

System Dynamics Society

Report of the 2025 Strategy Committee

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Background and 2025 Activities

The System Dynamics Society (SDS) has put significant thought into its strategy¹². This year, consultations between the SDS Strategy Committee and the Home Office revealed that more high-level direction is desired. Specifically, the Home Office requested guidance around what activities and initiatives they should prioritize. The Strategy Committee thus chose to focus on developing 5-year goals for the Society. The goals selected by the strategy committee should guide SDS activities from 2026 through 2031, unless directed otherwise by the SDS Policy Council.

To develop the Society's 5-year goals, the Strategy Committee first conducted a series of strategic planning meetings with the Policy Council. These meetings were intended to develop a picture of the current state and needs of the SDS and the field of System Dynamics. This picture, along with existing strategy documents, the Society's Articles of Organization³, and the Society's Mission and Vision⁴, contributed to the Strategy Committee's recommended 5-year goals. The Strategy Committee developed draft goals, held multiple discussions about these goals with the Policy Council, and revised the goals based on those conversations to arrive at the goals reported here.

¹ System Dynamics Society Strategy. 2013. <https://systemdynamics.org/wp-content/uploads/assets/docs/strategy-report.pdf>

² Report of the Strategy Committee. 2018. <https://systemdynamics.org/wp-content/uploads/assets/docs/Strategy%20Committee%20Report%20-%20February%202018.pdf>

³ <https://systemdynamics.org/articles-of-organization>

⁴ <https://systemdynamics.org/about/>

Results of Discussion with the Policy Council

Initial conversations with the Policy Council focused on brainstorming and discussions about the SDS's current strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats. Conversations were run in breakout groups, with each group focusing on a different portion of the Society's Articles of Organization. Summaries of these conversations are included here.

Strengths

- Strong body of knowledge and expertise
- Useful teaching strategies
- Have people who are good at working across silos
- Strong social media outreach
- Impact through our conference and journal
- Curated content

Weaknesses

- Communication is mostly with ourselves
- Relevance is hard to explain
- Competition with more popular techniques
- Not in popular/mainstream science conversations
- Lack of unity in the society/field
- Dispersed domains
- Curation of material is difficult,
- Lack of large-scale education, certification

Opportunities

- Outreach to organizations and researchers with aligned goals
- Certification of skills
- Integration with AI and data science
- Collaborations with governments and NGOs
- Training for policy makers and stakeholders
- Develop content in other languages

Threats

- Resistance to change and innovation
- Competition with more popular methods
- Some of our best examples are politically charged
- Lack of funding
- Age structure of field - many retirements
- Lack of unity in methodology & shared identity
- University programs disappearing or shrinking

The Policy Council also discussed the potential for the SDS to pursue expansion of the Society's activities to incorporate similar fields. 73% of attending Policy Council members supported this idea, 27% were unsure, and 0% were against. Policy Council members brainstormed fields with which to create relationships and then voted on the most preferred fields. Results are shown in the table below; rows in green had scores of 6 and above, yellow 0 through 5, and orange had negative net votes.

Field	Net Votes	Up Votes	Down Votes
Organizational behavior	8	8	0
Agent-based modeling	7	8	1
AI & data science	6	8	2
Medical decision-making	6	6	0
Computational social science	6	6	0
Complex systems	6	6	0
Simulation model users	5	5	0
Modeling communities	4	4	0
Users of domain-specific models	4	4	0
Operations research	2	5	3
Systems biology	2	3	1
Systems engineering	0	3	3
Systems thinking without causal loops	-3	1	4
Cybernetics	-3	0	3

5-Year Goals

The Strategy Committee's proposed 5-year goals are below. Unless otherwise noted, targets are to be achieved by the end of 2031.

1: Build and support local system dynamics groups

The SDS will take actions to build and support local system dynamics groups. This is likely to occur through the Society's chapter structure, but may also include on non-chapter local groups.

Recommended metrics and targets:

- Support 2 new local events each year
- Increase the fraction of members that have a conference or meeting in their country each year (not including the annual conference) by 10%
- Increase membership in underrepresented areas (outside of the US and Europe) by 10%

Path Forward:

- Research how to do this effectively and develop a plan
- Collect data on how successful chapters are run
- Find local champions

2: Increase attendance at System Dynamics events

The SDS will take actions to increase attendance at System Dynamics events, including but not limited to the annual conference, the seminar series, and local events.

Recommended metrics:

- Increase conference attendance by 10%
- Increase attendance at the SD-MIT seminar series to 100
- Increase attendance at local SD events by 30%

Path Forward:

- Research how to do this effectively and develop a plan
- Consider recruiting from adjacent fields
- Invite good work to be presented at events
- Consider a special issue of System Dynamics Review for top annual conference papers

3: Increase number of Society members

The SDS will take actions to increase the number of SDS members, focusing on increasing both recruitment and retention.

Recommended metrics:

- Increase recruitment by 10% by 2030
- Increase retention by 10% by 2030

Path Forward:

- Analyze and improve the value proposition of membership
- Analyze and improve dynamics related to diversity
- Consider methods for building social networks
- Consider business-inspired techniques (loyalty programs, incentives, etc.)

4: Broaden awareness of System Dynamics

The SDS will take actions to broaden awareness of System Dynamics outside of the Society and the current field.

Possible metrics:

- Increase number of SD articles in the academic press by 25%
- Increase number of citations of SD articles in the academic press by 25%
- Increase number of articles published in the System Dynamics Review by 25%
- Increase number of citations of SD in the popular press (possible tracked through google alerts) by 25%
- Increase K-12/college-level teachers using SD by 10% by 2030

Path Forward:

- Research how to do this effectively and develop a plan
- Consider consultation from outside experts

5: Increase availability of System Dynamics in education

The SDS will take actions to increase the availability of System Dynamics in K-12, college, and graduate-level education.

Possible metrics:

- Increase K-12/college-level teachers using SD by 10%

Path Forward:

- Research how to do this effectively and develop a plan
- Consider efforts to provide teaching material

Recommended Follow-on Activities

The Strategy Committee purposefully focused on selecting high-level five year goals, with suggestions for an initial path forward, but no recommendations for specific initiatives designed to meet these goals. We recommend that next year's Strategy Committee activities focus on identifying specific mechanisms and initiatives for addressing the goals presented here.