

Secretary Q&A

Questions submitted will be posted here once one or more responses from the candidates have been received. Candidate responses will be posted in the order they are received. Until a candidate has submitted a response to a specific question, their name will not appear in the "[Candidate] Responds" section of the Q&A.

To see the candidates for Secretary:

- [Alyssa Fox](#)
- [Michael Opsteegh](#)

To see the posted questions and answers for each position:

- [Vice President](#)
- [Director](#)
- [Secretary](#)
- [Nominating Committee](#)

Q. 1: What will you do to bring member dues in line, end the nickel and diming for every

resource, and steer STC toward serving its members and the profession instead of building an empire? - Dennis Camilleri

Alyssa Fox Responds:

I'm an STC member too, and also want to continue to receive as much value for my membership as possible. I want to help STC find ways to offer more value to its members and grow its membership.

I believe the society is becoming more budget-conscious so they can deliver the most value for our members' dollars. I'm interested to see if there are ways to reduce member fees in various areas, but until I know what the budget actually looks like, I can't promise something that I don't know if I can deliver. I'd like to explore how STC can continue to provide high value – through education and leadership resources, possible partnerships with vendors for member discounts, and possible partnerships with other organizations.

I'm also interested in how we can apply lessons learned at the chapter level to the society level. For example, STC Houston has run on a zero-based budget for several years now. We've adapted to a changing environment in various ways, such as changing the scale of our annual awards celebration to fit the recent constraints of the economy, but still holding some sort of event to congratulate our peers. Adding more social events for networking in addition to program meetings has provided more value to our local members. We should explore how can we do things like this on a larger scale. As members' needs and values change, STC should adapt and change with them.

Michael Opsteegh Responds:

In the interest of full disclosure, I should say that my employer has graciously reimbursed me for my member dues. I may be one of the lucky few who can still claim membership dues on an expense report. That doesn't mean that my dues are assured indefinitely. Each year, I must convince my boss that my STC membership is a valuable asset that benefits me and the company. I believe the benefits of STC justify the cost, but I can understand other member's concerns about making ends meet.

As a chapter leader, I have seen my vibrant chapter shrink 300 members to just 80 in only five years, and I have had painful discussions with long-time chapter members and former volunteers who can't afford to renew due to economic hardships. I see that many members agonize over the high cost of membership.

I believe our current STC leaders have taken steps in the right direction. Membership dues have not been raised since they spiked three years ago. Additionally, the New TC Professional entry-level membership for \$160 is a great way to entice recent grads in entry-level positions. The STC alumni program was a great way for members to come back without losing their years of membership or member status.

These recent initiatives however haven't done much to relieve the burden of the members who are well beyond graduation and who have maintained their memberships. More should be done.

I'd like to see STC survey similar professional associations to determine costs of membership and compare the benefits included with membership. I'd like to see those results published so that all of our members have access to this information. For example, when I look at ASTD, a closely related professional association, I see that their membership dues are currently \$199, which is only slightly lower than our STC dues. What benefits am I getting from STC that I wouldn't get from ASTD and vice versa?

I'd also like to see STC offer a two- or three-year membership, where members could save money by buying in bulk (so to speak). I'd also like to see STC extend benefits to recently-lapsed members who are unemployed or underemployed to give them access to resources that can help them find work again.

Membership costs and value will continue to be hot topic in the ensuing year. If you have

suggestions, you have my ear.

Q. 2: What will you do to ensure that Board meeting minutes are posted in a timely fashion? As of 1/30/12, the last Board minutes posted were from July, yet the Board has met monthly. How important do you think these minutes are to keep the membership updated on the Society's direction?

Alyssa Fox Responds:

□ Communication with society members is critical to understanding their needs and how the society can provide value to them. Timely posting of the board meeting minutes is essential to keeping our members informed of how the board is addressing those areas. It also opens up the conversation for members to provide feedback about the society's governance and direction.

The secretary position requires someone who's detail-oriented and prompt. In my job, I track multiple projects at once. For these projects to be successful, it's important that I keep information about the projects organized and easily accessible, so all stakeholders are synced up. Delivering meeting minutes and critical information on a timely basis is a huge part of that project success. I plan to transfer those same information gathering and rapid delivery skills to the secretary position to ensure board meeting minutes are assembled, approved, and posted as quickly as possible.

Michael Opsteegh Responds:

I will make sure minutes are approved at the following board meeting and posted on MySTC in a timely manner. Transparency is vitally important to any elected body, but it seems even more important to STC due to its culture.

I'm not sure why the minutes have not been posted since July, but I will look into the matter and correct it. I'll verify with a member each month that the latest minutes are visible on MySTC and not caught up somewhere in the access rights settings of the content management system.

Q. 3: The STC Secretary role is probably the most challenging role on the Board. This is because you have many tactical activities within your perview, but you are also expected to participate fully in all strategic discussions and contribute your best thinking to setting STC's strategic direction. It takes a special person to do this well, and is so much more than producing meeting minutes --- the official, legal record of board meetings, not a primary communication vehicle for members on board decisions and actions --- on time. Tell us what experience you have that will help us understand why you are the better choice for Secretary.

Michael Opsteegh Responds:

In my chapter, the tactical management of council meetings and special business meetings are among the chapter president's duties. Having served as chapter president for two years, I was responsible for tracking down committee members and officers to retrieve a summary of their report and to collect any materials or presentations that were required at the council meetings and coordinating the agenda with the secretary. More often than not, everything fell into place, but sometimes, it was like herding cats. I find that taking notes, keeping checklists, and reaching out to folks early is a big help in managing a meeting or a conference call.

Alyssa Fox Responds:

I've held several positions that set strategy and involve implementation of that strategy, including Information Development manager, various roles on the STC Houston administrative council including President, and chair of a development process leadership team. Each of these positions required me to think strategically, lead and participate in discussions along those lines, contribute to and deliver meeting minutes on deadline, and lead implementation of the strategies discussed.

I manage a team of information developers who work on multiple projects in my organization. My management role requires me to participate in many tactical activities such as writing, editing, usability testing, reviewing plans, budgeting, and resource management. However, my role also requires that I think strategically to help shape my team's future. I keep up with where our industry is headed so our skills remain relevant and we continue to provide value to our organization.

In addition to managing my direct reports, I participate in strategic initiatives for the entire Engineering team, and sometimes beyond that. For example, I currently serve on a scrum implementation team that helps define and improve our agile practices across the organization. I have established relationships with colleagues in Product Management, Sales, Technical Support, Development, and Product Marketing to help drive strategic plans across the organization.

I have managed to participate fully in these strategic objectives while continuing effective project and people management across the 20+ projects for which I'm responsible. Clear communication and excellent organization are key when balancing the tactical and strategic facets of any effort. My self-evident abilities in these areas will help me to meet the challenge of the Secretary position and contribute fully to Board discussions while driving the tactical areas I need to as well.

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