As students, we are always looking for something that can make us stand out from the crowd, from taking optional classes that help us focus on our work to learning multiple languages that allow us to understand the world in different ways. It is clear that building a successful career is a type of competition, where the best graduates are able to get the most desired positions in top companies.

Good grades are very important, but sometimes it is not enough. Employers are looking for people with good soft skills, such as leadership, effective communication, teamwork, and empathy, among others. But how can we learn or develop such skills?

The IEEE offers students a wide range of opportunities that helps to attain a “differential factor” that most students desire. Like you, I am an engineering student, and I don’t have much free time. I am always tired because there is often not enough time to complete lab reports, projects, or other tasks. I’m also running my own company and serving as the student editor of this magazine, but despite all of these commitments and my limited time, I decided to be an IEEE volunteer a couple of years ago.

The IEEE has given me the best and most memorable experiences of my life. I have met my best friends, traveled to several countries, and learned how to be a better professional. Everything started in 2013 when I was a freshman looking for an investigation group. Sadly, in my university, such groups are only for students three years into their studies and beyond, so I was rejected. Weeks later, I met Fernando in a class, and he invited me to be part of an IEEE project. Watching the enthusiasm of everyone involved in the project was enough for me to become part of the group, which accepted me with open arms.

The resulting years were full of work and invitations to join various committees, starting with my Section, the Student Activities Committee team in Region 9, and the global committee of IEEE Young Professionals. Each position I accepted allowed me to develop while learning how to work in and lead a team, speak to a large audience, and network with companies and garner their support to organize technical visits and various events and competitions. These are skills that employers look for in new employees because students with good grades exist everywhere.

So here is the question: What do you want to achieve as an IEEE Member? You also need to ask yourself, What am I able to give and do for the IEEE? I have given my time and energy, but the IEEE has rewarded me tremendously. Please share this article with a friend and invite him or her to be part of the world’s largest technical professional organization for the advancement of technology.

About the author
Cristian Quintero (cristianquintero@ieee.org) is the student editor of IEEE Potentials.