

IEEE Region 5 Student Activities Newsletter

September 20, 2007

Greetings!

Welcome to this first edition of the IEEE Region 5 Student Activities Newsletter for the 2007-2008 Academic year. This first edition is rather lengthy because it contains both some basic information which new Branch Officers need to know and specific information pertaining to this year's activities. Please take the time to read it or at least scan it carefully. This information is designed to help you be a better Branch Officer and improve your Branch operations for both the Officers and members. Also, some of this information may be of interest or value to your members; if so, please make sure that this information is communicated to them. This newsletter is being sent to all Student Branches, Branch Chairs, and Branch Counselors. If you are aware of anyone who is not getting this that should, or if you know someone who simply wants an electronic copy when it is published, please let me know.

My name is Francis Grosz, and I am the Region 5 Student Activities Coordinator (RSAC). The Region Student Representative (RSR) and I represent you on both the Region 5 Executive Committee and the IEEE Student Activities Committee. We also try to communicate with you so that you are aware of what is happening in Region 5. And finally, we are here to help you. My e-mail is f.b.grosz@ieee.org. The RSR is Enrique Granja, a senior in Electrical Engineering at the University of New Orleans. His e-mail is egranja@ieee.org. If you have any questions or a problem with IEEE, please get in touch with one or both of us so that we can assist you with it.

You and your Branch

As a Student Branch Officer, you are a leader of IEEE on your campus. IEEE is aware that the job you do has a direct and major impact on your Branch members and the value they place on their IEEE membership. Both IEEE and Region 5 value and appreciate the time and effort you devote to improving your Branch's value to its members. There are a number of resources available to help you with specific problems. If you have any questions or problems, please do not hesitate to contact Enrique or myself (or both of us). One of the primary functions of the RSAC and RSR is to support the Branch officers and Counselors. You are never bothering us when you ask for support!

IEEE Student Concourse

The IEEE Student Concourse is a Web page designed to be the starting point for many resources for Student Branches, Officers, and Members. It contains information on running a Student Branch, forms for joining IEEE and submitting Branch reports, links to other Branches, information on contests, scholarships, and awards and other happenings, and in general almost everything of interest to students available on the Web. It's a good place to start if you need any information about IEEE. The URL is: www.ieee.org/students.

2008 IEEE Region 5 Conference

You and your Branch should begin now to make plans to attend the 2008 IEEE Region 5 Conference in the spring. This year's Conference will be in Kansas City, Missouri from April 18 to April 20, 2008 at the Intercontinental Hotel. As usual, there will be Student Paper, Design, and Robotics Contests and prizes will be awarded in all three contests. In addition, we will again hold a Student Ethics Contest like the one held for the first time in Region 5 last year. There will also be a Student Leadership Training Workshop for new or prospective Branch officers. And as usual there will be social events to allow student attendees to meet one another and also meet higher grade members. The Region 5 leadership will be there and there are usually guests from IEEE Headquarters as well. Those of you who have attended in the past know that it is an interesting and very enjoyable event. Region 5 provides some support for travel expenses; however, this is usually not enough to cover all of the travel expenses for the Branch members, so you should begin to seek additional support now. Possible avenues of support include your Section; your department, college, and/or university; local industry; and self-generated funds (raffles, sales of munchies or lab supplies, etc.) This is a popular event among Student Branches, and our goal is to have members from every Branch in Region 5 attending. I will be updating you with information on the Conference in later newsletters, but the latest information about the Conference and the various contests always may be found at the Conference Web site: <http://ewh.ieee.org/conf/basics2/>. Some rules for the various contests are already available.

Know Your Section

It may come as a surprise to some of you, but all Student Branches are affiliated with a Section. The Section is the primary geographic unit within IEEE, and every IEEE member is a member of some Section. In addition, your Section receives a rebate for its student members. If you do not know your Section or its Officers, please contact me and I will see that you get the information.

Unfortunately, in some cases the locus of the Section is a significant distance from the campus, and this may make close cooperation difficult. Regardless, you should know your Section leadership and be working with them to plan activities and cooperative endeavors which will benefit both entities. Hopefully your Section supports Branch activities. The Branch members should know about Section meetings and other activities and be welcome at them. In addition, you should keep your Section informed of Branch meetings and other activities, and when appropriate please make a point of inviting them to join you. One highly recommended practice is to invite your Section Executive Committee (ExCom) to a Branch meeting so that the officers and members can meet the Section leadership. Perhaps the Section would be willing to sponsor the pizza and soft drinks for such a meeting (a great time to recruit new members as well!) Remember that many of these people are leaders in local industry and can be of great help when looking for a job or seeking support for the Branch (such as assisting with travel costs to the Region Conference). Cooperation with your Section is a win-win situation for both of you.

Is a Bachelor's Degree sufficient to be considered an Engineer?

As IEEE Student Members, most of you probably receive the IEEE's electronic newsletter, "The Institute Online", and should have gotten the issue of September 11, 2007. But in case you didn't read it carefully, I'd like to call your attention to one item in it. Several professional engineering organizations, such as the National Council of Examiners of Engineering and Surveying (NCEES; the organization that oversees registration as a Professional Engineer), have recently recommended that a Master's Degree or equivalent be considered the entry-level degree for engineering. The IEEE is considering what should be considered the first professional degree in engineering, the Bachelor's or Master's Degree. This question is being considered in the context of all engineering, not just Electrical and Computer Engineering.

As students about to graduate most likely with one or the other of these degrees, I thought that you would be most interested in this discussion. The full Institute article may be found at <http://bmsmail3.ieee.org:80/u/7000/05840657>. At the end of the article there is also a link where you can express any opinion you might have on this issue.

IEEE Web Site Contest

Each spring, IEEE and Region 5 hold a Web Site contest for the Student Branches which seeks the best Student Branch Web site. The goal is to recognize excellence in development of a Branch Web site, to provide other

Branches with examples worthy of emulation, and to encourage all Branches to provide high-quality Web Sites as a communications medium to their members. The contest begins with a Regional Web Site Contest, which is open to all Branches in Region 5. Cash prizes and certificates are awarded for First, Second, and Third Place finishes in Region 5. This year, five Branches entered the Regional competition with excellent Web sites. The winning Web sites, their URLs and Webmasters/Webmistresses are:

First Place: The University of Texas at Dallas
www.utd.edu/orgs/ieee Nicole Halper
Second Place: Washington University, St. Louis
 ieee.wustl.edu Corinne Pascale
Third Place: Rice University
www.ece.rice.edu/~ieee Barron Stone

Congratulations to these Branches and their Web designers for a great job! They will each receive a certificate and cash award from Region 5 for their efforts.

In addition, one or more of the regional winners (depending on the number of entries in the Region contest) advance to the Institute-wide contest. Because we had 10 or fewer entries in the Region 5 contest, we were only allowed to advance one Branch to the Institute-level competition. Therefore The University of Texas at Dallas is the entry from Region 5. Let's all wish them well.

The First Place prize in the Institute-wide contest is glory and fame, not to mention a cash award of \$1000. Start now to prepare your Web site for the contest. Of course, the money and awards are nice. But the real payoff is the valuable service it provides to your Branch members and other students who may be interested in a career in engineering. As usual, more information is available on the Web; the URL is <http://www.ieee.org/portal/pages/membership/students/programs/websitecontest.html>. The 2008 rules should be posted shortly.

The IEEE Xtreme Programming Contest and other Awards

Last year, the first annual IEEE Xtreme programming contest was held. This is a test of programming skill held worldwide via the Web over a single 24 hour period. Branches all over the world are invited to compete. Another Xtreme contest is planned for this December. In addition, IEEE has numerous Branch Awards, individual student awards, counselor awards, grants, scholarships, competitions, etc. available. If you are not familiar with these, please visit the Awards, Scholarships, and Competitions page of the Student Concourse; the URL is:

http://www.ieee.org/web/membership/students/scholarshipsawardscontests/SAG_homepage.html

And please make sure all of your members are informed of these opportunities as well. These are just some of the advantages of being an IEEE member; please avail yourselves of these opportunities.

IEEE e-mail Aliases and Mailing Lists

If you look at the e-mail addresses for Enrique and I listed at the beginning of this newsletter, you will notice the domain listed is [ieee.org](http://www.ieee.org). IEEE is not an Internet Service Provider (ISP) nor does it host a primary e-mail service. These e-mail addresses are called e-mail aliases and are another service provided by IEEE to its members. When you send e-mail to an aliased address, it is automatically forwarded by the IEEE e-mail server to another account specified by the user. So why would anyone want to bother with this rather than just specifying the account to which the e-mail is forwarded? There are two primary reasons all IEEE members should consider having an IEEE alias. First, before being forwarded all mail is scanned for viruses and other malware. IEEE's IT department works hard to keep the scanning tools accurate and very up to date, so the potential for harm from e-mail forwarded in this way is minimized. Also, there is an opt-out spam filter on the alias to minimize junk e-mail. The second reason to have an IEEE e-mail alias is that it will never be necessary to change this alias as long as you are an IEEE member. Should you change Internet Service Providers or otherwise change your primary e-mail address, you simply redirect the alias to the new address. You never have to notify correspondents of the new address since your IEEE address hasn't changed. This is an especially valuable feature for students who tend to be a highly mobile population. During the school year you can point the alias to your school account. If that goes away during the summer, you redirect the mail to your home account. After graduation, you can redirect the alias to your new service provider. If you don't already have an IEEE alias, please consider getting one.

Your Branch should also have an e-mail alias for official mail, and you should make sure that it points to an appropriate account. Some Branches have an official Branch account at the school which is accessible by the officers, and the alias can point to that. In other cases, officers use their personal accounts and the alias can point to that. In that case, however, please be sure that the alias information is kept up to date when the officers change. The recommended format for Branch aliases is sb.BranchName@ieee.org. If you do not have a Branch alias, you can request one at

<http://www.ieee.org/organizations/rab/functionalalias.html>.

Please also check the IEEE Region 5 Student Web site directory at <http://www.ieee.org/portal/pages/membership/students/lists/R5.html>

and make sure the Web site URL and Branch e-mail address listed are correct, and submit a correction if they are not.

Finally, please make sure your Branch reports, including New Officer Reporting Form and Branch Counselor Reporting Form, are submitted. IEEE uses these to establish and maintain mailing lists of Branches, Officers, and Counselors so that important information may be sent to you electronically. If these lists are not up to date, you may not get information important to you and your Branch. Please e-mail Enrique or me if you need any help.

Student Enterprise Award

Does your Branch have a great idea for a student activity or enterprise but lack the cash to get it started? Then please consider applying for a Student Enterprise Award! These awards are made to provide financial help in implementing an engineering project or activity that will also strengthen the Student Branch. Awards may range up to \$1500 and are made IEEE-wide. The Student Branch must submit a proposal requesting the funding. The deadline is November 15th of each year, so this year's deadline is fast approaching. If your Branch has a great idea for an engineering project but lacks the funds to make it happen, this is a good place to go. More details may be found at <http://www.ieee.org/portal/pages/membership/students/awards/studententerpriseaward.html>.

Conclusion

I hope this school year is off to a good start for you and your Branch. As someone who has been an IEEE member for quite a while, I can assure you there are many opportunities for both personal and professional growth within the Institute. As Branch Officers, you are already developing leadership qualities which will serve you well in the years ahead. IEEE is one of those activities in which the more you put into it, the more you will get out of it. And should you continue your IEEE involvement past graduation, I think I can promise you one thing you may already have discovered: you will never work with a finer group of men and women. Certainly that has been my experience throughout my IEEE involvement.

Please remember to contact Enrique or me if there is anything you need or there is anything we can do to help you. And my best wishes for the coming year!

Francis Grosz
IEEE Region 5 Student Activities Coordinator

