

MEMBERSHIP IN THE SCHOLARS STRATEGY NETWORK

What Does It Entail?

The Scholars Strategy Network (SSN) welcomes scholars who are committed to engaging the public beyond the university in order to advance effective and democratically sustainable progressive solutions to the major challenges America faces – including fostering jobs and vibrant economic growth; advancing health care reform at the national and state levels; improving environmental, educational, and social policies; reforming immigration; and revitalizing democratic government and citizenship. SSN is not a beltway-focused think tank; members remain at their “day jobs” in colleges and universities across the United States and are attuned to the concerns of their communities and regions. SSN Members draw on the best research and ideas, not only to pinpoint relevant facts and findings but also to formulate promising policy approaches and articulate democratically sustainable political strategies for realizing them. Through outreach to their fellow citizens, community leaders and government officials at the regional and national levels, SSNers take on the formidable challenge of engaging and shaping public opinion and policymaking.

Most SSNers join a regional network where Members and affiliates take part in recurrent meetings and events, but individual scholars can also join SSN apart from a regional group. Becoming an SSN Member is a meaningful commitment. More than a debating society, SSN enables research-oriented scholars to help shape effective, democratically sustainable responses to pressing public challenges. Achieving this goal depends on the active engagement of all Members and requires building bridges to policymakers and civic leaders. In return for active commitment, SSN offers Members opportunities to reach interested interlocutors in the policymaking community and in civic groups and the media. Each Member commits to write, speak, and join forces with others. In return, each Member can expect support for injecting important findings and ideas into the public domain, as well as new opportunities to influence public policy and debates. Here is how the two-way relationship works:

What Members Can Expect from SSN

Beyond access to SSN activities, each Member will be featured on the SSN website with a profile that includes a picture and a description of those areas of his or her scholarly expertise and civic involvements that contribute to the SSN mission. Using these Member profiles, SSN will help each scholar find audiences beyond the academy for key policy insights -- by making Members’ ideas and potential contributions accessible to the media, and by sharing succinct encapsulations with policymakers and their staffs and with civic leaders and political advocates. SSN will feature Members’ ideas and findings in SSN publications, support Members in placing OpEds, and serve as a gateway for invitations to speak at relevant civil society forums and consult with the press and public officials. Further, SSN staff will provide editorial and graphics support to Members as they reformulate their research findings and ideas for non-academic audiences. As a Member develops accessible written products and becomes known through SSN outreach activities, he or she can expect invitations to take part in policy briefings, workshops, and discussions.

What Each Member Commits to Do

Upon joining, each Member will provide information for his or her web profile, and commit to keeping it updated in cooperation with SSN staff. Each new Member will also be invited to draft a short *Key Findings* brief encapsulating central ideas and findings from an appropriate (previous or current) scholarly publication he or she would like SSN to feature.

Each year, a Member commits to continue to contribute in one or more ways:

- *Creating written products:* At least once a year, SSN Members prepare a Strategy Brief or a Basic Facts or Key Findings summary. SSN provides templates for each of these presentations. All SSN written products are engagingly written in vivid, everyday English -- geared not to impress other academics but to pique the interest of and be useful to policymakers and civic and political leaders who regularly speak with everyday Americans. Such publications are at the core of SSN's mission and outreach activities.
- *Educating and responding to policymakers and public leaders:* Written products may serve as an entrée, yet policymakers and leaders of publicly engaged groups will often want to discuss ideas and findings with relevant SSN experts – and ask for further information that meets their needs. SSN will offer expenses-paid opportunities for Members to speak and take part in group sessions.
- *Reaching out through the media:* SSN will offer support to Members who can contribute by writing and placing OpEds and blog postings and by discussing issues with interested reporters.
- *Taking part in regional network activities and membership recruitment:* Members can participate regularly in regional networks and help to develop regional events and outreach. Members can also pitch in by reaching out to potential new Members and interested people in the media, public office, and civic life.

How to Apply – and Alternative Ways to Be Involved

University-based scholars considering SSN membership should consult the SSN website at www.scholarsstrategynetwork.org for further information. For answers to questions and for information on how to apply, contact SSN Executive Coordinator Lizzy Ghedi-Ehrlich at eghediehrlich@fas.harvard.edu.

The status of *SSN Affiliate* is available to people outside the academy and to college and university scholars who are interested in SSN but as yet unsure if they want to commit to full membership. Affiliates hear about and attend SSN events and discussions. SSN regional groups typically have numerous active participants from government, nonprofits, think tanks, foundations, political groups, and the media. In addition, university-based researchers, professors, and graduate students become *SSN Affiliates* to explore SSN activities and learn more about the opportunities open to full members.