



NAVTA's Powerful Strategies for Moving Forward



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NAVTA'S MISSION

NAVTA is a diverse community of credentialed veterinary technicians, students and veterinary assistants, united in advancing the profession of veterinary nursing through strategic advocacy, awareness and professional development.

In the Summer 2024 issue of *Today's Veterinary Nurse*, NAVTA published in this column a very high-level description of its new strategic plan. That column stirred a number of requests for more details and explanations, which I am happy to provide at this time. To begin, I'd like to share the process NAVTA used to develop its new strategic plan, since that will help community members understand the context in which conversations took place and decisions were made.

The Strategic Planning Process

The process began in September 2023 when NAVTA retained the services of Association Options (AO), a consulting firm with expertise in not-for-profit strategic planning. AO has clients in the veterinary medicine profession, so they understand the vernacular and most of the issues facing the veterinary nursing/technology profession. AO met with NAVTA's executive director and reviewed the existing strategic plan from 2020 to 2021. Using that information, as well as their own knowledge of the veterinary profession, AO developed surveys for the NAVTA board of directors and for the entire membership. The surveys polled the audiences on current and future issues in the veterinary world in general, as well as issues specific to NAVTA. Results of these surveys were shared with the board of directors over several Zoom calls in November and December 2023. During this time, AO also conducted 13 different focus group meetings of NAVTA members to drill down deeper into some of the key issues identified in the member survey. Feedback from the focus groups was also shared with the board of directors in December 2023. The board of directors then met in person in Chicago over the course of 2 days in early January (in a windowless room!) to participate in a planning session led by the consultant from AO.

The Results

The results of that exhausting 2-day meeting were a revised NAVTA mission statement and laser-like focus on 5 key issues facing the association.

The revised mission statement came about as a result of data and conversations showing the need to foster and improve engagement with the next generation of veterinary nurses/technicians: veterinary nursing/technology students and veterinary assistants. NAVTA's mission now encompasses these audiences, in addition to credentialed veterinary technicians, and reads:

"NAVTA is a diverse community of credentialed veterinary technicians, students and veterinary assistants, united in advancing the profession of veterinary nursing through strategic advocacy, awareness and professional development."



Based on this new mission statement, the board of directors developed 5 high-priority areas where NAVTA needed to be successful in order to live up to its mission. The board also created specific strategies for how NAVTA might attain success in each of these areas, as outlined below.

Key Area #1: Enhance NAVTA's Role as a Strategic Advocate for Veterinary Nurses/Technicians

Realizing and recognizing NAVTA's unique position and strength as the largest organized body of veterinary nurses/technicians and, therefore, the loudest voice for the profession, the board agreed that NAVTA must leverage these assets to speak for and promote the profession. Some strategies for how NAVTA might be successful in doing this are:

- Creating a membership base that is well informed and empowered to advocate for itself by providing members with the tools and resources they need to do so
- Conducting regularly scheduled advocacy updates for members
- Providing members with clear position statements on timely issues
- Engaging with policymakers and regulators
- Developing a public awareness program to increase pet owner understanding of the roles and value of veterinary nurses/technicians
- Leveraging social media to build relationships with journalists, bloggers, and appropriate influencers in the veterinary and pet care space

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Key Area #2: Grow and Retain a Base of Emerging and Experienced Veterinary Professionals to Become NAVTA Members

NAVTA is the largest body of veterinary nurses/technicians in the world, but more is better. Not only must NAVTA engage with emerging veterinary nursing/technology students, but we must also reach out to and capture as members those who are already veterinary nurses/technicians but have not yet joined the association. Some ways of doing this include:

- Supporting the growth and engagement of student members through NAVTA's student chapters
- Refining and strengthening NAVTA's value proposition
- Developing a mentorship component that engages all career stages of NAVTA veterinary professionals
- Creating leadership opportunities for students
- Developing and implementing detailed, professional marketing plans for the recruitment of new members and retention of existing members

Key Area #3: Develop and Foster Relationships With Allied Organizations to Advance NAVTA's Mission and Reputation

Recognizing that NAVTA does not exist or work in a vacuum and that we cannot accomplish our mission without the engagement, support, and participation of related organizations, NAVTA must reach out to these entities to develop and foster solid relationships. Some ideas for accomplishing this are:

- Increasing areas of collaboration with current allied organizations
- Exploring relationships with organizations that are not yet NAVTA's partners
- Increasing participation in industry committees, work groups, and task forces
- Building active relationships with state veterinary technician associations and VTS academies

Key Area #4: Enhance and Expand Both Professional and Personal Development Opportunities

One of NAVTA's strongest assets is the quantity and quality of continuing education it offers its members in both the professional and personal development realms. NAVTA can leverage this strength to even greater extent and may do so in some of the following ways:

- Providing leadership training to committee chairs and other volunteer leaders
- Enhancing and expanding resources and tools available to volunteer leaders
- Developing new professional content and means of delivery of this content

Key Area #5: Continue to Optimize NAVTA's Financial Health to Advance its Mission

We all know that it takes money to get things done, and NAVTA is no exception. Ever since NAVTA retained professional management services, it has greatly improved its financial position and started to save money in a reserve fund, but there is still a big financial need. Ways in which NAVTA could strengthen its financial position even more include:

- Creating new revenue streams beyond dues
- Increasing sponsorship engagement (e.g., more sponsors, greater sponsorship from existing companies)

I hope this further explanation of and details about NAVTA's strategic plan provide a clearer understanding of NAVTA's priorities for the next couple of years, as well as the ideas we've had for how we can be successful.

We welcome your continued feedback and input! Feel free to email us at director@navta.net. **TVN**

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