

## GWSAE & ASAE Consolidation "Concept" Draws Feedback

*Integration Steering Committee  
Created*

By Lee Park

One week after the dust began to settle from the news the Greater Washington Society of Association Executives (GWSAE), the Center for Association Leadership, the American Society of Association Executives (ASAE) Foundation and the educational programs of ASAE have agreed in principal on consolidation, the questions pour in.

Susan Sarfati, CAE, president and CEO of GWSAE and the Center for Association Leadership, told *USAE* she has received "hundreds" of emails and phone calls since the announcement was made Jan. 15.

According to Sarfati and John H. Graham, IV, president and CEO of ASAE, the boards of GWSAE, the Center for Association Leadership and ASAE voted unanimously in favor of the principal of consolidation. On the ASAE Foundation board, however, all voted in favor of the consolidation but one member.

To address the concerns and questions that have arisen, GWSAE and ASAE will host a Town Hall Jan. 28 from 5:30 to 7:30 p.m. at the Reagan Building in Washington, D.C.

Sarfati said attendance demands were so high that the Town Hall had to be moved out of its original location in the Marriott Learning Complex to another room in the building.

"In the first day, 230 people registered," said Sarfati. "I'm very, very gratified how

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much people care and their genuine way of expressing their issues."

Another Town Hall is scheduled for Feb. 10 from 5:15 to 6:15 p.m. in the ballroom of the Baltimore Convention Center during the ASAE M&T Conference.

Sarfati said there had been "overwhelming positive feedback" and that 95 percent of those contacting her have indicated that the consolidation is "a great idea."

She said some members have even recognized similar challenges within their own association's profession, and that the consolidation could almost serve as a blueprint for other organizations to follow to eliminate redundancy.

"I'm really excited about the volume of feedback because we're interested in hearing from our members and stakeholders," she said. "People outside the D.C. area want assurance that we're not going to become a more Washington, D.C.-centric organization."

Sarfati wouldn't divulge specifically what comments suppliers were submitting, but she said she is currently assembling issues to address – based on the feedback from members and suppliers – during the upcoming Town Hall meeting.

Graham told *USAE* he had also received "hundreds" of emails with questions from members and suppliers and agreed that it was "95 to 5 favorable."

"I couldn't imagine it being much more favorable," he said. "There's really no negative comments as much as there are questions. The announcement was very well received."

Graham said most of the questions came from members "outside the Beltway," wanting to know what the consolidation could potentially mean for the allied societies across the country.

"I think this is a tremendous opportunity for ASAE to focus its activities and efforts in Washington, D.C. and outside the Beltway," Graham said was his response to the queries. "That, to me, is where the growth is. It's more service to people outside the Beltway."

In order to coordinate the combined staffs, Sarfati and Graham indicated during the Jan. 15 meeting they would form a committee to address staffing and operation issues.

On Jan. 20, Graham and Sarfati established the Integration Steering Committee that will "be chartered to map out the integration of ASAE/Center function consistent with the conceptual model agreed to January 15, 2004."

The committee, with Graham and Sarfati

acting as sponsors – a term to be defined at its first meeting – will feature Scott Steen, COO of The Center for Association Leadership and Sarah Varner, CAE, executive vice president of the ASAE Foundation as co-chairs.

The following sub committees have also been formed, with co-chairs of each able to add additional staff as appropriate:

- Budget and Due Diligence: co-chaired by Malcolm S. Karl, CAE, CFO and senior vice president of ASAE, and Lori B. Derkay, CAE, senior vice president of GWSAE;

- Communications: co-chaired by Ron McNally, CAE, vice president of business development, marketing and public relations for GWSAE, and Jim Clarke, senior vice president of public policy and strategic relations;

- Education: co-chaired by Greta Kotler, CAE, senior vice president of professional development and credentialing, and Anne Blouin, chief learning officer at GWSAE;

- Human Resources: co-chaired by Derkay and Bob Skelton, director of human resources at ASAE;

- Services for Members: co-chaired by Susan Robertson, senior vice president of member relations and business development for ASAE, and McNally;

- Publications: co-chaired by Liz Ware Whittemore, vice president of GWSAE and publisher of *Executive Update* magazine, and Robertson;

- Sponsorship: co-chaired by Brent Mundt, vice president of development for the ASAE Foundation, and Whittemore;

- Technology: co-chaired by Reginald Henry, vice president of Knowledge Services and Technology for GWSAE, and Terrance W. Wilson, director of technology for ASAE;

- Trade Shows: co-chaired by Blouin and Robertson; and

- Volunteer Transition: co-chaired by Michele M. Mason, CAE, vice president of research programs for ASAE and Derkay.

Aside from the two planned Town Hall meetings, Sarfati said other events will be scheduled to keep association and supplier members informed. She said there are many questions that have arisen in the industry and that it's good there is so much conversation taking place about the consolidation.

"GWSAE members want to be able to keep the ease of getting involved, the ability to participate in a large community," said Sarfati. "The fact that there are so many emails and calls show how much people care about their profession and their job and their career. People want the culture of GWSAE to carry on. I'm heartened by the overwhelming positive response."