



RAISING THE BAR

Enhancing the quality of our member services

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By the time this issue of the Right of Way Magazine is released, the COVID-19 pandemic will have forced the cancellation of the IRWA's International Education Conference for the first time in our history, and the Annual International Board of Directors Meeting will have taken place under a virtual format. No one could have predicted this would be the way we would begin our 86th year of serving the Association's membership of infrastructure real estate professionals. The impacts of the pandemic will continue to be felt for many months to come, and those impacts will change some of the ways the Association will operate, communicate and support our members. However, it will not change our resolve to provide the right of way community with the best possible education and networking opportunities.

Adapting to the Circumstances

While the Association's staff and volunteer leadership will carefully consider each step we must take to steer through the challenges ahead, rest assured that we will be proactive in looking for ways to manage the fiscal risks, while improving our service to members during these difficult and unique times. We have addressed some of the immediate education needs of our members and Chapters by "jumping into the deep end" with virtual classes; our staff, instructors and students have enthusiastically embraced the opportunity to try a new way of teaching and a new way of learning.



As we test these new waters and learn more about how this new format can fit into our vision of progressive and innovative education for our members, we will continue to be mindful of how this may affect our Chapters. We know that this form of connection is not a substitute for that irreplaceable camaraderie that is generated when IRWA members gather together to learn and share stories and experiences with one another. It is my hope that Chapter meetings and events will be back on the calendar very soon when it is safe to do so. We recognize that they are an important part of what makes our IRWA community special.

IRWA is about members getting involved, contributing, sharing, supporting others and making a difference. Ultimately, we work together to elevate our profession through education and networking. Our Chapters are where the action happens. It is where our members connect and learn. It is within our Chapters and our Regions that IRWA members raise their level of professionalism, enhance their ethical standards and then take what they have learned out into their communities. In doing so, they share that knowledge and use their new experiences to help improve the quality of life for everyone.

We know that the future world of work and lifelong learning is changing rapidly, and the scale of the COVID-19 pandemic has reshaped that world in lasting ways. We will adapt to these changes to ensure that our members are best prepared to continue their important work of improving people's quality of life through their critical roles in the establishment and maintenance of energy and transportation infrastructure.

Investing in Our Members

As I look to the year ahead, there is much to do. The International Executive Committee will support the new Chief Executive Officer as he continues to assess the operations at Headquarters. It will be important to find ways to improve efficiencies, support our employees to improve customer service and ensure that we continue to provide exemplary support to all our members across the globe. We will start the process of creating a new communications plan to ensure that all levels of the Association are hearing and listening to one another. Additionally, we will begin the work of creating a new leadership training program for our volunteers as was directed by our International Governing Council at the recent conclusion of the Governance project. Most importantly, I will ensure that we will not lose focus on the necessity of continuing to raise the bar of our education program. The time and effort required will be significant, as nothing of quality is created without significant investment, but investing in our members and their professional education is well worth it.

Over the coming months, the IRWA staff and our many volunteer leaders will be working hard to adapt to the changing landscape and I look forward to updating you on our progress. As they say, "Smooth seas do not make skillful sailors." We will be shaped and made more resilient by the challenges ahead. This year will teach us all some lessons on how to be better leaders, better world citizens and valued partners who care for one another and improve the quality of life in the communities where we live and work. My choices and decisions as International President will be founded in the values of our Association and my goal will be to maintain and enhance the quality of the services we provide our members.

An Impactful Year

I am grateful for the opportunity to serve this wonderful organization alongside people who have become friends and mentors. I am especially grateful for the dedication of the staff at Headquarters and the incredible loyalty of our volunteers who give so much time and energy to our Association. I am proud to be your International President and I look forward to the year ahead and the work we will do together.

Thank you. Merci. 🌍

