

Engagement in the AAPT Community

For many of us, AAPT has been our professional home for many years. Our community, which includes undergraduate and graduate students and instructors who teach students at all levels, is unique among professional organizations and continues to be a vibrant source of ideas, programs, and activities that serve our fundamental goal of ensuring the "dissemination of knowledge of physics, particularly by way of teaching." While the fundamental goal has not changed since 1930, the way we, as AAPT members, think about and address this goal is constantly evolving as our world changes and the values of our membership shifts.

At the 2019 Meeting of the Members, many of you learned that AAPT membership has had a fairly steady decline. This trend in organizational membership is not something specific to AAPT. Many science education organizations are seeing similar trends. While College and University membership in AAPT has remained relatively constant, HS teacher membership, in AAPT, has been decreasing since 2010.

While membership is only one piece of how AAPT engages with physics educators, it is an important piece that helps foster a collaborative community. As the educational enterprise changes, we are starting to see differences in how professionals interact and engage with professional organizations. For some, membership and being part of an organization, plays less of a role than thinking about how an organization serves specific needs. Many professionals are looking for relationships with professional societies that are more transactional.¹ Other members are juggling memberships in multiple societies, and with strained resources, are finding themselves making tough decisions on what organization to join. AAPT is constantly asking itself about member value and we are constantly asking the question: Are we serving the needs of our diverse community in the best possible way with our existing resources? It is questions like this, along with feedback from our members, that guide our activities and help our organization remain healthy, vibrant and useful to our diverse membership.

While we have work to do to make sure AAPT continues to best serve all of its members, AAPT's overall health is good: Our membership has expertise to tackle important issues for our time, our journals are highly regarded and valued, our meeting attendance is robust – our last summer meeting in DC was our largest meeting yet, our programs to support teachers at all levels remain important tools for the new teacher as well as the experienced teacher.

What can you do to help the physics education community engage with AAPT? You can: encourage your colleagues to join AAPT; give us feedback on ways we can better serve the needs of our members by emailing us at eo@aapt.org; donate to AAPT, at www.aapt.org, to bring physics educators who have fewer resources into our community.

AAPT continues to rely on its membership for exciting ideas, discussions, activities, and collaborations. We thank you for your continuing support.

Mel Sabella, AAPT President

Beth Cunningham, AAPT Executive Officer

¹https://www.asacenter.org/resources/articles/an_magazine/2014/july-august/the-new-rules-for-a-thriving-membership-model (retrieved 1-23-2019)

Chandralekha Singh, AAPT President Elect
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