

—President's Message

"I've learned that people will forget what you said, people will forget what you did, but people will never forget how you made them feel."

—Maya Angelou

Where were you when you heard that the Laser Interferometer Gravitational-Wave Observatory (LIGO) had detected gravitational waves? I was in my office when I heard the "rumor," but was at an OSA governance meeting when the actual announcement came on 11 February. In fact, we stopped the meeting to watch it streaming live. We all felt that we were watching history in the making.

Einstein thought humans might never be able to measure such small effects. But thanks to the orders-of-magnitude increase in accuracy and sensitivity in optical science and engineering, it happened. Indeed, our community put the "LI" in LIGO—lasers and interferometers are what we do. Moreover, the hope is that many commercial applications enabled by optics may experience dramatic increases in performance in the future due to the advances needed to make LIGO work.

Who will experience and herald that future? Who will say, decades from now, "I remember where I was when they announced the measurement of gravitational waves"? It is, of course, student and recent-graduate members of OSA, who are the society's crown jewels. The fastest-growing segment of OSA membership, these individuals represent a growing fraction of our authors and conference attendees, and are perhaps the most important reason for celebrating our Centennial.

Ira Flatow—the host of Public Radio International's *Science Friday*—recently appeared as the speaker at one of OSA's first Centennial events. In that talk, he noted, with examples drawn from across popular culture, that the value and excitement of science is becoming more mainstream in society. That's a thought that inspired the entire audience that heard it. Similarly, those of us who have long histories with OSA have a responsibility to make our younger members *feel good* about being part of our community. OSA takes to heart the quote by Benjamin Franklin, "Tell me and I forget. Teach me and I remember. Involve me and I learn."

These members, like others, are motivated by intellectual stimulation, recognition, appreciation, respect, fairness and a vision forward. Oh—and gainful employment! We can help them build high-quality résumés with publications in prestigious journals and conferences; give them access at our conferences to technology leaders and hiring opportunities; give them leadership opportunities of their own; keep them abreast of hot topics, emerging fields and rising stars; and provide valuable and prestigious fellowships and awards. Engineers hate uncertainty. It's our responsibility to help them through the inevitable period of introspection and trepidation as they embark on their journey.

As one example of such help, OSA recently launched its Ambassadors program for young-professional members. The ten 2016 Ambassadors are emerging leaders who will provide professional development, technical knowledge and mentorship to students. I've met them, and their enthusiasm, vibrancy and quality are truly inspiring.

Whenever established members meet a younger person, they should always try to be great role models, and instill in that person the goals of quality, integrity and scientific excitement. Coming back to Einstein, he also said, "Setting an example is not the main means of influencing another; it is the only means."



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Respectfully and warmly submitted,

Alan Willner,
OSA President