

## ASSOCIATION MEMBERSHIP AND THE SURVEYOR

The Merriam-Webster dictionary defines membership as follows:

### **Membership** noun

mem-ber-ship | \ 'mem-bər-, ship

*plural memberships*

### **Definition of membership**

**1:** the state or status of being a member

**2:** the body of members // an organization with a large *membership*

Membership is implied to be individuals who have something in common and therefore wish to belong to a group or organization that promotes that commonality. This is not a new concept, as various memberships have existed for centuries. The groups can be formal or informal, business or social, public or private, but the common interest is key to them all. For instance, membership was a status symbol if you and/or your family belonged to a country club, hunting club or equestrian club. Groups have gathered socially in automobile and motorcycle clubs for the past century. Civic clubs, including Kiwanis, Lions Club, and the Jaycees, were created to provide organized assistance to municipalities and neighborhoods. Museums are well known for their membership programs and those donations help keep the institutions thriving. Other membership organizations were established to help people with various causes, including civil liberties, Second Amendment rights, and retiree programs and discounts. All serve a good and dedicated purpose; however, the most important one that will most likely provide the most benefit is the professional membership.

### **MEMBERSHIP IN PROFESSIONAL ASSOCIATIONS**

Membership in a professional society, especially in times like these, is also important on many levels. For the surveying profession, it provides advocacy and representation for not just the licensed practitioner, but anyone who works in surveying. Some of the benefits of being a member of state and national surveying associations include:

#### **REGULATION & ADVOCACY**

Part of the association's role for professional oversight is regulatory advocacy. Professional licensing has come under fire in recent years as deregulation groups seek to eliminate licensing they see as a barrier to entry rather than to protect the integrity of the interests. State and national associations are working together to defend our profession against these efforts and maintain the regulatory requirements of the surveyor.

Another area of advocacy is political representation at both the federal and state levels. From UAV uses to fighting back against infringing uses of radio signals used by GNSS satellites, the

associations work together to represent the surveying profession's best interest in potentially damaging policies and lack of funding for essential surveying and mapping activities.

### PROFESSIONAL STANDARDS

Besides advocating for licensing, the associations provide input and guidance for professional standards for technical documents and services. From working with the title examiners group to establish a national land title survey standard to specific guidelines for deliverables, our association groups work together to raise the standard of the profession. They also advocate for a higher ethical standard for all practitioners in surveying so to be seen in a respectable light.

Various certification programs are available through the national and state associations, including:

- Certified Survey Technician
- Certified Hydrographic Surveyor
- Certified Floodplain Surveyor

These certifications allow Surveyors to promote their skill set further as one who is specifically trained for a particular task.

### EDUCATION

The surveying associations provide continuing education (whether statutorily required or not) for all levels and tasks of surveyors, from introductory field and office to advanced technology and legal curriculum. Many also provide material refreshers for those preparing for their licensing exams. Many of these educational opportunities are held during annual conferences and seminars specifically targeted for surveyors, whether members or not.

Labor shortages are happening in most professions and surveying is no different. Our organizations provide educational outreach for future surveyors through various conduits, including elementary and high school programs and college career days through engineering and mapping-related curriculums. We also promote scholarship opportunities for two- and four-year degree college programs through a variety of channels.

### TECHNOLOGY

Along with formal surveying education topics and discussions, another substantial portion of a association's conference or seminar is an exhibitor's hall showcasing the latest and greatest in surveying technology. It is also a place for vendors to present new data services to augment existing surveying tasks.

Technology providers often utilize these associations for advertising and marketing so members are exposed to new equipment, software, and processes more directly than simply advertising in trade magazines.

### AND MUCH MORE!

Many of these organizations offer member discount programs for insurance, travel, products, and more. They can provide these discounted options simply because of the buying power of more users, so the savings are passed on directly to the Surveyor.

Associations also often offer career centers for connecting people and open positions. Many also offer resume services to help the job seeker capture their best qualities for inclusion on a job application.

### THE INTANGIBLES

While the aforementioned are the main examples of the benefits of membership in your state and national surveying association, for many it is simply the the opportunity to connect with fellow professionals and technicians. Whether it be for job openings, questions regarding a specific survey or simply engaging another professional in peer review, your membership in these groups helps to pave the way to completing these tasks and more.

### **TAKING CARE OF TODAY AND PLANNING FOR TOMORROW**

Although we are living in unprecedented times, maintaining your memberships, both state and national, may become a question of necessity. For most, prioritizing expenses has become more scrutinized and a membership is easily seen as non-essential cost. These memberships are an investment in your profession and career, so consider that return when your next renewal form comes in the mail. The money spent now on on professional memberships can go a long way in keeping your profession and career acknowledged as an essential service for years to come.