Attending the Vascular Annual Meeting on a student travel scholarship nearly a decade ago changed the course of Andrea Obi’s career.

Already leaning toward vascular surgery, her VAM experience — including a mentor to show her the ropes — cemented that decision. “SVS made me feel not only that I belonged there, but that I was valued,” she said. “I’d never had that experience before.”

She wants prospective members today to feel that same camaraderie and sense of belonging she has always felt and urges them to apply for membership. The final deadline for 2019 is Dec. 1.

In some organizations, trainees can feel a bit like outcasts, she said. SVS “does a great job making them feel like they can be part of something bigger than themselves.”

Now a surgeon-scientist with her own translational thrombosis laboratory, Dr. Obi has found the SVS Research Council second to none. With individuals competing at the highest level for all types of research and at every career stage, SVS surgeon-scientists offer a robust support system, built-in mentors and good funding. From talking with doctors in other specialties, she feels “we’re unique in that sense. Because of the Research Council, I feel I’ve had opportunities that they have not.”

Membership, she said, also provides a way for her — and all members — to give back. Remembering her own VAM experience, she has participated in talking with medical students, residents and fellows at VAM. She participates in a joint writing committee and the VA Vascular Surgeons Committee. “It’s a great way to collaborate to try to improve the quality of care,” she said. “You can only do that in a group, not a silo.”

After years of participating in SVS as a student, resident, fellow and trainee, Dr. Obi became an Active Member earlier this year.

What would she tell someone considering SVS membership? The reasons to join, she said, are numerous: SVS offers incredible opportunities for young surgeons, including formal and informal mentorship, research grants and scholarships, education to help pass the board exams. “You have the ability to get involved at every level and in whatever WAY you want; you can advocate for your patients in a way that’s meaningful for you.”

SVSConnect, the SVS online community, is another source for learning, she added. She doesn’t post herself, but she reads questions and answers and finds good information there.
And SVS guidelines “are my go-to for standard of care recommendations as a young surgeon. If I see something I haven’t seen before, I go straight to the guidelines page,” she said. “I see if my peer group has looked at this problem before and what they have to say. Then I can tell my patients that what I recommend is what the best practice is.”

For more information, visit vsweb.org/Join.

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