

**Strategic Plan
for The Oceanography Society
2025-2030**

INTRODUCTION

In May 2024, members of The Oceanography Society (TOS) Council and staff met to develop a new strategic plan for the Society. As a starting point, they revisited the organization’s mission and produced a shorter, more focused statement.

The Oceanography Society’s mission is:

To build the capacity of its diverse global membership; catalyze interdisciplinary ocean research, technology, policy, and education; and promote equitable access to opportunities for all.

In support of the mission, the TOS Council defined goals in three areas to advance during the period encompassed by the plan:

- Develop Policy for Science and Science for Policy
- Serve a Broader Ocean Science Community
- Support Undergraduate and Graduate Students

I. DEVELOP POLICY FOR SCIENCE AND SCIENCE FOR POLICY

Science is influenced by institutional and national policies that guide and impact how scientists work, progress through their career, receive professional recognition, compete for funding, and disseminate their results, which we refer to as Policy for Science. Scientific data, analysis, interpretation and translations are critically important to inform sound public policy decisions, which we refer to as Science for Policy. In the first two goals, TOS seeks to support clarity in policies and procedures surrounding promotion and tenure and to take the first steps toward building a more robust approach to support our members who want to use science for policy.

Goal 1 – Catalyze pathways to equity in promotion and tenure

Developing solutions to grand challenges like climate change, biodiversity, and environmental sustainability requires collaboration across disciplines and communities. This collaboration is often hindered by outdated hiring, promotion, and tenure policies. Professional and scientific societies like TOS help define and set standards for their professional fields. For example, in collaboration with the TOS Justice Equity Diversity and Inclusion (JEDI) committee, the Council improved the award nomination and selection processes to ensure more equitable recognition amongst all career types and people within the field. However, more can be done to promote

equity in promotion and tenure within the ocean sciences. Educating members about different metrics used in promotion in different careers can also help in choosing a career path or transitioning from one career to another.

Implementation:

Action 1.1 – Conduct a literature review, administer a survey, and host virtual listening sessions to gather information on the following topics:

- promotion and tenure policies at universities
- promotion policies in industry
- promotion policies at NGOs and agencies
- how each of the above vary by country

Timing – 2025

Estimated financial cost – \$3,000 to hire an intern to work with the TOS Executive Director or a member(s) of the Council

Metric for success – Report or series of articles to be published in *Oceanography* that can serve as a guide to members of university, industry, NGO, and agency committees involved in hiring, tenure, and promotion and individuals considering career options for preparing for promotion or tenure decisions

Action 1.2 – Solicit white papers from the membership and ocean science community at large on challenges and opportunities in the current promotion and tenure system

Timing – 2025/2026

Estimated financial cost – None

Metric for success – Compilation of white papers for publication in *Oceanography*, host a Town Hall at the Ocean Sciences Meeting in 2026

Action 1.3 – Based on the information collected in Action 1.1 and 1.2, form working groups to craft best practice document(s) for promotion and tenure in academia, industry, NGOs, and agencies

Timing – 2027/2028

Estimated financial cost – None

Metric for success – Best practice documents available for community discussion in webinars and presentations at the Ocean Sciences Meeting in 2028

Goal 2 – Develop a TOS Policy Program

Good policy is informed by sound science. Scientists can engage with policy issues through a broad range of activities, from conducting policy-relevant research to providing expert opinions on policy issues to pursuing a career in developing and advocating for specific policies. To meet the needs of members interested in policy, the society will develop a program with an eye toward providing skills that can be used in any country.

Implementation:

Action 2.1 – Develop and administer a survey to the ocean sciences community to gather input on science policy issues and to better understand their policy-relevant professional development needs. Based on the survey results, develop a proposal for the TOS Policy Program, which clearly identifies goals, strategies for implementing those goals, and corresponding capacity and resource needs.

Timing – 2025

Estimated financial cost – TBD

Metrics of success – Development of a new program

II. SERVE A BROADER OCEAN SCIENCE COMMUNITY

TOS currently conducts a wide range of activities that serve the broader ocean science community.

- It publishes *Oceanography*, which includes a wide array of peer-reviewed scientific articles and other educational content
- TOS hosts and co-hosts conferences such as the biennial Ocean Optics conference and Ocean Sciences Meeting
- TOS hosts an exhibit booth at conferences to engage with existing and potential members
- TOS hosts webinars, panels, networking events, and town halls (online or in-person), focused largely on career development
- TOS recognizes members who excel by giving awards and honors to deserving community members and groups
- TOS maintains a strong web presence that includes pages targeted at undergraduates, graduate students, and early career scientists

Goal 3 – Facilitate bi-directional support and networking to connect members with industry, NGOs and agencies

Traditionally, the activities above have largely focused on members working in academia but increasingly TOS members are pursuing careers outside of the academy. Compared to AGU and ASLO, TOS membership consists of a higher proportion of people who work at non-academic organizations. TOS seeks to serve this important and growing community through targeted professional development and to help build connections between job seekers and industry, NGOs, and federal and national agencies seeking to hire professionals with multidisciplinary oceanographic research and/or technology expertise.

Implementation

Action 3.1 – Provide resources that help members prepare for and find jobs in industry, NGOs, and agencies and help employers connect with qualified TOS members

- Host in-person town halls at meetings and a virtual Career Week, with an activity scheduled for each day. The in-person town halls and virtual Career Week may include all or a combination of:
 - A panel of employers from industry, NGOs, and agencies who describe what jobs and internships are available, what skills are needed, and how to apply
 - Training and advice for job seekers interested in industry, NGO, or agency sector jobs
 - CV and resume development targeted for different positions in a range of sectors
 - Application preparation and interview skills for different position types
 - Resources for navigating career transitions between academic and non-academic careers and leadership or management roles
 - Discussions of training and certification programs and how to apply

Timing – In-person town halls will alternate between Ocean Science Meetings (winter 2026, winter 2028) and Marine Technology Society meetings (fall 2027, fall 2029). Virtual Career Week will occur annually in the summer.

Estimated financial cost – Annual in-person town hall costs are expected to be minimal but may include room rentals and meeting registration for coordinators

Metric for success – Increases in townhall and career week attendance and post-event survey responses from registered participants

Action 3.2 – Support and host or co-host networking receptions aimed at bringing together industry, NGOs, and agencies with members seeking career opportunities in these areas. These receptions may occur in conjunction with town halls at meetings or at locations around the world where maritime career opportunities are clustered (e.g., the reception co-hosted with SeaBird Scientific in Seattle, WA in June 2023).

Timing – In-person post-town hall receptions will alternate between Ocean Sciences Meetings (winter 2026, winter 2028) and Marine Technology Society meetings (fall 2027, fall 2029).

Estimated financial cost – \$15,000 Annually (100 people), funded through corporate sponsorships

Metric for success – Increase in event attendance over time, post-event survey responses from registered participants

Action 3.3 – Establish a TOS committee consisting of members from industry, NGOs, and agency sectors. This committee will provide guidance and recommendations to the TOS Council on issues related to Goal 3. Committee responsibilities will be to:

- Assist TOS in coordinating town halls, Career Week, and networking events to ensure diverse attendance and participation and that the information provided is relevant to the industry, NGOs, and agency sectors
- Work with the TOS Council to evaluate how best to include the voice of industry, NGOs, and agency sectors in Council decisions, such as adding additional councilor positions to represent their communities

Timing – Committee members will be asked to serve 3-year terms

Estimated financial cost – None

Metric for success – Establishment of a committee that delivers actionable recommendations to the TOS Council that serves this segment of membership

III. SUPPORT UNDERGRADUATE AND GRADUATE STUDENTS

TOS currently provides a broad suite of support for student members such as:

- Providing travel grants to the Ocean Sciences Meetings and Ocean Optics Conferences
- Hosting the TOS Breakfast at the Ocean Sciences meeting
- Providing volunteer opportunities throughout the conferences
- Convening workshops on topics relevant to students during conferences
- Maintaining the Graduate Student/Early Career Resources page (<https://tos.org/opportunities>) and Undergraduate Resources page (<https://tos.org/undergrad>)
- Including announcements of relevant opportunities for students in TOS NEWS
- Hosting virtual webinars such as *Forging Your Career in Academia and Industry*
- Providing leadership development opportunities through inclusion of the elected Student Councilor as a voting member of the Council and the appointment of a TOS Student representative as a core committee member for the Ocean Sciences Meeting Planning Committee

Goal 4 – Increase student members’ sense of belonging in TOS

Implementation:

Action 4.1 – Expand student opportunities for those who receive a travel award such as special table or recognition at TOS Breakfast at OSM, serving as a panelist or facilitator for TOS online programming such as a CV workshop, etc.

Timing – Annually at either the Ocean Science Meeting (winter 2026, winter 2028) or Marine Technology Society meeting (fall 2027, fall 2029)

Estimated financial cost – None

Metric for success – Increased visibility for award recipients leading to increased applications for travel awards as well as post-meeting survey responses from travel award recipients

Action 4.2 – Include student opportunities for those who receive a research award such as serving as a peer mentor to future research award recipients, being a TOS undergraduate research ambassador to talk about the research process, etc.

Timing – Annually

Estimated financial cost – None

Metric for success – Increased visibility for award recipients leading to increased applications for research awards as well as post-experience survey responses from research award recipients

Action 4.3 – Provide professional development and career readiness programs and include programs for undergraduate students exploring the possibility of graduate school to pursue ocean research

Timing – Annually

Estimated financial cost – None

Metric for success – Increases in numbers of participants and post-event survey responses from registered participants

Action 4.4 – Guide members through the transition from student membership to professional membership by describing the benefits of TOS membership as one moves forward in their career

Timing – Annually

Estimated financial cost – None

Metric for success – Increased retention of student members as early career members through time

OUR VISION FOR THE FUTURE

The long-term objective of The Oceanography Society is to attract and serve a vibrant membership community that spans disciplines and career trajectories. We hope our members view us as a source of nurturing, support, guidance, and community. This 2025-2030 strategic plan provides an actional roadmap to guide the Council to better serve our members.