



International Congress of Infant Studies (ICIS) Strategic Plan

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Mission

ICIS is committed to advancing the understanding of infant learning and development across the globe through the creation, dissemination, and promotion of leading-edge science.

Vision

Our vision is a world in which policies and practices that impact infants are grounded in scientific research on infant learning and development so that all infants thrive in supportive contexts.

Core Values

Advancing the science of infant development

Understanding infant learning and development is critical to science and society. Infants represent the future, and advances in the science of infancy are vital to creating a world in which all infants thrive in supportive contexts. We support the science of infant development by generating new knowledge and providing avenues for disseminating methodologically and theoretically rigorous science.

Inclusivity and diversity in methods, subject populations, and professionals

As an international society, diversity is central to all our endeavors. We embrace diversity in international representation in our meetings and journals; international representation in our governing board; and broad representation in the populations we study, the methods we use, and the theoretical approaches and domains that we investigate.

Effective communication of scientific findings

We endorse effective and widespread dissemination and communication of scientific findings to researchers, policymakers, parents, and other stakeholders in the development of infants through platforms that include our conference, journal, website, and social media.

Educating researchers and key stakeholders

We believe that educational opportunities for the next generation of scientists and seasoned researchers are critical for advancing the science of infant learning and development and achieving our mission. We innovate, promote, and support the education of a diverse scientific workforce, and create collaborative research partnerships to extend the boundaries of our reach in education.

Strategic Goals

Four strategic goals support our key values.

To promote and support scholarship in infant development

A primary goal of the society is to promote and support scholarship on infant development. In particular, we aim to provide the best context for scientists and scholars to acquire tools, gain knowledge, develop collaborations, and disseminate findings related to *transparent open science, basic and applied* research that is characterized by



innovation and rigor, and is *evidence based*. We achieve this goal by producing a top scientific journal whose editorial board reflects these values; by organizing a premiere scientific meeting that allows for the discussion and sharing of new findings, issues, and methods around the best science in the field; and by leveraging available resources and creating new ones to promote scientific rigor, transparency, data sharing, and reuse.

To increase and enhance diversity in the study of infant development

A second goal is to encourage and support diversity in our efforts. This includes ensuring diversity in our *methods, approaches, disciplines, and theory*; our *subject populations* and *where our scientists live and work*, with an emphasis on the *international* composition and reach of the society.

To provide outlets for communicating the science of infant development

A complementary goal is to have means for the effective dissemination of information about scholarship on infant development to diverse groups including scientists, policy makers, parents and lay audiences, and students. Our journal and biennial conference, effective social media presence, webpage, and new initiatives and platforms are vital mechanisms for researchers to communicate their results to broad audiences.

To support educational opportunities in the science of infant development

We have an important role in providing opportunities for education for the next generation of scientists and even seasoned researchers. We support education through internships and scholarships for scientists at the earliest levels, workshops and offerings at our conference, and partnerships with other organizations to promote opportunities for researchers to learn new skills and to educate new scientists.

Vehicles for Advancing ICIS's Strategic Goals

We have several current and planned vehicles for achieving our goals.

Journal

Our journal, established in 1999, has been one of the most important outlets for our research on infant development. It has been innovative, including (historically) providing a means for authors to include supplementary materials, publishing themed collections of articles and special issues, and more recently becoming one of the first developmental journals to adopt open science practices such as registered reports. *Infancy's* editors and editorial boards display strong commitment and time investments in advancing the journal and have embraced new approaches and ideas for making the journal one of the top in the field.

It is important to identify ways that our journal can help achieve our strategic goals. For example, we need to ensure that the editorial team reflects the goals of scientific rigor and transparency; embraces the goals of increasing diversity; and recognizes their role in identifying new approaches to communication and education. Furthermore, in line with goals around diversity, the methods sections of our journal should uniformly include information on the background of infants: parent education, ethnicity, race, languages spoken at home, and so forth.

Membership

Our membership is our best resource for addressing our goals. As we consider our membership, and how we might draw on members for leadership of the Congress, we must recognize how strategies aimed at increasing and maintaining membership align with the values and goals of the society, including those around diversity.

Partnerships

We aim to create mutually beneficial and long-standing partnerships. Historically, we have partnered with organizations, such as Jacobs, for one-time opportunities. These partnerships have been beneficial to the



organizations and ICIS, but we aim to create longstanding partnerships that span multiple events and initiatives. The goal of these partnerships is to make our membership available as a resource for other organizations and to make resources and opportunities available to our membership. The *learning sciences exchange* (LSX) is an example of such participation. Although this particular opportunity may not extend beyond this one time, we hope that future endeavors will be more sustaining and will involve ongoing relationships.

Another possibility is for foundations and organizations to become official sponsors of ICIS. Such an official sponsorship would involve sustaining financial support for the society (e.g., guaranteed student travel, support for meetings, support of salary for communications person/blog writer); and other ways to support the foundation or organization.

Conference

Our biennial meeting is already positioned to meet our strategic goals in several ways. It promotes the science of infant development and provides opportunities for individuals to disseminate information about the latest findings, methods, and approaches to this science.

Moving forward, the biennial meeting should be structured in ways that will further promote diversity in several ways. Increased efforts should be made to promote diversity in methods, theories and approaches to the study of infant development. This may be achieved through continued use of innovative offerings at meetings (e.g., roundtable discussions, two-views presentations, invited symposia), and the development of new types of sessions and workshops.

The biennial meeting also should promote diversity of the subject populations studied and the scholars who attend and participate in the biennial meeting. Efforts to increase reporting of research conducted on diverse populations, for example in the context of the Presidential Symposium on global development and other ways, should be incorporated into the planning of the biennial congress.

Efforts to increase participation by diverse scientists should be supported by more programs, such as support by the Jacobs Foundation for attendance by scholars from developing countries. Diversity in disciplines should be encouraged and tracked, and efforts should be made to ensure that our membership extends to pediatric researchers. Given the international reach of the society, diversity should be considered in terms of the kinds of diversity in the membership as a whole.

Continued efforts to offer a virtual platform for the conference would allow remote participation by members who do not have the funds to attend the conference in vivo.

Web footprint

Our presence on the web and social media is a vehicle to achieve our goals. Historically, these resources have been underutilized by the society, but can provide opportunities by highlighting new findings; engaging infancy scientists to disseminate their newest work; educating scholars in infancy around new tools and methods; communicating to policy makers, lay audiences, and parents about research; and much more

Support & Resources

We have several resources at our disposal to achieve our goals. These include:

- Podium Conference Specialists
- Board
- Journal Editors
- Conference program committee



Our future plans should include strategies for effectively using and expanding on these resources.

How do we achieve our goals?

As we move forward, the board must continually consider and vet concrete steps to achieve our goals. The list below, although not exhaustive, can provide important guidance as we move forward to make changes to the society and its governance that align with our stated values and goals.

1. To promote and support scholarship in infant development

The most obvious ways to achieve our goals are to continue to improve and enhance our journal and conference.

The new editorial team, led by Gavin Bremner, has a vision for increasing the transparency and open science efforts of the journal. The board and membership should support these efforts by engaging in the new innovative features of the journal, submitting strong scientific findings to the journal, encouraging colleagues and junior scholars to submit their best work to the journal, identifying ways to showcase key research findings to audiences beyond the journal, and providing timely and constructive reviews when asked.

Efforts should be made to expand the readership and impact of the journal by pursuing representation in Medline and other premiere bibliographic databases. Additionally, the board and the editorial team should continue to discuss ways in which the journal can move forward. The journal should reflect the breadth and diversity of scholarship and our membership, with evaluation of not only journal impact, but the reach of the journal.

Historically, the biennial conference has fallen under the responsibility of the current president. The president selects a location, a program committee, and determines the general theme and tone of the meeting. As the society has grown and conference attendance has increased to be consistently over 1000 attendees, this approach has become somewhat problematic. Although generally strong and well attended, there have been some inconsistencies across conference years, and it is not clear that there is a general attempt to create conferences that embrace our core values. There should be threads of continuity between conferences that are grounded in our core values, while still allowing for a unique signature and character of each conference.

Offering programming, workshops, webinars, and other events on the off-conference years would foster continued investment by the membership.

The conference should continue its rotation between North American and non-North American locations. Decisions around travel awards should seek to ensure the diversity of scholarship methods, domains, and topics, and diversity in the geographic regions of awardees. The board should identify guidelines for such decisions and make those available in advance on the ICIS website. Long-term goals should emphasize ways to create stable sources of support for ICIS travel, rather than efforts to secure support for each conference separately.

ICIS has the possibility of providing seed support to innovative ideas around research. Board members should identify various mechanisms for encouraging new scholars to pilot and learn new methods and for students to travel to different labs for new research experiences, for example by using summer months as possibilities for cross-laboratory research internship experiences.

2. To increase and enhance diversity in the study of infant development

Our goal is to increase diversity in many aspects of science. Our journal and biennial meeting are platforms to increase representation in the research in the methods, approaches, and subject population. This may be accomplished through special issues or sections of the journal focused on a diversity of methods or approaches.



The journal also may include calls for work on diverse populations such as bilingual families, children in poverty, and children from non-Western countries.

Similar approaches could be taken to increase diversity at the biennial meeting. Including specific calls for diverse methods, theoretical perspectives, and subject populations may be effective means for increasing diversity in submissions. Program chairs and ICIS presidents may also consider increasing diversity in the invited program.

Increasing diversity in the scholars who participate will involve several different approaches. Increasing travel awards to the biennial meeting with a focus on diversity may increase participation from young scholars from underrepresented groups or countries of origin. However, increasing diversity in the membership of the congress may require innovative solutions. For example, the congress may consider special efforts to match young scientists from under-represented groups at the biennial meeting.

Finally, it is important that the diversity of our field be represented in our Board composition. The board has included members from North America, Western Europe, Asia, Australia, and New Zealand. However, moving forward it is important that we consider our board composition and develop concrete strategies to ensure that the board reflects the diversity of the field, and encourages increased diversity in our membership.

3. To provide outlets for the communication about the science of infant development

An important goal is to support communication about the science of infant development. Our journal and biennial meeting provide opportunities for scholars to disseminate their latest findings.

Going forward, we must consider other avenues for disseminating information. For example, research findings in *Infancy* can be spotlighted on the website, through 1-page layperson summaries of articles accepted for publication.

Social media communications are also key, requiring an effective communications committee, coordinator, and/or plan. This strategy should include increasing twitter activity, for example tweeting about articles published in *Infancy*. It also should include ways to respond to current events, for example by promoting and redistributing efforts by SRCD and others to communicate scientific findings relevant to policy, encouraging members to write blog pieces that connects science to current issues and policy, and by partnering with organizations like Zero to Three to facilitate such communications. We can move forward with promising connections, including the highly successful child-development blog initiative around dissemination proposed by Duncan Fisher that was agreed on at the last board meeting.

4. To support educational opportunities in the science of infant development

Currently, we do not have existing, sustained vehicles for education. One goal for the future is to more systematically develop vehicles to provide educational opportunities for all scientists on techniques and methods. Partnerships with organizations, companies, or foundations may be especially important for supporting educational opportunities for our members. Partnerships with organizations and companies may allow us to provide training in methods, techniques, and equipment (e.g., EEG, physiological measures, eye tracking).

The committee on Sponsors and Vendors should update the membership regularly, and reach out to members of the board for ideas for outreach. Materials should be updated and circulated in terms of template letters, packages that describe support levels for ICIS, and so forth.

With support from foundations or other agencies, we may enhance educational opportunities for undergraduate students to do summer internships. We have used society funds to support undergraduate student summer internships. These summer internships could also increase diversity in participation by focusing on students from underrepresented groups or from communities/countries with few opportunities for research.



Our biennial meeting provides an excellent context for providing educational opportunities for scientists at all levels. As part of our congress, we can ask members to provide workshops and webinars. For example, preceding the 2020 biennial meeting, we initiated several Webinars that offered educational opportunities such as on methods for remote data-collection (critical during the time of COVID).

Traditionally, preconference workshops provide opportunities for scientists at all levels to be introduced to and educated in new methods, tools, and analytic approaches. Often companies are interested in sponsoring such workshops.

Virtual conference options may offer another educational opportunity by expanding the reach of participants in the conference. The highly successful vICIS offered various educational opportunities throughout the conference, one each day, that were well attended.