By Jonathan Schuppert, AICP

MARCH marks the start of my fourth year at Facebook. During my first orientation there, my newby colleagues and I were challenged to “commit to being a little terrified every day.” I took that to heart — and ultimately created a poster with that message to remind me — that if I’m comfortable, I’m not being adequately challenged, and I need to find something new to keep me mentally energized.

When James Castañeda, the previous Director of APA California-Northern, and I spoke about his new job opportunity in LA and my expedited path to Section Director, that long-ago quote reminded me to be flexible and adapt to new situations.

Was I excited for this new professional challenge, yes. Was I excited for what this meant for my career growth, yep. Was I a bit terrified, absolutely!

I share this to challenge everyone — including myself — to find areas where we can expand our knowledge, learn new skills, take on risks, and continue to be leaders who can shape our world so future generations can thrive.

Midway through our Section retreat on February 1st, I officially became APA California-Northern Section’s Director, then led our board through a goal setting exercise. I
took a moment to reflect on our Section’s accomplishments and encouraged our board members to think about where we want the profession to be at the end of this new decade — and what we, as individuals and as representatives of our Section, can do to get there.

At the retreat, we broke into focus groups to start preparing work plans for the year, identify issues and tools needed for success, and confirm partnerships that will increase our impact. As always, our board not only collaborated, but pushed the envelope. Themes we embraced include providing high-value programming for members, embracing technology to reach larger audiences, supporting students, adding program opportunities for emerging and mid-career planners, and growing our partnerships.

To improve our impact and streamline our efforts, I’ve made my initiatives for 2020 to better document our procedures, create onboarding resources, and update our bylaws.

In the optometry world, 2020 represents perfect vision. I’m excited to make 2020 a year of vision and clarity for our APA section and a year for me to think about my long-term goals and visions for the efforts in which I’m involved.

Think of it as a marathon, not a sprint

I hope 2020 inspires you to identify (or reassess) your long-term goals and push you out of your comfort zone whenever you feel too comfortable. Find small actions you can take to work toward your goals, check in often with yourself to see how you’re progressing, and don’t forget to celebrate the small victories — they really add up.