



## From the President

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## Opportunity Is Knocking: 100,000 Members?

**Moving on from** our review of the internal attributes of our Association in the past two issues, where we examined our strengths and weaknesses, let us now take a look at the external attributes of the environment in which we operate. These attributes are either unfavorable (threats) or favorable (opportunities). It is the latter we will examine now in greater detail.

Here are the opportunities the Board identified, in descending order of perceived importance (the value in parentheses indicates the number of “votes” received): grow membership (6); create awareness of translation and interpreting programs (4); maturing programs (4); legislative influence (4); international expansion (4); better targeted public relations efforts (3); viral advertising (3); cooperation with other groups abroad (3); cooperation with allied associations (3); health care interpreting (3); growing demands for translation and interpreting services (2); “let our voice be heard” (2); positive outlook for the profession (1); legislation (1); and new administration in Washington (1).

As with the strengths and weaknesses, there is overlap in the lists of opportunities and threats. International expansion, legislation, and the new administration in Washington appear on both. Expansion of our membership base beyond U.S. borders has not been without controversy, as it poses the fundamental question of whether we are an American association as our name suggests, or an international organization as the reality confirms. In the late 1990s, the Board was challenged by the membership to answer this question and a temporary ban was imposed on certification exams abroad. After much deliberation, ATA emerged as a “national association with international orientation.” Today, we have members in 90

countries on six continents.

The opportunity that was assigned the greatest value is membership growth. So what is the pool of potential members at which we are looking? According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics report,

major opportunities for creating new benefits or enhancing existing ones were identified during the Board’s Planning Day. Creating greater awareness of translation and interpreting programs at universities, maturing

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there were 33,680 translators and interpreters in the U.S. in May 2007 (see [www.bls.gov/oes/current/oes273091.htm](http://www.bls.gov/oes/current/oes273091.htm)). Considering the growth of our industry and the fact that many part-timers are not included, this figure is likely to be higher; let’s call it an even 50,000. The estimates of the number of translators and interpreters around the world vary wildly, but one could imagine there are another 50,000 translators and interpreters abroad who could benefit from joining our Association. That makes 100,000 potential members, compared to our current size of about eleven thousand.

Of course, the key phrase here is “who could benefit.” If we want to attract more members, we have to enhance and promote the benefits of belonging to our Association. Other

existing programs such as ATA certification, and exerting legislative influence are among the opportunities with the highest potential. As an example, our certification program could be the first one in the world to achieve accreditation by an internationally recognized body. This would not only lay a foundation for reciprocal recognition of credentials among sister organizations, but also make our credential the measuring stick for other associations.

Acting on opportunities is always exciting. Be a part of the action. Help the Association identify additional opportunities, suggest ways to act on opportunities that have been identified already, and get involved in the implementation!

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**ATA Medical Division/Interpreters Division Joint Conference**

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