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IEEE ROBOTICS AND AUTOMATION SOCIETY STUDENT BRANCH CHAPTER FORMED AT THE UNIVERSITY AT BUFFALO
By: Venkat Krovi
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https://sites.google.com/site/rasscsunyub/

A student branch chapter of the Robotics and Automation Society (RAS) has been formed at the University at Buffalo. Michael Anson, a Ph.D student in the Mechanical and Aerospace Engineering (MAE) Dept. in the School of Engineering and Applied Sciences (SEAS) will be the Founding Student Chapter President and Prof. Venkat Krovi from the MAE Dept./SEAS will serve as the Faculty Advisor.

The primary objectives of the chapter will be: to increase interest in the areas of robotics and automation among UB students, to provide opportunities for both graduate and undergraduate students to enhance their knowledge in these areas (in the form of projects, workshops, and guest speakers), and to provide students with networking and leadership opportunities. For more information about the RAS student chapter, please contact Venkat Krovi (vkrovi@buffalo.edu) or Michael Anson (current student president - mjanson@buffalo.edu).

IEEE POWER & ENERGY SOCIETY STUDENT BRANCH CHAPTER FORMED AT THE UNIVERSITY AT BUFFALO
By: Peter Casey
Secretary, IEEE Student Branch
Associate Editor
petercas@buffalo.edu

A student branch chapter of the Power & Energy Society (PES) has been formed at the University at Buffalo. Frank Walsh, an undergraduate in the Electrical Engineering (EE) Dept. in the School of Engineering and Applied Sciences (SEAS) will be the Founding Student Branch Chapter President. Dr. Kevin Burke an EE Faculty member will serve as the Faculty Advisor.

The foundational mission of the chapter will be: to promote cooperation and exchange of both technical information and topics advancing the field of power and energy among the student body, to provide opportunities for both graduate and undergraduate student to broaden their knowledge and interest in the field in the form of projects, community service and workshops...
with guest speakers, and to provide professional skills such as networking and leadership roles. The IEEE Power and Energy Society has provided over $30,000 in scholarships to UB students who have an interest in the Power and Energy Area. For more information about the PES student chapter, please contact Kevin Burke (kmburke@buffalo.edu).

IEEE-USA SUPPORTS SENATE LEGISLATION TO REFORM H-1B AND L-1 VISA PROGRAMS
By: Chris McManes
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“We commend Sens. Brown and Grassley for introducing this important legislation,” IEEE-USA President Marc Apter said. “This, along with increasing the number of green cards available to high-skill workers, would strengthen job retention and creation in the United States.”

The bill “aims to close loopholes in the H-1B and L-1 visa programs, reduce fraud and abuse, provide protections for American workers and for visa holders, and require more transparency in the recruitment of foreign workers.” Among other things, it would:

- Require all companies to make a good-faith effort to hire Americans first
- Prohibit employers from advertising only to H-1B visa holders
- Require that wages paid to H-1B holders and U.S. citizens be essentially the same
- Prohibit companies from outsourcing visa holders to other companies


Including exemptions to the 65,000 annual H-1B cap, the United States issued 134,780 H-1B visas in FY 2012. If legislation pending before the Senate passes, it will significantly increase this number.

One of the drivers for the reform bill, as profiled in a recent Computerworld story, is the strong connection between H-1B visas and offshoring. The publication found that the top 10 companies using the visas specialize in offshoring U.S. jobs.

Computerworld concluded that “… the major beneficiaries of the proposed increase in the cap would be pure offshore outsourcing firms.”

http://www.computerworld.com/s/article/9236732/The_data_shows_Top_H_1B_users_are_offshore_outsourcers

COMPANIES SPECIALIZING IN SHIPPING AMERICAN JOBS OFFSHORE SEEKING MORE H-1B VISAS THAN LAW ALLOWS
By: Chris McManes
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Companies specializing in sending American jobs offshore have already applied for more H-1B visas than will be available in 2013.

Data compiled by the Department of Labor Office of Foreign Labor Certification shows that the top 10 companies applying for H-1B visas in the first three months of FY 2013 are all offshore outsourcing companies. http://www.foreignlaborcert.doleta.gov/pdf/h_1b_temp_visa.pdf

These 10 organizations collectively had 112,739 positions -- representing 73.4 percent more than the base annual H-1B cap of 65,000 -- certified to be filled by an H-1B worker. Many of these work visas are issued to scientists and engineers.

Moreover, 64.1 percent of the 175,806 certified H-1B applications from just 1 October to 31 December 2012 went to these 10 companies. And there are many more than 10 outsourcers. DOL will begin applying these applications to the FY 2014 visa cap Monday.
“Starting next week, proponents of an H-1B visa increase will bemoan the fact that the H-1B cap is already used up,” IEEE-USA President-Marc Apter said. “But it was outsourcing companies -- businesses who use the visas to take American jobs -- who used nearly two-thirds of them.”

Current Labor Department statistics are consistent with Computerworld magazine’s recent analysis of FY 2012 government data, which found that, “The largest single users of H-1B visas are offshore outsourcers…”

http://www.computerworld.com/s/article/9236732/The_data_shows_Top_H_1B_users_are_of_fshore_outsourcers

Some members of Congress are considering increasing the H-1B cap significantly beyond 65,000 as part of comprehensive immigration reform. Computerworld concluded that, “… the major beneficiaries of the proposed increase in the cap would be pure offshore outsourcing firms.”

IEEE-USA supports legislation providing employment-based green cards for skilled immigrants earning advanced STEM degrees from U.S. colleges and universities, and their dependents. Green cards, unlike H-1B visas, allow immigrants to start their own companies, many of which will create jobs in the United States.

“The H-1B program shouldn’t be used to facilitate the transfer of high-paying jobs to other countries,” Apter said. “If Congress wants a full U.S. economic recovery, it shouldn’t even be thinking about expanding it.”

IEEE-USA supports Sen. Chuck Grassley’s efforts to determine if gender bias is present in the H-1B program.

Grassley (R-Iowa), in a letter Monday to Janet Napolitano, asked the Department of Homeland Security secretary “… to do everything in your authority to make sure that the program is used as Congress intended, and that discrimination against women is not tolerated when employers seek to bring in foreign workers.

The San Jose Mercury News recently published a story showing that about 70 percent of H-1B visa holders entering or re-entering the United States in 2011 were men.


A 2010 National Science Foundation survey found that 77 percent of temporary workers in STEM fields were males. The issue of gender bias was highlighted by IEEE Fellow Dr. Karen Panetta, an engineering professor at Tufts University and IEEE-USA vice president, at a Senate Judiciary Committee hearing on 18 March.

Among technical services firms, “where outsourcing companies get more than half the capped H-1B visas, the ratio is more like 85 percent men,” Panetta testified. “That’s outrageous.” http://www.judiciary.senate.gov/pdf/3-18-13PanettaTestimony.pdf

“Gender imbalances within the engineering profession will never be corrected as long as Congress insists that H-1B visas are the preferred vehicle for hiring foreign engineers and computer specialists,” IEEE-USA President Marc Apter said. Apter also noted the increased potential for gender discrimination.

“Because the visas are owned by companies – not workers – H-1B employees cannot effectively utilize legal protections that American workers take for granted,” he said. “It is hard to file a discrimination case against an employer...
who can easily have you kicked out of the country."


FREE IEEE-USA E-BOOKS IN MAY AND JUNE HIGHLIGHT KEYS TO ENJOYABLE & REWARDING CAREERS & CAREER TRANSITIONS

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IEEE-USA E-Books is pleased to offer as a member benefit in May, “Launching Your Career: Lifelong Learning – Your Key to an Enjoyable and Rewarding Career.”

The fourth e-book in a series written by former IEEE-USA President John Meredith, “Launching Your Career” is a guide for engineering students or new engineers beginning their careers. It offers a number of practical ideas to help make lifelong learning a priority in pursuing an exciting and rewarding career.

Meredith writes that technology is growing at an unprecedented rate, global competition is driving companies to become more competitive, and engineers are challenged to keep their technical skills current. He shares the estimate that an engineer’s technical skills will be obsolete in seven years or less unless they continue to upgrade their knowledge and skill set.

“Embracing a program of continuous learning will ensure that you have a successful career,” Meredith says.

“Launching Your Career: Lifelong Learning – Your Key to an Enjoyable and Rewarding Career” can be downloaded at http://www.ieeeusa.org/communications/ebooks/files/47skc0ie/Launching-Your-Career-

Lifelong-Learning.pdf for free to IEEE members. The nonmember price is $7.99.

In June, IEEE-USA E-Books will offer “The Best of Today’s Engineer: On Career Transitions.” This collection of stories can help you handle almost any situation you might face in your career, whether you’re changing projects, employers or career paths.

Articles include, among others, “Handling Downsizing; Conquering Change”; “Kick your Career Up a Notch – Become a Licensed P.E.”; “In My View: The Realities of Age Discrimination”; “Finding a Job in an Unstable Economy: Coping with Fears”; and “Engineer to Entrepreneur: Making the Career – Enhancing Transition.”

To purchase IEEE members-only products, and to receive the member discount on eligible products, members must log in with their IEEE Web account.

Call for Authors

IEEE-USA E-Books seeks authors to write an e-book or a series of e-books on career guidance and development topics. If you have an idea for an e-book that will educate other IEEE members on a particular topic of expertise, email your proposal to IEEE-USA E-Book Chair Gus Gaynor at g.gaynor@ieee.org and to IEEE-USA Publishing Manager Georgia C. Stelluto at g.stelluto@ieee.org.

IEEE-USA URGES SENATE TO REJECT EXPANDING H-1B VISA PROGRAM & REMOVING SAFEGUARDS FOR HIGH-SKILL WORKERS

By: Chris McManes
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IEEE-USA is urging the Senate Judiciary Committee to reject amendments to the comprehensive immigration bill that would increase H-1B temporary visa numbers, weaken safe-
guards for U.S. and foreign workers and facilitate the outsourcing of American jobs.

“We encourage the Senate to maintain the high-tech provisions as written,” IEEE-USA President Marc Apter said. “Efforts to destroy the balanced compromise that went into crafting the legislation will make it more difficult to enact into law.”

The committee is expected to begin debating amendments to the “Border Security, Economic Opportunity and Immigration Modernization Act” (S. 744).

Sens. Orrin Hatch (R-Utah) and Ted Cruz (R-Texas) have introduced amendments to increase the annual H-1B visa cap from 65,000 to between 300,000 and 325,000. When exemptions are included, this would equal roughly 10 percent of the total U.S. engineering workforce. This is troubling in light of recent reports that the top 10 companies using H-1B visas specialize in shipping American jobs offshore.

See http://www.computerworld.com/s/article/9236732/The_data_shows_Top_H_1B_users_are_offshore_outsourcers and http://www.ieeeusa.org/communications/releases/2013/032913.asp

“Outsourcing is damaging to U.S. workers and the American economy,” Apter said. “We need laws that promote U.S. job growth, not encourage it to leave our shores.”

Other amendments would strip the bill of language preventing companies from replacing Americans with lower-cost H-1B workers; weakening language requiring companies to hire qualified U.S. citizens before seeking an H-1B; and making it easier for companies to discriminate against Americans when hiring.

“We see no justification for any H-1B increase,” Apter said, “although we’ll accept the modest expansion in S. 744 in light of new workforce protections embodied in the bill’s high-skill provisions.”

Another proposed change would remove a protection in current law prohibiting companies from using the L visa (for intracompany transfers) to replace U.S. workers. If the amendment is accepted, it would only require a company to pay a $500 fee to use an L visa to outsource an American job.

IEEE-USA supports the legislation’s call for unlimited green cards for STEM Ph.D.’s. It has no position on the bill’s non-high-tech sections.

CALL FOR NOMINATIONS - IEEE MEDALS AND RECOGNITIONS

By: Jayne Cerone

Nominations for 2014 IEEE Medals and Recognitions are due 1 July 2013. IEEE Medals are the highest recognition within the IEEE awards hierarchy, with the prestigious IEEE Medal of Honor as the premier award. IEEE Medals embrace broad and significant contributions within the technical fields of interest of IEEE.

IEEE Recognitions reward member’s individual contributions to IEEE, published papers and corporate advancements within the IEEE fields of interest. IEEE Medal and Recognition Recipients are recognized at the formal IEEE Honors Ceremony. All IEEE members are encouraged to submit a nomination for a worthy candidate within their technical fields. For more information visit the IEEE Medals, Technical Field Awards, and Recognitions page or send an email to staff.

CALL FOR NOMINATIONS: TAB HALL OF HONOR - DEADLINE EXTENDED

By: Jayne Cerone

The TAB Hall of Honor Selection Committee is accepting nominations for recipient(s) to be inducted into the “TAB Hall of Honor”. The final 2013 recipient(s) will be determined by the IEEE Technical Activities Board at the Novem-
ber 2013 meeting. The deadline has been extended to 9 August 2013.

The "TAB Hall of Honor" has been established to honor those persons, living or deceased, who have made one or more major contribution(s) to IEEE Technical Activities. Contributions include the creation, development, or advancement of the technical objectives of the IEEE.

The contribution(s) must be to more than a single Society or Council, and the nominee must have been an IEEE member at the time of the contribution. Sitting members of the 2013 IEEE Technical Activities Board and the recently deceased (less than 1 year) are ineligible. Members of the Selection Committee and IEEE staff are also ineligible.

There will be one class of inductees per year, with two separate recipient categories. Recent contributions (within 5 years) and earlier contributions. Each category may have a maximum of three inductees per class.

For questions or to receive a nomination form, which will ask for a picture and citation suitable for use on the Hall of Honor site and a description of the accomplishment, please contact Paula Dunne. References also need to be provided. To review the Technical Activities objectives, please see Section 1.3 of the TAB Operations Manual.

**CALL FOR NOMINATIONS: 2015 VICE PRESIDENT-ELECT, IEEE TECHNICAL ACTIVITIES**

By: Jayne Cerone

The 2015 Vice President-Elect, IEEE Technical Activities will assist the Vice President, IEEE Technical Activities as a representative of the IEEE in its technical areas and will serve as the Vice Chair of the IEEE Technical Activities Board. The individual will also preside over the meetings of the Presidents' Forum and TAB Nominations and Appointments Committee. In the absence of the TAB Chair, the Vice President-Elect will preside over meetings of the TAB and the TAB Management Committee.

This individual will serve as the Vice President, IEEE Technical Activities (TAB Chair) in 2016 and as the Past Vice President, IEEE Technical Activities (Past Chair of TAB) in 2017. Each of these positions includes services as a member or chair of other TAB and IEEE committees.

Candidates for Vice President-Elect, Technical Activities must be of Fellow or Senior Member grade, and maintain membership in at least one IEEE Society. The TAB N&A Committee is also looking for particular skills for this position, which you can read on the Volunteer Opportunities page.

The TAB N&A Committee will select at least two individuals for the position, verify the nominees' eligibility, confirm willingness to serve and present a slate of candidates to TAB in November 2013. In order to be considered for the November 2013 slate presented to TAB, the deadline to receive nominations is Friday, 6 September 2013. After this time, a petition process must be followed as noted.

Petition Process: After the 6 September final deadline, a petition, signed by at least twenty percent (20%) of the voting members of TAB, may add a name to those on the TAB N&A slate once announced. Petition candidates shall notify the Managing Director of Technical Activities of their intentions at least 30 days prior to the scheduled November 2013 TAB meeting (by Monday, 14 October 2013). The final TAB N&A approved slate and any petition candidates will be presented to TAB for a vote during the November 2013 meeting.

TAB will decide both the number of names and the individuals for the slate of TAB approved candidates. Once approved by TAB in November 2013, the TAB N&A Committee will forward the slate of "TAB approved candidates for 2015 Vice President-Elect, Technical Activities," to IEEE Corporate to be included on the IEEE ballot.
CROSSCHECK PORTAL OFFERS QUICK AND EASY ACCESS TO PLAGIARISM DETECTION SERVICE
By: Jayne Cerone

The IPR Office is pleased to announce the launch of a new tool for publication volunteers. The IEEE CrossCheck Portal is now available to all conference organizers and periodical editors to help screen manuscripts for plagiarized material. The IPR Office partnered with the IEEE Publications Technology department to develop the CrossCheck Portal as a stand-alone web application that can be used by any publications volunteer at any time.

The IEEE Board of Directors recently approved a new policy requiring all IEEE papers to be reviewed with plagiarism detection software prior to posting in IEEE Xplore. The goal of the new policy is to assure the quality of content by flagging papers with improperly reused material before they are posted. Some full-service vendors have integrated CrossCheck into their systems in an effort to help publication volunteers comply with the new policy. Publication volunteers who work independently from these vendors, however, faced limitations with accessing and using CrossCheck. The IEEE CrossCheck Portal offers these volunteers with a viable alternative by providing a stand-alone application with quick access to the CrossCheck service, along with a simple interface. The portal also gives volunteers a direct connection to the IEEE IPR Office who will help review the results from CrossCheck, and advise volunteers on any actions that may be necessary for problematic papers.

IEEE publication volunteers interested in using CrossCheck and the portal can do so at no cost. All IEEE editors in chief and conference publication chairs are encouraged to visit the CrossCheck Information page for more information and to register to use the CrossCheck Portal. Contact the IEEE IPR Office with questions at copyrights@ieee.org or +1 732-562-3966