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2021 Candidate for 2022 Vice President
**ASSOCIATION OF SCHOOL BUSINESS
OFFICIALS INTERNATIONAL**

BIOGRAPHY

Susan Harkin's first exposure to public education was as a passenger on her mom's school bus. When she was older, her mother was a school secretary and her father was a school board member. Because of her parents' roles in public education, the family took on the charge to fight for access to high-quality education for all. Currently the superintendent for Community Unit School District 300, Harkin served as the COO for the district for nine years and has worked for school districts of various sizes around the Chicago metropolitan area for 20+ years. She is a past-president of the Illinois Association of School Business Officials, vice-chair of the Illinois State Board of Education Professional Review Panel, and chair of the Illinois School Liquid Asset Fund. She serves on the ASBO International Board of Directors and is a member of the Meritorious Budget Award Advisory Committee, the Audit & Finance Committee, and the Policy Committee.

VISION STATEMENT

The Association of School Business Official International provides the forum for school business officials (SBOs) to receive high-quality professional development and collaborate with school business professionals world-wide. ASBO delivers quality programs and services that promote the highest standards of school business management, professional growth, and the effective use of educational resources. ASBO looks to develop its SBOs to be champions for school business professionals and is an invaluable resource to all SBOs to uphold the vitality of our profession.

CANDIDATE QUESTIONS

The vast inequities in education were highlighted during the pandemic, as many students in underserved areas did not have the resources to learn remotely. How can ASBO International help close the learning gap and support accelerated learning recovery?

ASBO International (ASBO) can help close the student learning gap and support accelerated learning through targeted professional development, peer-to-peer engagement, and legislative priorities.

As school business officials (SBOs) work with their administrative team to tackle the impact of COVID on student learning, we could benefit from professional development geared towards understanding evidence-based practices to support students post-COVID. Professional development could also provide guidance on a multi-year plan to spend ESSER dollars to support these activities.

It will be necessary for members to share how they will develop financial projections to navigate resource allocations once ESSER dollars are no longer available. SBOs derive great benefit through the collective sharing of ideas. Peer-to-peer conversations sponsored by ASBO International could significantly assist an SBO in working with their district team to develop ideas to close the learning gap.

The voice of the SBO will be more critical than ever to the district leadership team post-COVID as we navigate utilizing resources in new ways. If the SBO understands best practices for addressing learning gaps and supporting accelerated learning, we can participate in the conversation with our administrative teams to develop and fund those plans. If we understand how ESSER funds can support these initiatives, we can ensure there is adequate funding to

do so. Once ESSER funds are no longer available, we will need to navigate post-ESSER budgeting discussions with a mindset to prioritize limited resources for initiatives that have become critical to our students' long-term success. As we better understand the long-term impact of COVID on our students, ASBO can develop legislative priorities to address those concerns as they arise. ASBO has developed a strong advocacy voice on "The Hill." Since we may not fully understand the long-term impact of COVID on our students, ASBO should keep a close eye on this with a voice to address these things with legislators as needs arise.

What needs do school business officials have now and what skills will they need in the next 5-10 years that ASBO International should focus on?

SBOs can no longer view their role solely as the gatekeeper of the district finances. Throughout COVID, we have learned how to be problem solvers and work collaboratively with every level in our districts. I hope that this collaboration becomes the norm in our school districts. With that in mind, I believe there are several skills that SBOs will need to develop in the next 5-10 years. First, SBOs will need to continue developing their leadership skills to be valued members of their executive team. As equity in education continues to be a focus, SBOs will need to be skilled in navigating conversations about the impact of diversity, equity, and inclusion in our classrooms. As we come out of COVID, we need to learn how to support the social-emotional needs of our students and staff. Lastly, SBOs will need to develop systems that correlate student outcomes to district resources to find creative ways to sustain programs with the most significant benefit to our students.

To support developing these skills, ASBO should continue providing high-quality leadership training through the Executive Leadership Forum and Eagle Institute. ASBO should provide professional development to assist SBOs in understanding and addressing diversity, equity, and inclusion barriers in our schools. ASBO will need to showcase best practices on how SBOs can develop structures to support student and staff social-emotional needs. Lastly, ASBO should provide training for SBOs on how to evaluate program outcomes, navigate challenging conversations, establish a diverse workforce, and transition into an active voice at the leadership table. No longer can we manage district resources; we need to help participate in the conversations to help create model school districts.

Because of the diversity of the skills that will be required, ASBO could leverage its learning management system (LMS). One option would be to create microlearning courses where members can get on-demand training in these areas in bite-sized chunks. ASBO should leverage the

expertise of its members, strategic partners, and existing programming to develop the appropriate professional development content. The learning options available in the LMS make it a great platform to establish on-demand professional development to develop skills required for SBOs in the next 5-10 years.

With a goal of continuing to meet the needs of all our members, what can ASBO International do to encourage racial diversity on the board, on committees, in our membership, and in our cadre of professional development presenters?

ASBO could encourage racial diversity on all levels through its policies, leadership pipeline, and professional development. I have had the fortune to serve on the Illinois ASBO Equity Committee. Many of the ideas listed below are a culmination of the work completed by that committee.

ASBO's strategic plan states its core value is to "embrace and respect diversity in all ways" and has an objective of "enhancing the diversity of its members." These statements are a significant first step, but it will be essential to develop specific action items to encourage diversity in its members. An easy step in this area could be to create an at-large board position for people of color. This position could be similar to our at-large AEDG and international representatives board positions. This person could be a voice and provide a perspective to ensure diversity in the ASBO membership.

It is also essential to understand barriers for members of color to participate in the ASBO leadership pipeline. Perhaps ASBO could develop a survey to understand what those barriers may be for any member, including members of color. ASBO could use this data to create action steps to address identified obstacles. ASBO could also work with its affiliates and all members to identify and encourage upcoming leaders of color to get involved at ASBO. If funding is a barrier, ASBO could explore providing membership grants to address this barrier.

ASBO could continue to feature diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) keynote speakers at its Annual Conference and Exhibition. From a professional development perspective, it could expand the Education Committee to include a DEI subcommittee responsible for creating learning opportunities in this area. The DEI subcommittee could work with ASBO staff to develop a webpage focused on DEI resources to share with members and showcase ASBO's commitment to this work.

These types of "actionable" ideas are needed to put a real emphasis on our desire to "embrace and respect diversity in all ways."