

National Association of Geoscience Teachers

Annual Report: Executive Director

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Anne E. Egger

This year, I will continue to use the format for my annual report that I initiated last year, organizing the description of my efforts by the primary responsibilities of the executive director:

- Promotion of the association's mission and coordination of its major programs and functions for essential annual operations,
- Management of an annual budget to ensure the long-term financial health of the organization,
- Support for activities of the Executive Committee and Council and where appropriate other bodies of the organization,
- Communication and coordination across the activities of the Sections, Divisions, Committees, Council and Executive Committee.

I believe this format helps the Executive Committee and others see how the work I am doing aligns with the mission of the organization and the expectations for the position. I end the report with some closing thoughts.

Promotion of NAGT's mission and coordination of major programs

Our mission and goals are the foundation for all our major programs. Because our *community* is the focus of our mission, the specific means by which we achieve our goals can change as our community and the world we live and work in changes. As Executive Director, I work to be responsive to our community in coordinating our major programs, maintaining a strong foundation in our mission. Because we are a small organization, I feel it is important for me to both *promote* and *engage in* our programming to make progress towards our goals. That work may involve leading our efforts in a particular area, developing a new strategy or program, or focusing our efforts to reduce expenses. This flexible and responsive approach has been particularly important in the recent past as external events have had a strong (and primarily negative) impact on our members, highlighting the need for our support.

I will highlight a few ways in which I have promoted our mission through our major programs:

- **Professional development programming**
 - Earth Educators' Rendezvous: The 2026 Earth Educators' Rendezvous at the University of South Carolina marks the first implementation of our revised planning process that involved more clearly defined roles for volunteers and members of the planning committee. In addition, this was my first year being directly involved in the planning. As Executive Director, I focused on sponsorships and fundraising, along with managing the balance of work between paid staff and volunteers. Ongoing involvement of the ED in EER planning will be important for managing both the budget and the overall message of the meeting.
 - Early Career Workshop: We received notification in March that our NSF proposal to support the Workshop for Early Career Geoscience Faculty was funded; I am

serving as PI on this grant through my institution (Central Washington University). Serving in this role allows for stronger integration of the ECW into the rest of our professional development programming. The timing of the notification meant that we had already begun to proceed with planning and registration under the assumption that we would *not* receive external funding. A new component for the ECW program with this grant is follow-on programming that includes virtual office hours and mini-workshops. We have begun to implement these this fall.

- Pausing the webinar program: Our major programs evolve as community needs evolve. NAGT was an early leader in offering webinars; we offered these to participants for free and bore the cost as an organization. More and more organizations now offer webinars and it is challenging to consistently reach a substantial audience. At the same time, the actual cost of offering high-quality webinars has increased, and fewer funded projects are able to support them. I worked with webinar committee, professional development planning committee, and finance committee to decide that now is the time to pause our webinar program and put our efforts into other programming that has greater potential to bring in funding.
- **Traveling Workshops program**: In the fall of 2025, we promoted the TWP heavily at GSA Connects and through a variety of other channels. As a result of that promotion, we received five requests for workshops and had a very successful year of workshops. I recently wrote up the results of those workshops in an article for *In the Trenches*. In addition, I am supporting a research project that is assessing the long-term impact of the TWP on departments; our initial results were presented at the 2026 EER and will be shared at GSA Connects 2026.
- **Awards**: I was approached by a program officer at the Maxwell/Hanrahan Foundation, a private foundation for whom one goal is to provide funding to organizations to support awards that are currently unfunded. The foundation is particularly interested in awards that have the potential to be “life-changing,” and have a substantial impact on the recipients. After exploring all of our awards, the program officer determined that a focus on the Outstanding Teaching Assistant (OTA) awards would be the best fit with the foundation’s priorities, and we were awarded funds to support \$2000 to each recipient (up to 30 per year) for the next two years. We are implementing new awards procedures in FY2027.

Promoting our mission also goes beyond our major programming to making connections within the broader science education community. Some of my efforts go towards this work:

- The Geological Society of America (GSA) is working with all of its affiliated societies to establish (or strengthen or streamline) their relationships. We have had a variety of MOUs with GSA, but never an overarching MOU as an affiliated organization. I have been working with Ester Stein to establish an MOU that will provide reciprocal benefits to each organization.
- With reorganizations at both AGU and AGI, the leadership and oversight of the Heads and Chairs of Geoscience Departments program has been unclear. I continue to work with staff at both organizations to offer resources and expertise from NAGT towards this

effort. NAGT is the lead organization on a December, 2026 workshop for Heads and Chairs that will be held in conjunction with the AGU meeting in San Francisco.

- I continue to serve as a member of the Board on Science Education (BOSE) at the National Academies. As the sole geoscience educator (and professional society executive director), I bring my perspective from the organization with me to this important work.
- Colleagues from the Board on Science Education recruited me to the STEM DBER Alliance (DBER All) to represent the geoscience education research community. DBER All is working to create and sustain connections across the various discipline-based education research communities. The primary effort has been a regular webinar series, now entering its second year; we are also working towards establishing a curated meta-journal and pursuing funding opportunities. DBER-All recently became a community in the STEM Ed+ Commons, a web-based platform for sharing resources. This is a nascent effort, but one in which NAGT can have a strong presence.

Management of an annual budget to ensure NAGT's long-term financial health

We inaugurated the Finance Committee to develop the FY2026 budget, resulting in a much more robust and productive budgeting process for the organization. Even so, we discovered some gaps and errors that we had missed, which surfaced throughout the year and needed to be addressed. As a result, in preparing the FY2027 budget, we further refined our process and worked as a committee to ensure that income and expenses were aligned with our expectations and goals. I highlight a few of the major budget stories from FY2026 and the preparation of FY2027:

- **Implementation of our new planning process for the Earth Educators' Rendezvous:** In 2025, we made significant changes to the budget and management of this meeting to adjust to the expected attendance and shift more of the planning work to the volunteer committee. We successfully implemented this new planning process and stayed within our budget for the meeting as a whole.
- **Transition to a new system for soliciting and managing donations:** After substantial exploration of a range of alternatives, I proposed that the organization initiate a contract with DonorPerfect to manage our donations and membership. We began the transition to that system in February. During the transition, we discovered several reasons why managing membership through that system would be more difficult than maintaining membership through Serckit, and we revised our transition plan. The transition allowed us the opportunity to clean up a lot of our historical data, better track and understand our donors, and utilize Constant Contact to reach both our membership and donors. Although the system is now up and running, we continue to work on the logistics and understand the capacities of the different systems and how they interact.
- **Fundraising:** We utilized our new donations platform in a campaign at the Earth Educators' Rendezvous that allowed us to quickly meet our goal, and we are planning campaigns for the upcoming membership renewal season.

Support for activities of ExCom, Council, and other NAGT bodies

As in previous years, I met regularly with the staff to implement the activities of the organization, and met with the presidential line to establish the agendas for all Executive Committee and Council meetings. Specific activities in FY 2026 include:

- Revising the constitution and bylaws to separate the secretary/treasurer into two positions and managing the process to ratify and implement the changes;
- Informing the leadership of my intention to step down as Executive Director at the end of my current contract (end of FY 2027) and initiate the process of searching for a new ED;
- Leading the development committee and implementing their campaign strategies.

Communication and coordination across the activities of the sections, divisions, committees, Executive Committee, and Council

Over the past year, we implemented onboarding meetings from all leadership groups within NAGT and continued to update our Leader Resources Hub and calendars that lay out the timing of processes throughout the year. These resources have proven valuable communication tools across the organization, especially as new leaders come on board. We also continue to expand our use of the NAGT Google Workspace to support sharing of resources; most successfully in the Traveling Workshops program in which the workspace includes several README files with directions on how to best utilize the shared drive.

We are also beginning to make use of Constant Contact for our newsletters and other potential member communication. One of the advantages of this platform is the ability to see bounces and clicks, which will allow us to refine our communications to better target our community.

Closing thoughts

In the past year, I feel we have seen the fruit of our efforts to right-size our budget and be proactive in addressing financial issues. Although membership continued to decline (as is true for most of our peer professional societies), we saw robust participation in our programming, strengthened our connections with partner organizations, and continue to have a strong presence within the geoscience and education research communities. I look forward to growing that work in the coming year.