My wife is an elementary school teacher, one of those saints who wrangle our kids throughout the school year, aiming for forward academic progress. I am an engineer and generally prefer books and spreadsheets to noisy groups of children. Despite my preferences, I always make exceptions for opportunities to speak to students and young adults about environmental issues. I consider it fun and part of our duty as professionals to pass along scientific insight, policy context, and some real-world experience to the next generation of potential environmental leaders.

Our current issue of *EM* is focused on environmental education, and I hope it will spur thinking from you on how we, both as individuals and as A&WMA members, can support educational initiatives. A&WMA’s Mission is “to assist in the professional development and critical environmental decision-making of our members to benefit society.” Our educational efforts are core to the work of our Association and there are a number of ways we can provide support.

Many of our employers have programs to promote STEM education or environmental projects. I encourage you to participate and include your A&WMA engagement as part of your message. Discussions of A&WMA are not only valuable for promoting the success of our organization, but also help students learn how to find and succeed in a job. As we all know, professional networks are important for success in a complex world.

I appreciate the efforts of our student chapters, faculty advisors, and other members from academia. They form an important link in the chain that connects young people with an interest in environmental issues to careers in the environmental field. I mentor college students and guest lecture at my local university. Many students that I meet struggle to link their studies to careers, from understanding what specific jobs exist in their field to connecting with employers when they graduate. A&WMA can be a key resource for them.

Once our student members enter the workforce, A&WMA may play an even more significant role in their development. Most people enter our profession with some technical grounding, but minimal practical experience. Our environmental rules and regulations are complex and continue to change. The technology we use to measure environmental conditions, manage data and information flows, and create products at our industrial facilities is evolving at an even quicker pace. Our Association can be a key education provider for our young professionals. Given the pace of change, even old professionals like me need to continuously learn in order to be effective.

One of my goals as A&WMA President is to create momentum to integrate our programming and member services in a way that allows our members to more easily chart their professional development path or dig deeper into a specific technical topic. However, I recognize that is a “how” and not a “what”. As an Association, we must maintain our focus on the “whats”: professional development programming. I will repeat my request from last month and encourage you to contribute ideas, insight, or time to A&WMA programs at the local, national, or international level.

If you have expertise or a development gap and aren’t sure how to move forward, please feel free to contact me and we will add your thoughts to the conversation. Maybe there are many members with the same interest and we only need to make the right connections to provide the next great conference, workshop, or webinar.

Thank for your continued service to A&WMA.