

Progress and Transformation:

My Final SMPTE Presidential Message

RENARD T. JENKINS



Members, colleagues, and partners, as winter comes to North America, so does the end of my tenure as President of this Society.

The past 23 months have been filled with ups and downs, ebbs and flows, and opportunities to learn, grow, and expand the reach of SMPTE. When I was selected to take the reins, the organization was in the midst of a change and was attempting to adjust to a new normal as we emerged from a worldwide pandemic. As a matter of fact, the adopted slogan was “SMPTE for a Change.” As the saying goes, the one constant in life is indeed...change. Before accepting the role of president of this Society, I conducted a SWOT analysis to fully understand the scope of my future responsibilities and determine what type of team I would need around me to be successful. My findings led me to establish what would become my presidential platform. That platform included the following six action items:

- Refocus the Society on advanced production, sciences, and technology innovation such as AI, ML, and Blockchain.
- Reinforce the Society’s participation in tool development for animation, gaming, visual effects (VFX), and sound.
- Work to engage potential members at an earlier age.
- Increase options for the Society to serve its members at ALL stages of their careers.
- Make sure that the Society is inclusive and looks like the world of M&E we serve globally.
- Identify, discover, and nurture new talent and leadership for the Society.

Over the past two years, we have seen positive changes that align with these proposed actions:

- ST 2110 has become a ubiquitous standard across the broadcasting environment.
- The Society has taken a leading role in the discussion of artificial intelligence and its use in the media entertainment industry.

- Webinars and sessions at the 2024 Media Technology Summit focused on advanced virtual production, VFX workflows, tool design, and deployment.
- An increase in new vendor and partner interest in collaborations across the industry, particularly in the areas of animation, gaming creation, and design.
- An increase in the number of student chapters around the globe. We celebrated the addition of Clark Atlanta University, the first Historically Black College and University (HBCU) student chapter, and Barnard College, the first female college student chapter.
- Established partnerships with Los Angeles and New York City high schools.

I want to thank the membership team and everyone who supported them in these efforts. They understood the assignment and went above and beyond to exceed the original goals. Thank you for your dedication and hard work!

The year is not complete, and we are not resting on our accomplishments. There will be more announcements throughout the remainder of the year. The first of these announcements is that the Peter Wharton Scholarship program will launch next year. This program supports underrepresented communities such as people of color, LGBTQ, neurodiverse, and many others in media and entertainment engineering. We will also launch a new mentorship program in 2025 focusing on support for early- and mid-career members. This greatly benefits our members, our supporting partners, and the Society.

Over the past two years, we have focused on making our educational products valuable to members at every stage of their career journeys.

WE ALL HOPE THAT THE CHANGE WE HAVE SEEN WILL LEAD TO PROGRESS. HOWEVER, PROGRESS DOES NOT COME THROUGH PERFORMATIVE ACTIONS. IT COMES THROUGH **TRANSFORMATIVE ACTIONS.**

During this time, you've also seen a stronger commitment to inclusion in our content, programming, presenters, and membership. And thankfully, I say with a smile and a chuckle, we have seen a decrease in the average age of our membership. Let me be clear—there is absolutely nothing wrong with aging gracefully. I, for one, am incredibly grateful to be doing so along with the other members of our Society who comprise over 450,000 years of combined wisdom. That is one of the things that makes our Society strong and valuable. It is the currency we exchange throughout our industry as we fortify our relevance in the minds of engineers, creatives, technologists, and artists worldwide.

We all hope that the change we have seen will lead to progress. However, progress does not come through performative actions. It comes through transformative actions. Transformative actions move the ball down the field, disrupt the status quo, and are built on a foundation of ethics and responsibility. They can also provide stability in an unstable environment.

Simply put, transformative actions make an impact and a difference. While I am pleased with some of the progress I've seen in the past 23 months, I'm not satisfied because there is so much more for us to do. I'm excited to hand the reins of the presidency to Richard Welsh, who shares my desire for transformative action.

I am equally excited to count the appointment of Interim Executive Director Sally-Ann D'Amato as an example of transformative actions and progress for SMPTE. This organization is crucial to the foundational infrastructure of our industry. It will forever be the science behind the art and science of storytelling in all forms, known and unknown, well into the future. It has been an honor to serve as your president. Enjoy the 2024 Progress Report, and remember to enjoy what you do.

Be Well,
Renard T. Jenkins

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