

IEEE COMSOC MEMBER RELATIONS

As anticipated in my first message in January, the President's Pages in February to June will be devoted to the presentation of the five ComSoc Vice Presidents, who will describe their sector activities and programs for the next two years. This month's column is written by Stefano Bregni, the Vice President for Member Relations.

Stefano is an Associate Professor at Politecnico di Milano, Italy. Born in 1965, he is graduated in Electronics Engineering. He worked in industry a few years before joining Politecnico as a tenured Assistant Professor in 1999.

Stefano is an IEEE Senior Member (1999). He has been an active IEEE ComSoc Expert/Distinguished Lecturer for seven years: in 2003-2009, he visited repeatedly 14 countries and 29 IEEE Sections/Chapters worldwide, giving more than 30 lectures in Mexico, Puerto Rico, El Salvador, Panama, Costa Rica, Guatemala, Ecuador, Peru, Bolivia, Colombia, Malaysia, India, Poland, and the United States.

In IEEE ComSoc before, he has served as Member at Large on the Board of Governors for two terms (2010-12, 2013), Director of Education (2008-11), Chair of the Transmission Access and Optical Systems TC (2008-09), and before as Secretary/ViceChair (2002-07), and Member at Large of the GLOBECOM/ICC Technical Content (GITC) Committee (2006-09).

He is or has been Technical Program Co-Chair of ICC 2016, Technical Program Vice-Chair of GLOBECOM 2012, Symposia Chair of GLOBECOM 2009, Symposium Co-Chair in nine other ICC/GLOBECOMs, and Technical Program Co-Chair of IEEE LATINCOM 2011. He is Editor of the *IEEE Global Communications Newsletter*, published monthly in *IEEE Communications Magazine*, and Associate Editor of *IEEE Communications Surveys and Tutorials*. He contributed to ETSI/ITU standards on network synchronization. He is the author of 80+ refereed papers, and of the book *Synchronization of Digital Telecommunications Networks* (Wiley, 2002).

THE MEMBER RELATIONS COUNCIL

In the IEEE Communications Society, the Member Relations Council addresses all activities and programs related to members, chapters, membership development, marketing, industry relations, sister and related societies, and Society regions. Chaired by the Vice-President for Member Relations, it also includes seven Directors, each chairing his/her own Board (viz. Marketing and Industry Relations, Membership Programs Development, Sister and Related Societies, and the four regions LA, NA, EAME, and AP), the President-Elect and Past-President, as well as up to four additional members.

It is my pleasure to introduce to all readers of *IEEE Communications Magazine* the seven Directors appointed to serve in this term 2014-15:

- Director M&IR: Ashutosh Dutta, Columbia University, USA.
- Director MPD: Koichi Asatani, Kogakuin University, Japan.

- Director SRS: Curtis Siller, USA.
- AP Director: Wanjiun Liao, National Taiwan University, ROC.
- EAME Director: Hanna Bogucka, Poznan University of Technology, Poland.
- LA Director: Pedro Aguilera, Switch Comunicaciones Ltda, Chile.
- NA Director: Merrily Hartmann, USA.

STRATEGIC DIRECTIONS

The ComSoc Bylaws specify quite a wide scope of activities for the Member Relations Council, namely:

- Formulating strategic directions for serving members and for membership development.
- Overseeing ComSoc member activities and programs for members and chapters.
- Promoting and expanding ComSoc membership.
- Ensuring global participation of members in ComSoc activities.
- Ensuring cost-effective marketing programs for ComSoc services, products, and activities.
- Fostering the provisioning of technical/professional development and information services to ComSoc members.
- Overseeing the relations with professional societies internationally.

In my view, our Society should aim at five strategic directions in Member Relations to ensure its innovation and growth, ultimately to serve more and better its 50,000 members: globalization, industry, academia, women, and students. I call this the Golden Pentagon,

to pursue further the vision of our Past President, Byeong Gi Lee.

THE GOLDEN PENTAGON OF COMSOC'S MEMBER RELATIONS

Globalization means incorporating global culture and values in ComSoc, on the one hand by strengthening balanced participation of members from all regions, and on the other by disseminating knowledge and technical skills in all countries worldwide, paying extra attention to disadvantaged areas.

Aiming at both industry and academia implies creating multidisciplinary links between ComSoc, universities, and industry. As a matter of fact, currently the participation of universities in ComSoc conferences, publications, and various technical activities is largely prevailing over industry, after years of a progressive shift that made ComSoc's circle of active members more and more unbalanced.

Correcting this shift and restoring a balanced participation from both industry and academia within ComSoc should be a priority, for example by enriching our portfolio with new programs and services specifically oriented to the practical needs of industry and capable of serving better that segment of communications engineers. At the same time, needless to say, university students and professors must always trust ComSoc publications and conferences as their safe haven, that is their

first source of pure and applied research articles, being sure that technical excellence and innovation are firmly among ComSoc's best assets.

Due to a number of various historical reasons, women are significantly under-represented in most engineering disciplines worldwide (although to various extents in different countries) and since early education in university. Communications is not an exception. For a long time, regrettably, there have been even fewer women in visible senior leadership positions in academia, industry, or even public institutions.

Also in our Society, the number of women on the Board of Governors or as Editors in Chief of our journals has significantly increased in recent years, but is still not representing fully the potential of the large share of female ComSoc members. In my opinion, therefore, some concerted effort is still possible to better balance the representation of women in leading positions in our Society, aiming at granting true equal opportunities to both genders.

Students truly represent the future not only of our Society, but more broadly of our disciplines of engineering. One of our most important strategic directions should be, therefore, toward promoting initiatives to invite young students to contribute to ComSoc activities. Online education programs, special awards dedicated to students (e.g., the Student Competition Award just launched in 2013), ad-hoc activities organized for students at major conferences and Student Travel Grants, as well as various other initiatives of this kind, may all be ways to encourage participation of the young generation in ComSoc's major activities, as well as an effective means for retention of student members.

Besides this, special attention is due to young students living in disadvantaged areas of the world, who have smaller opportunities to meet international experts at major conferences. Online education (webinars) and the Distinguished Lecturer Program are two key programs to also serve this social mission of ComSoc.

GOALS AND PROGRAMS

The Member Relations Council will work cohesively toward the five strategic directions outlined above. Many specific goals and activities are under planning.

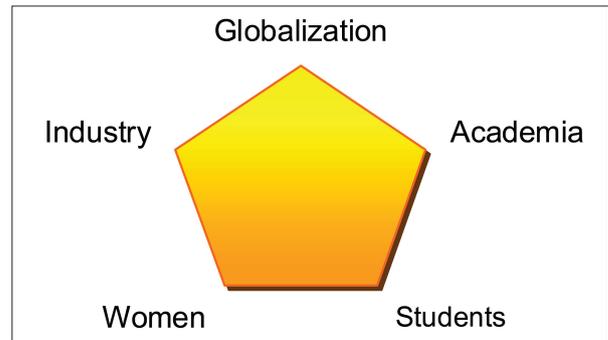
To support these ambitious goals, at the last OpCom meeting we decided to increase significantly the budget share allocated to member services. This will not come at the expense of other important missions of ComSoc, but rather from the ComSoc infrastructure cost saving that has been programmed for the next several years (see the President's Page in the January 2014 issue).

Chapters and Regional Activities

There are more than 170 ComSoc Chapters worldwide! Some of them are extremely active in organizing initiatives that involve successfully both industry and academia. Some others struggle with the difficulties of a small local membership, who is much less prone to be engaged in regular activities.

Our goal will be to encourage all Chapters to organize technical events and local dissemination of ComSoc products, in particular by meeting specific local demands. Ultimately, the challenge will be to develop membership in disadvantaged areas, but with the highest growth opportunity.

Regional Conferences will be instrumental to this purpose. Having one such conference in each Region (or sub-region) in the ComSoc portfolio, appropriately managed in order to ensure good technical reputation and a significant local base



The Golden Pentagon of ComSoc's Member Relations.

of followers, can be key to allowing members in disadvantaged areas to attend conferences with a good reputation, but without high expenses for travelling.

All Chapters will be required to set up and keep regularly updated their official web site, posting all Chapter information, news, announcements and programs of the events organized for their members. In order to ease their effort, the ComSoc IT Dept. will provide a common template and a web publishing tool, thus minimizing the difficulty of this task for their volunteers.

IEEE Global Communications Newsletter

As Editor for many years of the *IEEE Global Communications Newsletter*, I am often surprised by noticing that only a few Chapters take advantage of this powerful means for advertising their best initiatives and achievements. A specific effort to enhance the awareness of Chapters for the GCN will be taken.

The *IEEE Global Communications Newsletter* is really the "Voice of the Chapters". Published in the *IEEE Communications Magazine*, it reaches the 50,000 ComSoc members every month. All issues are also posted publicly in PDF format on the ComSoc web site.

The GCN is an outstanding venue to make all ComSoc members aware of how well local activities have been organized by Chapters. Examples of such activities might be Distinguished Lecturer Tours which turned out particularly well, local and regional conferences, special technical events and workshops, news from the local public Authorities which may have relevance and be interesting also to the broad audience of the global ComMag readership, etc.

Distinguished Lecturer Program

Having been an enthusiastic Distinguished Lecturer for seven years and with so many tours in my travel journal (29 Sections/Chapters visited in four continents), I am really persuaded that the Distinguished Lecturer/Speaker Program is one of the best programs of ComSoc to serve its members.

The DLP is truly an effective way to reward its current members and also to attract new ones, especially in disadvantaged areas that are seldom visited by lecturers with international reputation. Virtual Distinguished Lecturer Tours, by means of online education tools, can also be useful to attain the same target.

We plan to reinforce the DLP, by analyzing its critical issues and proposing ways to improve its effectiveness.

Industry Outreach Programs

Industry is one of the five vertices of the Pentagon shown above. Restoring a balanced participation from both industry and academia within ComSoc will be our priority, for example

by refocusing membership program development on industry, or by designing new programs and services specifically oriented to industry.

An important area of high potential interest for industry would be education and professional training. ComSoc already probed this area with the Wireless Communications Engineering Technology (WCET) education program, started a few years ago. It is time that ComSoc further widens the scope of its education and professional training services. This can be beneficial not only on the side of revenues (training as a product to sell), but also on the side of membership development (training as a service provided to members).

Not less important are all ComSoc activities related to Standards (under the Standards Council, chaired by the Vice-President for Standards, Rob Fish), which have a primary role in our strategy to recover participation from industry.

Sister and Related Societies

Sister Societies are national or international professional associations, on communications engineering or equivalent disciplines, with a charter similar to ComSoc, and similar in technical scope. Examples of ComSoc Sister Societies are the IEICE in Japan, the Popov in Russia, the KIKS in South Korea, the VDE in Germany, and many others.

Related Societies are national or international professional associations with charters similar to ComSoc, but complementary in technical scope. Examples of Related Societies are other IEEE Societies, the Association for Computing Machines (ACM), the International Telecommunication Union (ITU), the Optical Society of America (OSA), and others.

The SSR Board is currently working on revising and updating agreements, as well as promoting new activities.

Student Competition Award

In 2013, the past Vice-President for Member Relations, Nelson Fonseca, launched a ComSoc Student Competition Program, for graduate and undergraduate students, with the

theme “Communications Technology Changing the World”. I co-chaired the Competition Committee with Nelson.

The 2013 Competition was a great success. More than 70 projects were submitted and evaluated by an international committee made up of 30 experts, nominated by the Competition Co-Chairs and by ComSoc Technical Committees, covering all areas of ComSoc’s scope. The evaluation process was organized in two rounds and took into account five different aspects, namely: social impact, technical content, originality, practical applicability and results, and quality of presentation. The winners received their Award in front of the Board of Governors at GLOBECOM 2013.

We plan to run the Competition again in future years, aiming at making it a well-established appointment on the agenda of ComSoc students.

Graduates of the Last Decade (GOLD)

This Ad-Hoc committee is chaired by Jingxian Wu, University of Arkansas, USA. It promotes activities aimed at young members, who entered the professional world as engineers in recent years, in order to complement the activities organized for students and to facilitate retention of student members.

Women in Communications Engineering (WICE)

This Standing Committee is chaired by Octavia Dobre, Memorial University of Newfoundland, Canada. Its mission is to promote the visibility and roles of women communications engineers and to provide a venue for their professional growth. Octavia and her Committee are setting up various initiatives, namely:

- Organizing social events at ComSoc flagship conferences in form of receptions with speakers and discussion panels.
- Keeping members in the loop via a mail list, a website and social networks (Facebook and LinkedIn).
- Awards for WICE students and other members.
- Nominating WICE members for the DLP.

You are cordially invited to check the WICE web site, hosted at www.comsoc.org, for news and announcements.