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# The Oceanography Society in 2030 – What is Our Joint Ambition?


After two years serving as TOS president-elect, I am now looking forward to working with TOS membership to grow and advance our society. Under the leadership of Alan Mix, we have made excellent progress in a number of areas, including the Society's budget and have approved the urgently needed TOS policies concerning professional integrity, ethics, and conduct. My goal as president is to articulate a vision for the Society for the coming decade. How should TOS adapt to the changes in ocean science? How can TOS provide value for our members? And how can we strengthen the profile and impact of TOS? Not only is scientific ocean drilling "Looking to the Future," we should be, too.

One area that has seen increased engagement, awareness, and possibly urgency is that of Integrated Ocean Research or Ocean Systems Science. Over the last decade, the (non-scientific) world has discovered and recognized the critical role that the ocean plays in Earth's life-support system, and as such, its importance for societies and their economies. First, a growing population, its affluence, and industrialization have increased pressures on the ocean system. Ocean science has documented the effects of over-exploitation of natural resources such as fish and minerals; of increasing levels of pollution from nutrients, carbon dioxide, toxins, and plastic; and of climate change and coastal habitat destruction. Second, questions arise about the resilience of coastal communities. Ocean science and engineering are expected to provide insights about how to manage change and stress on our coasts and how to promote diversity in our natural defense systems. Finally, societies around the world are interested in figuring out how the ocean domain can provide lasting prosperity for their people. What are our options for safeguarding the ocean, husbanding its resources for human good, and preserving and benefiting from its cultural and ecological services? Answering these complex questions will require ingenuity and innovation in order to combine knowledge and insights from a wide range of sources. This approach is often referred to as "integrated science" or "system science." Does our society provide good answers? Do we promote this kind of ocean research?

The next decade provides a unique opportunity for TOS to engage in the development of the recently established UN Decade of Ocean Science for Sustainable Development (2021–2039). The program for the Ocean Science Decade is currently under debate and will very likely encourage actions toward a more integrated and sustainable ocean observing system to facilitate discovery, understanding of ocean systems, and environmental monitoring. Advances in robotics and the combination of remote and in situ ocean observations offer new opportunities, and free and open data sharing and multi-stakeholder contributions by governments (rich and poor), the private sector, and citizens are opening exciting new dimensions. International efforts, such as the Global Ocean Observing System, the Blue Planet initiative of the Group on Earth Observations, and the community developed Framework for Ocean Observing provide a basis and an opportunity for growth and evolution. The upcoming decadal conference on ocean observations, OceanObs'19 (Hawaii, September 16–20, 2019), will provide an excellent opportunity to advance our ocean observing ambitions. TOS is a proud sponsor of that conference.

The Ocean Science Decade will also highlight opportunities for integrated research informing human-ocean development options, will promote initiatives for global capacity building, and should improve current ocean governance systems. All this is actively discussed in the Executive Planning Group for the Decade. I am a member of this group, and I thank TOS for the nomination and support.

Our organization has the flexibility to explore new approaches and programs. However, it is not the president's job to define the future of TOS. I will work with President-Elect Andone Lavery and the TOS Council to establish a consultative process to develop an exciting and engaging strategy as we look ahead to creating a plan for The Oceanography Society in 2030: Looking to the Future.



Martin Visbeck, TOS President