by Edward Tunstel

Progress Report

Another year has passed, and the effort to carry out the mission of the IEEE Systems, Man, and Cybernetics Society (SMCS) continues:

> To serve the interests of our members and the community at large by promoting the theory, practice, and interdisciplinary aspects of systems science and engineering, human–machine systems, and cybernetics.

While the Board of Governors (BoG) and Society committees are focused on executing current plans for improving value to members, the Society remains interested in ideas from our membership for additional ways in which we can execute our mission.

Last year, I heard from members with ideas about adding content to our annual flagship conference that considers the ethics and social implications of systems, man, and cybernetics (SMC), i.e., the impact of our technical field of interest on humans at the societal level and with broader discourse from concerned fields, such as law and economics. I thought this was a great suggestion, in particular, because it speaks to the transdisciplinary aspects of SMC. I have also heard ideas that invite the Society to self-reflect with consideration of prevailing societal thought. An example is the suggestion that we ponder the political correctness of the use of the term *Man* in the Society's name at a time when the word *Human* may be considered more appropriate. This is a compelling suggestion as we work to convey a crisp expression of the SMCS identity and to magnify our human-centric focus. Such a suggestion is one that invites consideration of where we are in the semantic evolution of the word *man* within the modern English language as referring, in a gender-neutral way, to mankind. I welcome the ideas of our members and the opportunity to offer them up for deliberation by the Society's BoG. In 2019, I hope to hear more.

The SMCS starts 2019 with the welcomed volunteer contributions of several newly elected members of its Executive Committee. They include Imre Rudas as president-elect, Adrian Stoica as vice president (VP) for Systems Science and Engineering, Karen Panetta as VP for Membership and Student Activities, and Enrique Herrera as VP for Publications as well as Ferat Sahin reelected as VP for Finance. With their help, execution of the Society's current five-year Strategic Plan continues in earnest. We will further benefit from their fresh ideas toward pursuing the several focal objectives I set for our Society at this time last year. Now is a good time to offer a status update on progress in 2018 toward those objectives and a sense for continued focus for the remainder of 2019.

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My Focal Objectives for 2019

The following are my focal objectives for the Society and details about how progress has been made thus far to meet them.

- "Clarify the SMC Society identity such that it is commonly understood by all members and increasingly wider known among nonmembers."

To this end, the Promotion and Branding Committee was formed as an ad hoc committee to help establish related messaging for concise and consistent expression of the identity of the SMCS. The committee's efforts, thus far, resulted in a plan of activity that is now underway. It included formulation of the following set of statements about the Society's identity and value to be conveyed to members and nonmembers in a variety of ways. The IEEE SMCS is

- relevant: engages issues that matter to society and the professional technical community
- informative: provides content in many forms encouraging technical growth
- interdisciplinary: three technical areas engineered for practice span theory to integrated systems

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- unique: offers value distinct from other professional technical organizations
- authoritative: leads development of knowledge in our areas of interest.

These statements were put forth initially at the annual flagship conference, SMC 2018, in Miyazaki, Japan, during 7–10 October 2018, in the form of banners on display for all to see and appreciate. Also, they will appear in other forms as part of a broader messaging campaign.

- "Focus on the *and* in 'Systems, Man, and Cybernetics' in recognition of its increasing relevance to integrated complex systems at the present time and for years to come."

This objective aims for increased integration of disciplines across our three principal areas of technical activity. It also targets explicit acknowledgment that the SMCS embodies the x-disciplinarity enabling today's engineering practice and associated emerging technology and trends, where $x \in \{\text{inter, multi, cross, trans}\}$. In 2018, we made progress in the area of messaging as already noted and in implementation aspects of the plan formulated by the Promotion and Branding Committee. During 2019, we will pay attention to expositions of transdisciplinary aspects of SMC in articles for *IEEE Systems, Man, and Cybernetics Magazine*.

- "Successfully execute the SMC Society's long-range plan and identify activities and outcomes of the plan where the transdisciplinary feature of SMC can be further magnified."

It is a persistent objective to apply our best efforts to the execution of the Society's strategy. Each of the Society's Executive Committee members, with support of BoG members-at-large, share responsibilities for multiple parts of the plan. During 2019, an effort will be made to augment relevant parts of the current plan to enhance potential for, or broaden impact on, magnifying transdisciplinary features of goals or tasks within the plan.

- "Encourage technical activities and respective committee emphasis on transdisciplinary aspects that generate reference and educational products such as position papers, archived presentations, and tutorials as well as needed standards."

This objective aims to influence particular activities and documented material manifesting transdisciplinary aspects of SMC in tangible and more visible ways. During 2019, we will explore the idea and likely effectiveness of establishing a technical committee that cuts across and integrally includes our three principal technical areas of systems science and engineering, human–machine systems, and cybernetics. Members of that technical committee or the Society at large will generate written material informing members and nonmembers about current and emerging technologies representing the cross section of our principal areas of technical activity.

- "Increase the various ways in which we can highlight the research of our Young Professional and student members."

This objective is rich in potential for conveying the convergence of disciplines that are leveraged or sought after for solving problems associated with complex systems. Our student members and Young Professionals are the lifeblood of transformative research, engineering practice, and innovation. Many are involved with professors, laboratory, or industry staff or are early career professors or entrepreneurs to be credited with advancing the state of the art across the broad SMC field of interest. We should tune into and benefit from their research while also providing platforms for them to actively participate and exchange ideas.

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Since 2017, we have conducted the SMCS Thesis Grant Initiative to recognize the outstanding student and Young Professional members who, early in their career, contributed to major advancements of theory, technologies, and/or applications within the Society's principal technical areas. During 2019, we aim to make various outlets for highlighting their work, including *IEEE Systems, Man, and Cybernetics Magazine*, known to them and to encourage their participation.

We are actively pursuing all of these objectives as part of our effort to execute the SMCS mission, and we welcome the involvement of our membership in the process. I thank all members and friends in advance for your contributions and support.

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