



## From the President

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### Strictly Strategy

**The ATA Board** of Directors met for a day to step back from day-to-day issues and to look at our Association from a wider perspective, to assess where we are today and to explore long-term possibilities with an open mind. This year, the Board gathered for its Annual Planning Day in Alexandria, Virginia, one day before the Board meeting, which took place on January 19-20, 2008. (Please see Executive Director Walter Bacak's column on page 8 for a complete overview of the Board meeting.)

It is vital for any organization to balance tactical and strategic issues. The Prussian military thinker Carl von Clausewitz instructs us that "tactics is the art of using troops in battle; strategy is the art of using battles to win the war." Of course, ATA does not engage in battles or wars, but the military analogy makes the connection between tactics and strategy clear: when engaged in day-to-day activities, we must not lose sight of the big picture.

The big picture is what the Annual Planning Day is all about. For one day, the Board becomes the crew of an airplane surveying the ground below from 30,000 feet, looking at the landscape without seeing much detail. Robert's Rules, which normally govern ATA Board meetings, are suspended, and brainstorming and free discussion, with liberal use of flip charts and other props, take place instead. No "put downs" are allowed and all suggestions are welcome. Unorthodox ideas are encouraged.

This year, the Board surveyed ATA's objectives, looked back one year to the previous Annual Planning Day, reviewed the Association's finances, discussed public relations, and scrutinized the bylaws. ATA's objectives (Article II.a. of ATA's Bylaws) serve as our measuring stick for any Association-related activities,

so it is crucial that they be clear. The review of ATA's objectives, initiated in January 2007 and continued this past January, confirmed that they are still relevant to us today, but also revealed some ambiguities that the Board felt should be addressed. For example, it is not quite clear who the intended audience is for "dissemination of knowledge" in Article II.a. 2, or what the "allied professions" are in Article II.a. 5. It was also pointed out that "training" in Article II.a. 4 should really be "education."

Making changes to our core objectives is not something to be taken lightly, and should not be done just to

well as our paid public relations consultant, came to talk to the Board to explain the current media strategy. They discussed the future direction of the public relations efforts and the need to provide tools to ATA members to participate in public relations, which will benefit the profession as well as members.

"Where do we go from here?" was the question we asked ourselves at the end of the Planning Day. After we recapped the day's discussions, we created a list of actionable items and attached one or more names to each to make sure that we do indeed go somewhere. The priorities remain the same

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satisfy the desires of the current administration. However, it is important to take a close look periodically at the objectives and at the bylaws to see if improvements can be made. Over the course of 2007, the Board worked with a professional parliamentarian and received a number of recommendations regarding ATA's bylaws. In 2008, the Board is taking a hard look at the bylaws in light of these recommendations, and will seek input from the membership before any amendments are proposed.

Another important piece of the 2008 Planning Day was a discussion of ATA's public relations initiative. The work of the Public Relations Committee clearly fulfills the very first objective in our bylaws, namely "to promote the recognition of the translation and interpretation professions." Two members of the committee, as

as those we identified a year ago: communication, certification, and member benefits. Ultimately, where we go depends on each of you, as the Board and its actions are guided by the members. The Board is listening—let your voice be heard.

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