

The Purpose of the Indiana Section
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This past spring, the membership of the section (or at least those in attendance at the spring meeting) passed a collection of revisions to the Section's bylaws. The review process, and ultimate revisions, were a decadal effort for the section, required by the Association's general policies for its sections.

Most of the changes resulting from this review were routine. That is, they reflected changes in the work practices of the section over the past decade and included items such as membership on the executive committee, the composition of various committees, and guidelines for various activities.

The most substantial change was in the statement of the purpose of the section. An informal search of the reports published in the *American Mathematical Monthly* revealed no references to bylaws, but I was able to find the purpose statement given in the 2002 bylaws. (The 2002 bylaws may be the earliest version extant.) But the three available versions of the bylaws, spanning nearly thirty years, helps us to understand the evolution of the section's articulation of purpose.

The earliest available version, adopted in 2002, was very vague and focused on mathematics education at the collegiate level:

The purpose of the Indiana Section shall be to assist in the improvement of education in the mathematical sciences at the collegiate level by carrying out the purposes of the national organization within the state of Indiana.

This purpose statement assumed the mathematics community – college and university faculty - in Indiana understood the “purpose of the national organization,” agreed with it, and knew how to assist in the improvement of mathematics education at the collegiate level.

This implied consensus and the narrow focus on collegiate mathematical education began to change in 2012, when the purpose of the section was expanded to include the advancement of the mathematical science generally:

The purpose of the Indiana Section shall be to advance the mathematical sciences, especially at the collegiate level, and to promote purposes of the MAA within the territory defined in Article II below. In particular, the Section shall provide professional development and networking activities for section members and mathematics students; promote discussion and action on issues affecting mathematics teaching, learning, and research; and offer guidance to the MAA as it forms and fulfills its mission.

We see that this purpose statement offers specific guidance on activities to be undertaken by the section, including professional development, networking opportunities, and to provide a venue for discussion and action on issues.

The purpose was also expanded to include a charge to provide advice to the Association; the relationship between the Association and the section was no longer a one-way street.

The section's newest (2022) purpose statement provides even more details about how it supports our community, and explicitly speaks to the Association's mission, vision, and values:

The purposes of the Indiana Section shall be to advance the mission of the MAA on a regional level (namely within the territory defined in Article II below); to offer guidance to the MAA as it forms and fulfills its mission; to provide professional development and networking activities for

those with an interest in mathematics including Section members, mathematics students, and members of the larger mathematics community; to promote discussion and action on issues affecting mathematics teaching, learning, and research in the region; and to pursue initiatives that advance the core values of the MAA--Community, Inclusivity, Communication, Teaching & Learning--in pursuit of our vision of a society that values the power and beauty of mathematics and fully realizes its potential to promote human flourishing.

This new purpose statement, while rich in details leaves, as assumed knowledge, the MAA's mission. Given this, I share the Association's mission and vision statements here:

MAA mission: (Because) the Mathematical Association of America is the world's largest community of mathematicians, students, and enthusiasts, we further the understanding of our world through mathematics because mathematics drives society and shapes our lives. The mission of the MAA is to advance the understanding of mathematics and its impact on our world.

MAA Vision: We envision a society that values the power and beauty of mathematics and fully realizes its potential to promote human flourishing.

This thirty year evolution challenges us to think differently as a section. Organizing, and attending, a section meeting addresses only one of the activities in our purpose statement. What other ways can we "offer guidance," "promote discussion and action," and "pursue initiatives" to fulfill our collective vision of the role of mathematics in society?