricey, so that we can draw a larger audience and secure more of the industry

participation that makes the Conference a powerful delivery tool for system safety knowledge and professional engagement. To keep both dues and Conference registration fees low, we need to revisit how we can offer other industry services and support that:

- are valuable
- facilitate a healthy system safety profession
- enhance the flow of system safety services and training throughout industry (not only through members, but through all system safety professionals, consultants and trainers)
- returns a positive cash flow for the Society because we need to keep the lights on, along with doing outreach and other activities that cost money

We are careful about our commitments of capital, but we do have a mission — and minimizing our mission is not helpful to our industry or our members.

The world today is inherently complex — so much so that we could easily see an expanding role for system safety professionals if we are willing to step up and provide system safety leadership in creative and expansive ways. To do this, we must demonstrate viable solutions that reduce risk, improve performance and reduce development time while clarifying scope. All of this sounds a bit like program management, but then, we've *always* had a role supporting program management. That is, in fact, our primary role — to help programs succeed by guiding design solutions to be better overall solutions that are safer to implement and are more robust at delivering their function throughout the lifecycle.

The Society must craft powerful messaging about the importance of system safety to a much broader audience. We need to position ourselves to *be* the solution and to *have* solutions. Our system safety way of doing business has been crafted to fill niche conditions in narrow industries, but now we really need to look at how we can use our skills and tools to meet a wider need, in a wider role, for a broader audience.



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Our tools may need polishing to shine in these broader roles. We may need to retool, reimagine and rethink how the bigger picture of complexity fits into modern society. Our working initiatives and committees are beginning to peel back the onion, so to speak, to see just what we need to support vital roles in new industry sectors, in broader product development environments and in far faster development timelines. In some cases, we've already delivered the unsavory message that there is such a thing as too fast to market. We are now seeing some industries step back and rethink their aggressive delivery of new tech, such as driverless cars.

The Society, as an organization, has had a good year, with a lot of good work done by key people. To a large extent, our Conference team, and specifically Pamela Wilkinson, have delivered on their promises. Chuck Muniak and Rod Simmons managed the technical content with panache. As a result, we have generated some income. This has put us in a good position to explore and select staffing solutions that enable the broader role, which we are working toward.

What do we think the future holds for the Society? This is where we are planning to be in 2025, elaborated in the “present tense” of 2025:

- The International System Safety Society is the premier organization serving and representing the system safety profession. The organization has created and delivered credentialing; established a clear training path for continuing education; negotiated partnerships with numerous groups; generated and influenced standards that are being adopted worldwide; researched and published on the value and

methods of system safety and has influenced curricula in engineering.

- The Society has a credentialing program around a specific training path. This assures a consistent level of understanding and exposure to best practices. It also has a certification program that is recognized across all industries worldwide. The annual Conference brings together professionals to discuss the newest innovations and advancements.
- Research has been conducted that demonstrates the value of implementing system safety in the design of programs, products and processes. The public relations campaign on the findings is increasing the placement of system safety professionals at the appropriate time and situations to reduce safety incidents. Case studies are shared in various trade magazines and business publications to advance the understanding of the results of utilizing system safety programs. As a result, insurance companies, now familiar with the impact of the profession, are using system safety practices as part of the insurance risk evaluation factor. Those firms with good programs are saving funds on their insurance.
- The Society has data on the scope of the profession and whom it impacts. They utilize this to target education, communications and networking programs. A collaborative system is installed that facilitates a member asking a question of a specific community. As a result, membership reaches an all-time high of 75% of industry professionals. Collectively, these members share information on issues such as complex systems, artificial intelligence, the pace of change and multifaceted interactions. The Society has been a key participant in the develop-

ment of automated tools to enhance the profession. The profession embraces computer simulations and educates all involved in how to install the technology into the process. Together, they have set up a reporting system demonstrating results and the value of their work.

- The chapters are strong and facilitate a system of support in a confidential setting. Ideas are generated from the chapters and shared throughout the Society. Chapters recommend content for the communication vehicles and educational sessions. The diversity of the organization is a focused effort often looking to the chapters to recommend future leaders for task forces and workgroups.
- There is clarification on terms across industries. The Society maintains a database of concepts, principles, and the terms and their interaction in all languages. The learning management system, provided by the Society, features self-learning modules, whitepapers and a library of sample documents. A rubric and self-assessment documents were created based on the learning needed within the profession. These guide current professionals on how to stay current. The Society has an approved provider program that screens training programs and instructors, and is validating that they meet the ideals for helping individuals meet the Society's standards. The Society, using all this knowledge, is creating and communicating worldwide professional standards.
- Collaborations have been formed with numerous organizations within the public and private sectors. This includes the leading engineering schools. The Society is recognized as a leader in building career capacity within the profession. It is helping fill open positions, but not flooding the market. The career assistance program helps professionals locate jobs and helps human resource professionals with job descriptions, evaluation structures, matching candidates, and providing a focused on-boarding program.
- Being on the Board of the Society is an honor, drawing the best and brightest recommended to members through a Leadership Identification Committee. The Board runs the Society as a business, with professionals helping in association management and volunteers providing the content specific to the profession. The annual scope of work and budget, along with marketing and business plans, guides the focused growth. Grants and sponsorships are secured for various projects.

As a method of preparing for and reaching these aggressive objectives, we have the following short list of higher strategic priorities for 2019 and 2020:

1. Begin the creation of a system safety credentialing program
2. Work with establishments that are hiring system safety professionals to help assure they have qualified professionals
3. Provide evidence of the value of a system safety program that is implemented in the initial design stage

While I don't have space within this letter, I will deliver a business plan to the membership, outlining the critical activities and milestones for achieving the above-stated objectives to support the 2025 vision. It is clear that we cannot do this work alone, nor can we succeed at it by using all volunteers donating their nights and weekends.

We've launched a talent search and RFP for the services of an association management company to augment our volunteers and enhance the work they do to keep us vital. The RFP is on the street and we expect to have organizational interviews starting at the end of September 2019. Our business plan has identified the work they need to deliver and the methods we will employ to ensure the funds needed are within reach through the services they provide.

Finally, to re-cap, the 37th International System Safety Conference was successful in that it generated needed capital. It was successful in that it delivered deep content and more diverse content than ever by including new tracks, and by delivering communication training for the first time. If you were not at the Conference or did not take advantage of the communication training offered, we will have more opportunities to coordinate your personal access to this important growth tool because part of our arrangement with the provider, Effective Presentations, was to provide deeply discounted training and coaching for attendees and Society members. Watch for some forthcoming advertising.

I want to thank you for supporting the Society — your Society. I want to invite you to become engaged if you are not, to stay engaged if you are, and to dive deeper if you can into our important professional work. As volunteers, we are all shaping the future of our profession. By embracing the effort, you are also shaping your professional practice.

Best always,  
Russ