

# AMTA Strategic Planning Committee Report

## October 15, 2014

### AMTA Strategic Plan

**AMTA Vision:** To provide a transformative learning experience for all participants

**AMTA Mission:** AMTA is a non-profit organization that administers team-based competitive mock trial tournaments for undergraduate students with the goal of developing critical and analytical thinking skills, communication skills, civics, ethics, and professionalism in those students.

#### **AMTA Core Values:**

*Ethics and professionalism:* To make principled decisions without regard to self interest, to treat others with civility and respect, and to advocate with integrity

*Diversity:* To provide an inclusive environment for individuals from all walks of life and to welcome institutions from across the spectrum of higher education

*Critical Thinking/Problem-Solving:* To promote creative, innovative, and analytical approaches to addressing intellectual and practical challenges

*Relationship Building:* To instill a sense of community and to develop skills in understanding the needs and perspectives of others, nurturing social and professional networks

*Competitive Excellence:* To create a tournament structure that rewards diligence, thorough preparation, and outstanding team performance

#### **AMTA Strategic Goals:**

1. To increase access to and sustain participation in AMTA activities by identifying and removing barriers
2. To develop student learning outcomes for mock trial
3. To increase AMTA's organizational exposure and visibility, enhancing the prestige of the organization and attracting additional funding and partnerships
4. To provide excellent delivery of services to our members

## Administrative Models Considered by the Strategic Planning Committee

Summary: The Strategic Planning Committee reviewed multiple options for providing the necessary ongoing support that AMTA needs to achieve its strategic goals, as well as to provide an outstanding competitive experience for its students. At present, AMTA cannot advance its strategic goals without gathering further information. The appendix to this document identifies the information needed to develop and implement concrete plans. For this reason, the SPC believes that AMTA needs a transitional employment model to manage basic office functions while coordinating the collection of data and the development of plans that will allow AMTA to expand the benefits of mock trial to a larger constituency, articulate its educational value, develop a public presence that will attract funds and enhance partnerships, and improve the already excellent work we do in providing an intellectually challenging and high quality tournament experience. The recommendations below reflect AMTA's stage of development and offer a three-to-six year plan for achieving AMTA's strategic goals.

### Half-Time Administrative Assistant, working independently (\$40,000)

#### *Pros*

- The least expensive available option
- Consistent with past practice
- Meets minimum office needs to allow activities of the organization to continue
- Policy decisions and control of the competitive process and tournament structure remain with the Board of Directors
- Elected leader serves as the public face and voice of the organization

#### *Cons*

- Structure will not allow progress in meeting strategic goals
- Lack of on-site supervision of clerical staff leads to inefficiencies and misapplied rules/policies
- May require rental of office space and equipment

**Not recommended:** This is a caretaker model that will not advance the organization.

### Independent Contractor (\$60,000)

#### *Pros*

- Contract would be on a flat-fee basis
- There are multiple board members and former board members would be qualified to do the work
- The person would have institutional knowledge

#### *Cons*

- AMTA Bylaws prohibit a current director from being employed by AMTA
- A current coach might have a conflict of interest without the checks of our existing committee structure

- Lacks the institutional/academic prestige of being associated with a college or university
- Does not advance our strategic goals
- Employs a highly qualified and expensive staff member to perform clerical tasks
- Independent contractor, because operating a separate office, may become public face of the Board

**Not recommended:** This is a more expensive caretaker model that will not advance the organization.

Part-time manager supervising a part-time administrative assistant, in partnership with a college or university, 3-year contract with a required evaluation at the end of the contract – the contract would not auto-renew, but would require a decision by the Board at the end of the initial term to renew (\$60,000)

*Pros*

- Advances our strategic goals, as manager would focus on goals rather than day-to-day clerical tasks
- Allows for administration of consultant services necessary to collect data to develop growth, marketing, and communications plans
- Can be funded within confines of current budget, without increasing fees
- Provides support to officers and committee chairs (managing CD, completing paperwork for insurance requirements, transferring information to accountant)
- Allows for review of office functions for efficiency and cost savings
- Compensation is at the appropriate level based on the complexity of tasks (lower level pay for clerical tasks, higher pay for managerial functions)
- Policy decisions and control of the competitive process and tournament structure remain with the Board of Directors
- Elected leader serves as the public face and voice of the organization

*Cons*

- More costly than past employment models
- May require another transition in three years – the model, as proposed, is not self-sustaining
- We do not know if institutions are willing to enter such a contract with us
- Does not advance the strategic goals as quickly as a model with a full-time manager

**Recommended:** This model allows the organization to gather the information needed to determine how to advance its strategic goals and increase the organization’s profile in an immediately affordable manner. This model can be implemented by the time the contract with Furman expires.

Full-time manager, part-time administrative assistant, in partnership with a college or university– 3-year contract with a required evaluation at the end of the contract – would

not auto-renew, but would require a decision by the Board at the end of the initial term to renew (\$90,000)

*Pros*

- Has all of the same advantages of part-time manager model, but advances the strategic goals more quickly

*Cons*

- More costly than the part-time manager model

**Potentially recommended in 3-6 years:** Depending upon the results of the information gathered and implementation plans developed over the 3-year contract of the part-time manager and administrative assistant, it may be necessary to have a full-time manager to fully realize our strategic goals. While the SPC believes that immediate implementation of this model would advance our strategic goals more quickly, it does not believe that this model is affordable given our current revenue structure.

Executive Director supervising a part-time administrative assistant, independent of partnership with a college or university (\$115,000)

*Pros*

- Advances the strategic goals most quickly, given the level of professional expertise and autonomy typical of an Executive Director
- Frees Board of Directors from ongoing tournament administration functions
- Provides a consistent point of contact for the organization over the long term
- Provides more continuity than a 3-year contract and potentially allows for a succession plan for organizational management
- Reduces reliance on volunteers
- Executive Director would have time and status to engage in outreach efforts and gather information from membership at large

*Cons*

- The most costly model – would require fee increases or creation of new revenue sources to finance
- Unclear if we have sufficient information on what is needed to achieve strategic goals to craft an appropriate job description
- Potentially displaces elected leader as public face and voice of the organization
- Requires development of evaluation process and accountability measures
- Potentially creates a knowledge gap because the Executive Director would not have first-hand and current knowledge of coaching and program administration issues

**Potentially recommended in 3-6 years:** Depending upon the results of the information gathered and implementation plans developed over the 3-year contract of the part-time manager and administrative assistant, the organization may decide that an investment in a stand-alone office is desirable. At present, we do not have sufficient information to determine the duties of a full-time Executive Director.

## Appendix

Information needed to develop and implement concrete plans for achieving strategic goals

1. To increase access to and sustain participation in AMTA activities by identifying and removing barriers
  - Gather information about barriers
    - Design survey or study
    - Conduct focus groups
    - Gather program budget information
    - Identify and describe key characteristics of long-term programs
    - Identify and describe key characteristics of struggling programs
    - Identify patterns related to race, sex, class, etc.
  - Analyze data to determine barriers to access
  - Synthesize information to determine if AMTA has ability to remove barriers
  - Assess costs of removing barriers
  - Develop plan
  
2. To develop student learning outcomes for mock trial
  - Draft student learning outcomes (examples, rules of evidence, etc)
  - Develop measurement methods
  - Select programs for pilot study
  - Pilot outcomes/measurement with programs
  - Distribute the information to programs and news outlets, academic outlets
  
3. To increase AMTA's organizational exposure and visibility, enhancing the prestige of the organization and attracting additional funding and partnerships
  - Develop a brand identity
  - Develop social media presence
  - Use newsletter effectively
  - Identify outlets to use
  - Advertising – feature pieces
  
4. To provide excellent delivery of services to our members
  - Review current office procedures for efficiency
  - Analyze data collective from tournaments to determine if tournaments meet AMTA's quality standards
  - Ensure ongoing and continued improvement of services and events