AMIA’s New Statement of Vision, Mission, and Strategic Goals

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During 2000, the AMIA Board of Directors was engaged in a strategic planning process to re-examine the vision, mission, and goals of the association. As a comparatively new association founded just over a decade ago, this was only the second major strategic planning process for the association, the first having occurred in the early 1990s.

The resulting document includes a new vision and mission statement, a set of six major goals to guide the activities of the association, and a set of more specific shorter-term objectives under each of the six goals. The Board examined the overall objectives at some length and identified those it felt to be of particularly high priority in guiding the activities of the association over the next two to three years. The full listing of the objectives can be found on the AMIA Web site at www.amia.org. The purpose of the discussion of objectives below is to highlight those that the Board identified as being the highest priorities in the near term.

AMIA’s Vision:
A Premier Informatics Organization

The role of a vision statement in a strategic plan is to put forward an organization’s highest aspirations. It does not address the whys and hows, or the details of implementation, but rather states what the organization sees itself as, and what it wants the world to perceive it to be. For AMIA, this is succinctly stated in the Board’s vision for the association:

The American Medical Informatics Association is the premier organization to advance discovery and innovation in the use of information in health and biomedicine.

This vision is the focus against which the success of the association’s programs, products, and planning efforts is ultimately measured. Any of the organization’s activities should be justifiable in terms of effectively working to help make and keep AMIA on track toward realizing this vision.

AMIA’s Mission:
Advancing the Field

A mission statement is designed to state the basic raison d’être of an organization and briefly convey the basic tenets of how it will approach the accomplishment of that purpose. These two focal points are addressed in the new mission statement adopted by the AMIA Board:

The mission of the American Medical Informatics Association is to advance the field by fostering innovation and scientific exchange, educating professionals and the public, and influencing decision and policy makers regarding the use of information in health and biomedicine.

AMIA’s purpose is to advance the field of medical informatics, and the broad strategies for doing so are spelled out. This mission is what in turn guided the Board’s formulation of organizational goals and its identification of specific, shorter-term objectives under each goal.

AMIA Strategic Goals:
Charting the Path

The goals identified by the Board in 2000 reaffirmed many of the organizational aims for AMIA set forth in the forward-looking planning of the early 1990s, refining those principles while at the same setting some new directions. The Board has identified the following six goals for guiding the activities of the association over the next several years:

1. Be the premier membership and peer communication organization in medical informatics.

2. Promote research, development, diffusion, and evolution of medical informatics to enhance health and biomedicine.
3. Promote and integrate medical informatics as a field.
4. Expand and maintain multiple forums for interchange and dissemination of advances in the field.
5. Foster cooperation and establish relationships with relevant organizations.
6. Ensure an effective governance and management infrastructure to enable AMIA to accomplish its mission.

Threading through these explicit statements was a collective commitment to a number of principles about AMIA as an organization—a clear emphasis on research and scientific endeavor but balanced with inclusiveness for the practical and applied; an inward focus on meeting the needs of members, while also actively participating in the broader health care community and society at large; and a commitment to preserving programs that are tried and true, complemented by an eagerness to innovate and expand the programs and services to more fully address the needs of those working in the field of medical informatics.

Objectives:
Identifying the Highest Priorities

Through the strategic planning process, the Board eventually enumerated some 60-plus objectives that the association should pursue in advancing the six goals. To match aspirations to resources, it is necessary in any strategic planning effort to prioritize at the objectives level. This prioritization frames the action plan for the specific range of activities to be pursued by the component organizational parts of the association—its Board, its operating committees, its staff, and its vehicles for broad member participation, which in AMIA consist principally of its working groups and special interest groups.

Goal 1. Be the premier membership and peer communication organization in medical informatics.

Board discussion of this goal centered on identifying who AMIA’s members are, determining whether it is appropriate to expand that scope (and if so in what direction), and assessing the importance of providing members with programs and products that are needed and appreciated. Several of the highest priority objectives to emerge from the discussion of this goal focused on current individual members and were formulated as follows:

- Provide attractive and high-quality membership benefits for individual members.
- Provide relevant information resources for members and non-members.
- Foster the development and maintenance of working groups relevant to the needs of members.
- Continually monitor and assess member needs and satisfaction, and act on that information.

Other high-priority goals focused on member recruitment and retention and on enhancing AMIA’s relationships with industry and academia through its corporate and institutional membership programs:

- Recruit and retain core health informatics professionals into AMIA membership.
- Develop and implement plans to expand the scope of AMIA’s member audience.
- Provide attractive and high-quality membership benefits for corporate members, institutions, and other organizations.

These priorities chart an active course for AMIA’s office and for appropriate organizational committees. Already by the end of 2000, the AMIA office had taken a major step toward the “information resources” objective through a re-design and re-focus of the AMIA Web site, and the Membership Committee had undertaken to explore and direct staff to implement additional member service programs.

Goal 2. Promote research, development, diffusion, and evolution of medical informatics to enhance health and biomedicine.

The Board’s discussion on this goal centered on how AMIA and the field of informatics can help advance the state of health, with particular emphasis on the “educating” and “influencing” strategies outlined in AMIA’s mission statement. Two of the highest priority near-term objectives that were identified in this area were very broad:

- Identify medical and health-quality issues amenable to informatics solutions.
- Promote development and use of informatics solutions to improve health.

The Board envisions various formal components of the AMIA membership—committees, working groups, and special interest groups—working toward these objectives through mechanisms such as white papers, working conferences, and other appropriate forums. In addition to the general objectives of identifying and promoting informatics solutions, the
Board identified some specific action agendas for how those would be accomplished:

- Participate in public policy debate on key issues.
- Publish position statements on major policy and informatics issues.
- Carry out public relations efforts to encourage press and policy makers to seek out AMIA’s input on major relevant issues.

Discussions within AMIA’s Public Policy Committee and AMIA’s participation in the Coalition for Healthcare Information Policy (CHIP) have been concrete measures by which AMIA is actively engaged in public policy debates.

The second of this trio of objectives is a call to AMIA’s working groups and other bodies to assert themselves in developing major position statements not only on public policy matters but on any informatics issues on which the expertise of AMIA members can serve to guide the discipline and educate others in the health care community and general public.

The public relations objective is being addressed at the organizational level through a concerted refocus of public relations efforts in the AMIA office in response to the priorities that emerged during the Board’s strategic planning efforts.

Goal 3. Promote and integrate medical informatics as a field.

This goal focuses first on promoting the development of medical informatics as a discipline, and second on emphasizing some of the key AMIA vehicles for carrying out that promotion. Medical informatics is a young field, and in its strategic planning effort the AMIA Board is emphasizing the importance of crystallizing what constitutes the discipline and then making others aware of its accomplishments:

- Define the scope of the field of medical informatics.
- Develop core competencies and curricula for medical informatics.
- Promote and publicize the accomplishments and contributions of those engaged in the field of medical informatics.

In pursuit of the promotion and publicizing objective, the Board saw drew special attention to the role of AMIA’s Web site:

- Promote the AMIA Web site and, in particular, the medical informatics sections at the Annual Symposium and in other venues.
- Prepare special features for JAMIA and, subsequently, the medical informatics sections of the Web site.

An initial overhaul of the AMIA Web site has now been carried out. In its current rendition, the revised AMIA Web site greatly expands its scope and the timeliness of its coverage of developments in, and related to, the field. The site is positioned to move forward even further as the expertise of AMIA’s working groups, individual members, and institutional and corporate members are brought to bear in providing news, information, and resources for the site.

Goal 4. Expand and maintain multiple forums for interchange and dissemination of advances in the field.

This goal directly addresses the portion of the AMIA mission that calls for advancing the field of medical informatics by fostering innovation and scientific exchange and by educating professionals in the field. The highest priority objectives emphasize maintaining and enhancing delivery mechanisms familiar to AMIA members—the association’s journal and its two annual meetings. Added to these is a further objective directing investigation of additional opportunities:

- Support the transformation of JAMIA into a Web-based journal, JAMIA.org, that will add new communication processes, content construction, and value above that of the content itself.
- Continue to conduct the AMIA Annual Symposium as the premier conference in medical informatics.
- Maintain the AMIA Spring Congress as a key annual event focused on a selected aspect of medical informatics.
- Evaluate other existing education programs and explore new possibilities.

Accomplishing these objectives involves, at one level or another, literally all components of AMIA, including the Board, committees, working groups and special interest groups, the AMIA office, and members who contribute to and participate in these forums.

Goal 5. Foster cooperation and establish relationships with relevant organizations.

With such an interdisciplinary membership and interests, it is logical for AMIA to seek out working relationships with other organizations in the research
and health care communities. Many other organizations, companies, and meetings seek AMIA’s endorsement, co-sponsorship, and other forms of official participation. AMIA does not have a systematic framework for evaluating specific opportunities that arise or could be pursued, either proactively or reactively. The objectives under this goal center on establishing such a framework as well as evaluating some specific current and potential relationships:

- Develop and implement general models for managing external relationships and for identifying organizations with which AMIA should develop relationships.
- Better define some of our current inter-organizational relationships, such as those with the Joint Healthcare Information Technology Alliance (JHITA) and CPRI-HOST.
- Identify and explore potential relationships with other organizations that may share interests with AMIA, such as the International Society for Computational Biology and the Society for Medical Decision Making.

An AMIA Board Task Force has been set up to oversee the association’s work toward these objectives.

Goal 6. Ensure an effective governance and management infrastructure to enable AMIA to accomplish its mission.

To maintain a healthy, vibrant association that provides meaningful services to members at a reasonable cost and is able to work toward meeting its strategic objectives, it is important for governance and management to operate effectively and efficiently. To that end, the AMIA Board outlined a number of operational priorities for itself and the AMIA office. Several of these have to do with ensuring fiscal responsibility:

- Attract funding resources to ensure the financial viability of the organization and its programs.
- Align association resources to support goals established by the Board.
- Establish the financial policies, budgets and internal control to ensure that adequate money is available to contribute to the reserves in accordance with association policy.
- Increase corporate financial support (e.g., increased vendor participation in exhibits, sponsorship).

Additional priorities in this area have to do with developing and monitoring action plans for carrying out programs and with ensuring a sound working relationship between the AMIA Board and office.

Pursuing AMIA’s Strategic Priorities: A Goal for All

During the almost year-long strategic assessment and planning period, the AMIA Board examined the big issues facing the association, met with members at AMIA meetings, and called for input from throughout the membership as well as from other organizations outside the immediate membership. As in any association, the success with which these goals are met and the objectives achieved ultimately depends on the contributions of time and intellect by its members. There is plenty of room for participation by all in keeping AMIA the premier membership association in medical informatics.