

Great experiences, meeting new people, and making a difference

by Elisa H. Barney

This is my last editorial as chair of the Student Activities Committee (SAC). Most IEEE positions last for one year and are renewable for a second year. I will stay on next year, and possibly the year after, as “past chair,” where I will be able to contribute and assist the next SAC chair.

Let me briefly introduce him: Hossam Ali is from Egypt and currently working as a security project manager at The Missing Link in Melbourne, Australia. He will further introduce himself in the January/February issue of *IEEE Potentials*, so keep your membership active to receive that issue. Did you know that when you graduate, you can continue to receive this great magazine? You just have to pay for it instead of having it included in your membership dues.

I have really enjoyed this position and am thankful that a colleague nominated me for it. In addition to writing the editorials (remember, all SAC chair editorials are available unlocked on *IEEE Xplore* if you missed any of mine or want to check out Hossam’s editorials without a subscription), I hope that some of my initiatives will have a long-lasting impact on current and future students. I have tried hard to build bridges to other units in IEEE. IEEE Eta Kappa Nu, Educational Activities, and IEEE-USA are a few that are the biggest.

I am most proud to have created the virtual speakers bureau, currently chaired by Simay Akar, who has a great team working with her, and I have heard from many students that they are very happy about its existence. I hope that most IEEE Student Branches (SBs) will be requesting speakers this fall. I merged the IEEE-USA SPAX

program with SAC Student Professional Awareness Activities program to make a unified worldwide SPAX program.

To supplement our wonderful IEEE Xtreme programming contest, we are currently, as I write this editorial in August, finalizing a list of student contest opportunities across IEEE, which will be displayed under “Opportunities” on the Student Activities website so you can see all of the options you have as IEEE Student Members. The final initiative I started last month, based on an email request

from one student (you can have great impact if you try), is the new Collabratec Community for Mature or Nontraditional Students. If that describes you or someone you know, check it out. It is open to nonmembers and students in other science, technology, engineering, and mathematics fields. Spread the word.

The best part of the job was meeting so many of you. Many others I met virtually as you emailed me with questions. Some I met in person when I attended the Region 6 Rising Stars Conference in January. A few of you invited me to speak

at your SBs. I spoke to a few SBs in person while traveling and to several virtually, either as part of the Virtual Speakers Bureau or for a larger student congress. Sadly, a few student congresses I hoped to visit in person this spring or summer were canceled due to COVID-19.

All of you will eventually graduate, and your tenure with IEEE’s Student Activities program will also come to an end. When you transition from being a Student Member of IEEE, you won’t have an editorial to write to reflect on your membership time. At graduation, most will be tired from your last academic semester. (Try not to get too bad of a case of senioritis.) You’ll be saying goodbye to the many friends you made during your academic career, with whom you stayed up late so many nights studying or working on projects. Most of you will take that time to

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focus on family and then look forward to your new job and career.

I hope somewhere in there, or soon thereafter, you will be able to take a look back and think about what you might have written about your experience if you had been called to write an editorial for your SB or academic department newsletter. People continually ask me why they should join IEEE or what they should tell others about why they should join. If electrical engineering, computer science, or an allied field is your major and you will continue in it, then you should be proud of your field and career and join IEEE as your professional home.

For many, the dues cost turns them off, and they ask what return they get for their money. You might receive some tangible things, like *IEEE Spectrum* or, as a student, *IEEE Potentials*, but it is the intangibles that make membership worthwhile. You get out of IEEE what you put in. I didn't just pay my membership dues and read

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my magazines. I got involved. My boyfriend says that I have had two jobs these two years (SAC chair and Boise State professor), but putting in the effort to take on this extra "job" is why this was such a great experience. I feel similarly about the other IEEE positions I have had as Section and area chair and as a member of various committees. Yes, I paid US\$100 each year to have the opportunity to work an extra job. From that work, I gained new skills and knowledge. What I think more about is that I had great experiences, met new people, and—I hope you will agree—made a difference. Try it.

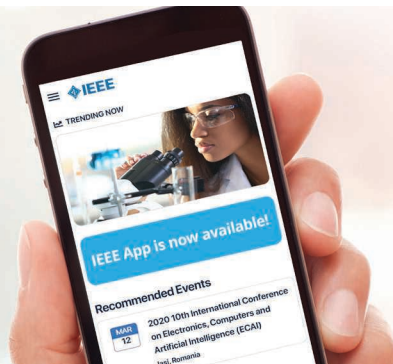
About the author

Elisa H. Barney (SACchair@ieee.org) is the IEEE Member and Geographic Activities–Student Activities Committee chair.



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