

Wednesday, January 18, 2017

Director's Matters: Looking back, looking forward

Robert G.W. Brown, CEO



We hope you all have had a wonderful start to 2017! As we celebrate the start of the New Year, it's time to take stock of what we have achieved over the past 12 months and of what's on the horizon for the coming year.

In 2016 AIP initiated a comprehensive strategic planning effort. This is not an initiative with an end date but rather a change in culture for AIP to be continuously renewing itself and planning for the future. We have established three main goals for the institute and dozens of program-level goals, all accompanied by an initial set of key performance indicators. The main goals are:

- Develop and serve an inclusive, diverse, and connected federation of Member Societies.
- Think and grow globally.
- Promote the physical sciences through preeminent communications and public engagement.

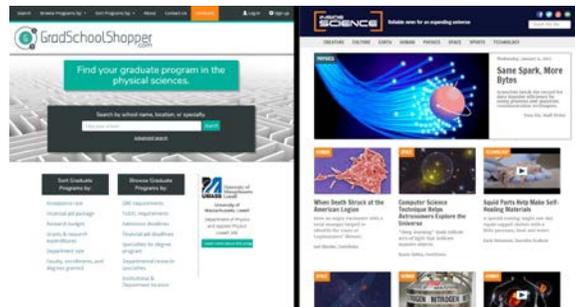
Perhaps the biggest program highlight of the year came from the Society of Physics Students, with the [2016 Quadrennial Congress of Sigma Pi Sigma](#). We far surpassed our goal for attendance and achieved the maximum capacity of 1,200 attendees. To the best of our knowledge, it was the largest single gathering of undergraduate physics and astronomy majors in the world, ever. Read more about the history of PhysCon and the 2016 event [here](#).

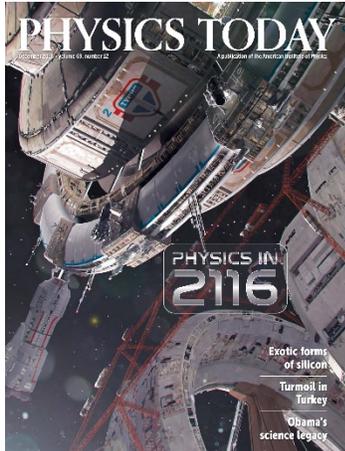


Students attending PhysCon gather for a tour near the welcome sign at SLAC. Photo by Ken Cole

Our government relations team put a monumental effort into laying the groundwork for a significant expansion of offerings. We engaged heavily in market research to better understand stakeholder needs and our opportunities for growth. We have built capacity to better serve our Member Societies with customized government relations and advocacy services. We have likewise built capacity to expand our suite of [FYI products](#). *FYI This Week* is in its beta phase and will launch this month.

Our web team worked closely with [GradSchoolShopper](#) to introduce a major upgrade to improve the user experience—GradSchoolShopper is now 100 percent mobile responsive and allows users to create accounts, save their searches, and more easily compare programs. The web team also worked with [Inside Science](#) on its new, completely revamped site and has many active projects underway to improve the success and reach of AIP programs.





[Physics Today](#) (PT) started the year with a brand-new look and is currently undergoing a major strategic business review. One celebrated feature was an article by Nobel laureate Frank Wilczek, who speculated on the state of physics in 100 years' time. He challenged readers to submit their own predictions, and the best essays were published in the December issue. (Read the winning essay [here](#).) [The Career Network](#) hosted three online seminars, with titles including *Women in STEM*, *Outstanding Oral Presentations*, and *Preparing a Winning Poster*. Our team there continues to deliver truly excellent customer service to network partners.

Thanks to the history staff, AIP hosted the [Third Biennial Early-Career Conference for Historians of the Physical Sciences](#) from April 6–10, 2016. Forty young scholars participated, representing eight countries, from Spain to Malaysia.

[The Statistical Research Center \(SRC\)](#) launched the physics teacher survey, a large project that we conduct every four years to gather data to support this community. SRC also found that U.S. physics bachelors in 2015 were at an all-time high—nearly 8,000! The SRC also works with our Member Societies on projects that are important to them. Some examples for 2016 include work with AAPT on a survey for computational physics and with the APS Panel on Public Affairs, among others.

The Big Top Physics Pavilion at the USA Science and Engineering Festival in April was a major draw, the result of a collaboration of nine physical science societies. Within AIP, SPS, Inside Science, and *Physics Today* made major contributions!



Demonstrating at the USA Science and Engineering Festival

The media services team is in the middle of a pilot program through which we provides \$5,000 of free media services to each of our Member Societies. This effort will increase the AIP value proposition. Secondly, they have building partnerships with popular Chinese news outlets in order to position AIP to reach that market with science news products.

We also made a concerted effort to understand and improve the Member Society value proposition. Early results were already mentioned throughout this report, and our work continues. We have increased our Member Society communications to help our societies better understand and utilize our offerings to get the most out of their membership with AIP.

Our finance and accounting team worked with programs to put together a strong budget to keep AIP healthy and growing in 2017. They have been working tirelessly to lay the groundwork for moving to Oracle Fusion, a new finance platform which will greatly improve our efficiencies and reporting capabilities.



Teams work together on the ideation exercise at the Innovation and Entrepreneurship for Scientists and Engineers short course, Sept. 27–28.

AIP's Corporate Associates program partnered with IBM, the University of the Witwatersrand, and the Joburg Centre for Software Engineering to organize a short course in South Africa on Innovation and Entrepreneurship. More than 30 participants attended sessions focused on skills needed to become a successful entrepreneur and lively discussions on how businesses are started in South Africa. Read more [here](#).

Our HR team introduced a new Employee Handbook, a project that was long overdue and took many months to complete. The team has kept us well staffed, bringing on board 23 new full-time employees for AIP—and 11 more for those Member Societies for whom we provide HR services—in 2016.

We are all enjoying new pantries, a new lunchroom, and new team collaboration spaces. We have also done major recabling work and installed a new VoIP phone system with enhanced conferencing capabilities.



New lunchroom at the American Center for Physics

Other notes of interest:

- AIP Marketing exhibited at national meetings for each of our 10 Member Societies.
- We completed a branding refresh to improve our communication, identity, and marketing materials.
- AIP launched a Venture Partnership Fund whereby our Member Societies were invited to apply for funding for new and innovative initiatives in partnership with AIP and other societies in the federation.

This year we will focus on refining the strategic plan and implementing a cycle by which new and existing programs are evaluated, implemented, or recast to better serve our many stakeholders.

Here's to a productive and healthy 2017!

Coming Up

January 20

AIP College Park office closed – Inauguration Day

January 22-26

97th AMS Annual Meeting (Seattle, WA)

January 23

AVS Board Meeting, (College Park, MD)

January 28-31

APS April Meeting (Washington, DC)