Candidates for 2016-2017 SDA National Executive Committee

The SDA National Nominating Committee worked diligently throughout the year to fulfill the responsibilities entrusted to the committee by the membership. The National Nominating committee reached out to several eligible SDA members and would like to thank each candidate who took the time to speak with us about their future leadership goals. We also initiated a campaign to promote the eligibility criteria amongst all members to help ensure all members are familiar with their Leadership Path within SDA, which will hopefully culminate in service at the executive committee level.

Special thanks to all who served on this year’s committee: Debra Ellis-Denver Chapter, Janet Bucholdt-Minneapolis/St. Paul Chapter, Lynda Meyer-Hampton Road Chapter, Wendy Callahan-New York Chapter, Monica Hodges – San Antonio Chapter, and Stephanie Kirschner, SDA Executive Director.

The 2015-2016 National Nominating Committee is pleased to submit the following slate of candidates for the 2016-2017 SDA National Executive Committee. Each candidate was asked to share their SDA philosophy, Strengths, Focus, and Experiences on their application - You can read each member’s full application on the national website.

The 2016-2017 SDA National Executive Committee

Philosophy
As we all know, SDA is education first. Staying on the forefront of technologies and trends in our field is vital to our careers and has a huge impact and benefit to our firms. The educational programming offered by SDA is instrumental in keeping its members up to date and ahead of the curve to the changes in the A/E/C industry. Along with the educational programs SDA offers the certification program that when obtained gives its members the validation and confidence that they have achieved the qualifications needed to perform their jobs and advance their careers.

Strengths
I believe the strongest strength I have brought and will continue is the ability to work as a team. I thoroughly enjoy the comradery gained by working in a group. I find the diverse viewpoints intriguing and the discussions enlightening and inspiring. As I take on the new role as President, I look forward to facilitating meetings, setting the tone for discussions and leading. With leadership comes confidence, increased self-esteem and focus. Since joining SDA I feel I have attained the skills it takes to envision the future and set the path to obtain goals. I am very excited about taking on this position.

Focus
As president I will focus on inspiring members find their path in the organization. Whatever direction that may be; individually or helping get their chapter more connected, or moving up to the national level. It is important to me that each member know they have something to contribute and that they are valuable to the organization and to other members. I will focus on the strategic plan set in place to increase the visibility of SDA to principals, firms, related businesses and organizations to increase membership.
Experiences
Serving on the executive committee and being a member of this organization in general has given me the skill of teamwork. Being a part of discussions, brainstorming and planning has taught me listen, and contribute, to be mindful of others thoughts and ideas. The ability to handle family, career and volunteer commitments has taught me leadership skills and provided a path to where now I feel I am capable of leading this organization for the next term.

Philosophy
SDA gave me a great kick start to my career in the A/E/C Industry. It has been an invaluable resource for my company and me. When you work in a smaller firm, the resources that you need are not always available. It is nice to be able to connect with someone that might have had the same challenges that you are facing and help you through them. The monthly luncheons are always a great way to learn about a new topic to see if it interest you or to take the information back to someone at your office. The contacts that I have made within SDA are invaluable. The experience of working on a national board has also stretched me to reach outside my comfort zone and break that glass ceiling that I had set for myself again. SDA is a great resource for many people when they were looking for connections, jobs, and friendship. Thanks to SDA, I had the courage to tackle many challenges and the knowledge to make it happen. That is want SDA has meant to me and my career. It is SDA that showed me that I can make a career out of administrative work.

Strengths
Technical: MS Office Suite (Word, Excel, PowerPoint, Access), Quark, InDesign, Photoshop, Deltek Vision People/Leadership: Office Manager/Executive Assistant for 14 years, National SDA Treasurer (2 year), Leadership positions in Local SDA Chapter 4 Years, Regional Leadership: Chair of Conference, Committee member, Treasurer, Asst. Den Leader for Cub Scouts (4 Years), Girl Scout Leader (5 years)

Focus
I would like to work on the services that are supplied to the members. We have a task force working on our outward message. I would like to work on the internal message and resources.

Experiences
During my tenure on ExCom, I have come to realize that it takes an army to move the mountain forward. We are all just a small part of the bigger picture. I have worked with ExCom on the 30,000 SF view and have been able to collaborate virtually and help to make decisions to move the organization forward. I have learned out to work with and present information in a way that everyone can relate to and is easy to understand.

I have had to communicate in person, on conference calls, doing speeches, and virtually throughout my tenure with SDA. I have had to juggle all the pieces of my commitments, my job and my family. This also requires many moving parts and being able to multi-task to make it all happen.

Part of my responsibility as President-Elect will be helping to plan the conventions. I have experience in this as I have planned a company-wide retreat twice a year for 13 years. I have also planned a regional conference for SDA.
National Vice President
Pat Leyden, CDFA
New York Chapter

Philosophy
I have been a member of SDA since 2004, and have served in many capacities in the SDA. I value my SDA membership, connections, and educational opportunities that yield results in a very practical manner. I hold a deep conviction that SDA has made me wiser, more adaptable, and better able to work as a team with diverse personalities. The association of a group of professionals who perform the same functions AND in the same industry is unique and extremely valuable.

Having been on ExCom this past year, I would very much like to continue the work we have begun as a team, especially on the 3 year Strategic Plan which we developed in 2 intensive days prior to EDS15 in Golden, CO. The Strategic Plan will require dedication in terms of time, organization, and a lot of thought process to look at areas in a new light. I have found the ExCom Committee to be enthusiastic, smart, and results-oriented, and they challenge me to think harder and outside the box. The same goes for the dedicated leadership on the chapter level.

I also believe I have strengths in many areas that can help ExCom. I have spent all of my SDA career serving on chapter committees, the chapter board, and then moving to National a few years ago to serve on National committees and last year, on ExCom. This is the classic path for SDA members who wholeheartedly believe in the importance of this organization. In my career, I have worked my way from secretary to office manager to VP of Administration, and am comfortable with all levels of staff and client. As head of office administrative systems and facilities management, I have supervised staff and outside vendors, run internal and external events, formed and run committees, and also worked solo when needed to get the best results. I have been lucky enough to participate at a management level, and I understand the challenges of running a firm, which translates well to a non-profit organization. As a member of Canstruction NY, I have seen the struggle of the non-profit arena.

In terms of the areas of focus I would champion beyond the Strategic Plan, I would like to continue in my role as Liaison to the Membership Committee and as a member of the Education Committee. I believe both to be extremely important assets of SDA, and am happy to lend my hand to the members of these committees. A personal goal of mine is to recruit more members from my firm to SDA. This past year I have been successful in recruiting two of our office managers and have gotten my firm to become a national sponsor.

In summary, I would be honored to be selected to serve another term on the SDA National Executive Committee and hope to contribute to its success in 2016-17.

National Secretary
Brooke Simcik, CDFA
Dallas Chapter

Philosophy
The achievements of the exceptional leaders who have served on ExCom, and the countless number of chapter leaders that promote SDA and the success of our members is humbling. The cumulative effect of
what these professionals have accomplished, is a true source of inspiration to me. Almost daily, I am inspired, motivated and sometimes left in awe by the actions, words or wisdom shared by a member.

President Ronald Reagan once said: “There are no great limits to growth because there are no limits of human intelligence, imagination, and wonder”.

My philosophy about SDA is a reflection of President Reagan sentiments. Our growth as individuals or as an organization is boundless. We should encourage each other daily to imagine, wonder and continuously seek to be more than we have before. I couple this philosophy with a desire to honor the professionals that have served before me, and to help build on their past successes.

Through relationships, education and the decades of shared knowledge that I can call upon at any given time, I save my firm time, money and add value to their bottom line. I believe that if an A/E/C firm wants to provide their administrative professionals the best tool for success, then an SDA membership should be mandatory.

The future is bright, fantastic and promising for SDA.

Strengths
The desire to see others happy and successful drives me, and I see this as a strength. I believe that being happy is the key to success not the contrary, and yes it took a while to arrive at this door. I am determined, like to encourage imagination/creativity and TRULY believe that 5 minds are greater than one. Planning, strategy and setting priorities are all within my comfort zone, and I have been told this is where I excel. I am effectively organized, pragmatic, and a numbers person that enjoys being around people. I am capable of working independently to get a desired result; however, I prefer to work in the company of other talented professionals. I enjoy connecting great people. Being resourceful helps circumvent most obstacles; however, developing an understanding that not all things can be accomplished overnight has served me well. Over the last 5 years this is where SDA has played a vital role in my professional development. By picking up the phone or sending an email to ask a question or get the opinion of an SDA associate, I often feel more confident in a resolve, and on several instances this has saved hours. I am kind, understanding; however, I am not weak, and I will take a stand for the greater cause.

Selected weaknesses, my thoughts never end, and I find it hard to slow down; therefore my writing suffers, and I often ask others to edit what I write. While I work on it daily, I don’t always ask the right questions before coming to a conclusion. I can get off track trying to do too much, and I am learning to stay focused in my own lane when working on specific projects. I am getting better at not sweating the small stuff, and most things are “the small stuff”.

Trust is a strength and weakness for me. If I trust someone, I will go to the ends of the earth to help accomplish the objective. However, if trust is lost, I become complacent. This is a struggle as few things are ever so black and white. What can seem to be a decision made from neglect or lack of ethics is many times a decision made based on circumstances at the time or based on available resources or lack thereof. Being aware of these grey areas is helping me become a better professional. As Aesop wrote in a fable, ‘A reed before the wind lives on, while mighty oaks do fall’.

Focus
My focus is about helping others. Be it taking notes, helping design a program, leading a meeting or mentoring, I’ll give it the best that I have at that time.

Cliché or not, it is important for me that our members know that history is filled with ordinary people doing extraordinary things – believing in oneself is powerful. Helping encourage others to seek to be the change they want to see is important to me. Additionally, I’d like to be a part of helping enhance our members overall SDA experience.
**Experiences**
The vast majority of my career has been in a management position, helping develop goals and objectives that benefit an entire organization. This includes connecting the right partners to help implement what is required to accomplish these goals from inception to completion.

I have taken time to learn about SDA. With the exception of Treasurer, I have held every position at the local level, including partaking on all the committees during the last 5 years, and have served as National Membership Chair allowing me the opportunity to work with "long distant" teams.

Technically, I have been considered the leader on many teams throughout my career. In these positions, I see myself more of a servant than a dictator. I believe in surrounding myself with other leaders. Therefore, I get to embrace being one player on a team of leaders. There are leaders in every department, and many don’t have the title one might expect.

As a volunteer, I am learning to embrace results no matter how small or big.

I am a communicator and multi-tasker at the very core of my being, and have gotten much better at time management over the years.

I have been a Corporate Secretary or Officer of Corporations for over 20 years. Therefore, I understand the importance of the position, and will do my best to fulfill the obligations of the position.

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**National Treasurer**
Susan Lankey, CDFA
Hampton Roads Chapter

**Philosophy**
As most of you know, I’ve been with the same firm for almost 20 years now. I’ve never worked in another A/E Firm, or really anywhere else. SDA has been so incredible for me to gain confidence in what I do, especially when I see so many other firms practicing the same concepts and methods. When I first joined, I was hesitant to speak my mind during our programs, just because I felt like I wasn’t "worldly" enough. It was great to have 3rd party validation on things that we were doing. Plus, everyone was so supportive and encouraging. It didn’t take long before I was truly interacting with our presenters and members. I have now served as our Chapter Secretary, Vice President, National Secretary, and also through the National Membership Committee. It’s amazing how far you can get out of your comfort zone before you even realize it. I now do things that previously I’ve despised in the past, mainly writing!!! It takes so much skill to make words flow, still make sense and not be boring. I have so much respect for our members and leaders who make it look so easy.

I love our members, and while serving as Treasurer, that’s where I would like to put our focus. It was awesome being on the Quarterly Town Hall calls this year, and hearing excitement from Chapters, as well as frustration. I’m sure none of us want to feel like we’re the only ones not connecting and making things happen. So, when excited Chapters are spilling their secrets on the things that they do to keep their members happy, it’s so easy to borrow their ideas and rejuvenate our frustrated Chapters. Life, family, and work keep us so busy, that the ideas just thrown out that we didn’t have to think of ourselves, really make it easier on us all.

I look forward to working with ExCom again, and all SDA members in order to achieve our goals. This is a wonderful opportunity, and I’m really excited to be part of it.
Philosophy
My philosophy of SDA is the summation of blending all the learning, experiences and opportunities I accumulated over the past 14 years as a member.

Going back to the beginning…I fell in respect with SDA when I attended my first national convention in San Diego. The education you receive as a member, on the local and national level, is unique to the fact that the lessons all apply to our industry. I believe career growth comes from attending SDA seminars.

Joining the chapter board and holding the positions of Corresponding Secretary, Vice-President and President gave me the leadership skills needed to serve the members and my firm. It also taught me about parliamentary procedures and gave me an understanding of governance.

Serving on a National Committee or chairing an event like Canstruction®, a conference or even a host chapter party is a great training ground and a conduit where you can collaborate with other members, be creative by sharing your ideas and opinions, and build yourself up, and others, for future leadership roles. And I believe the most effective leaders are the ones who figure out how best to use what they've got.

And what I've got are my natural talents, which have all been uncovered and strengthened through years of learning, experience and opportunities within the SDA.

Strengths
Strengths and skills I bring to ExCom are from my SDA experiences; presiding as Chapter President for four years, chairing the OC's first Canstruction event and participating in some capacity on the committee ever since, chairing the 2007 WSRC in Orange County, and chairing the Host Chapter Party at the 2006 National Convention in Los Angeles.

If you have ever held one of these positions you know the skills needed to succeed including smart decision-making, proficient record keeping, open-minded communication, exceptional organization skills and smart time-management. Also my years on the Executive Committee as Secretary, President-Elect and National President have strengthen my leadership skills.

Focus
1) My main goal this year is to encourage the membership to make a difference. I want to be someone who gives back, someone who inspires our members to be more involved or to take on leadership roles.
2) Help strengthen our chapter numbers by increasing awareness of SDA through Social Media and Networking, creating partnerships with engineering organizations and other associations, and working on member retention.
3) Create a Strategic Plan that improves the society and work to implement the action items.

Experiences
All of my experiences, both personally and professionally, have prepared me for national office.

Submitted by the 2015-2016 National Nominating Committee:
Sarah Wallace – Chair, Debra Ellis, Janet Bucholdt, Lynda Meyer, Wendy Callahan, Monica Hodges, and Stephanie Kirschner.