The MTT-S Ph.D. Student Sponsorship Initiative and Graduate Student Challenge at Microwave Week 2018

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The IEEE Microwave Theory and Techniques Society (MTT-S) Ph.D. Student Sponsorship Initiative (SSI) will once again be part of the featured student activities during this year’s Microwave Week in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. The Ph.D. SSI began in 2012 by providing complimentary housing and conference registration to the accepted participants. The awards are given to first- and second-year Ph.D. degree students who have not previously attended the IEEE MTT-S International Microwave Symposium (IMS) or IEEE RF Integrated Circuits Symposium. Students are eligible to participate in all aspects of Microwave Week as it relates to their interests. In turn for the support, they report on their experiences during the entire conference week.

One method of reporting involves a three-member student team that completes a “three reports” assignment. At the wrap-up Ph.D. SSI meeting, these students deliver a 10-min presentation featuring a product from the exhibition, one interesting paper presented orally, and one paper presented during the interactive forum. Students are encouraged to
engage in the conference and seek out the many academic and industrial experts they can meet with at technical and networking events.

A second method of sharing is through the Graduate Student Challenge (GSC) led by Prof. Maurizio Bozzi. The GSC began in 2011 and is available to all Ph.D. and master’s degree students registered at the conferences. The goal of the GSC is to bring students together to brainstorm new ideas and propose applications based on the papers and themes presented at the IMS/RFIC. In an interactive forum style, the students engage the judges on Thursday of Microwave Week. This competition is similar to the television series *Shark Tank*, with students pitching ideas to venture capitalists (the jury). The winning team splits US$2,000, and the members form relationships with peers they likely didn’t know before Microwave Week.

An additional requirement for accepted Ph.D. SSI participants is the student volunteer opportunity. This gives next-generation MTT-S members a chance to see how a large group of MTT-S volunteers seamlessly runs the largest microwave meeting in the world. The local Steering Committee benefits from the upwards of 100 energetic student volunteers who support the IEEE staff.

In 2017, 32 students participated in the Ph.D. SSI program, with representatives from all IEEE regions except Region 9. Pictured in Figure 1 is the 2017 Ph.D. SSI class at the kick-off event; Figure 2 shows Dr. Bozzi presenting the 2017 GSC program requirements; in Figure 3, the team gears up for the final wrap-up meeting on Friday, after having enjoyed the culture of Hawaii (the site of IMS2017).

In 2018, we look forward to bringing together another outstanding group of motivated young people for this program. Philadelphia is known as the City of Brotherly Love and Sisterly Affection, so we expect the 2018 Ph.D. SSI and GSC participants to develop a lifelong passion for interacting with the IEEE and MTT-S.

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**Figure 1.** The 2017 Ph.D. SSI participants with coordinators Dr. Rashaunda Henderson (front row center) and Dr. Maurizio Bozzi (front row right). (Photo courtesy of Lyle Photos, Atlanta, Georgia.)

**Figure 2.** Dr. Bozzi presenting the 2017 Graduate Student Challenge. (Photo courtesy of Lyle Photos, Atlanta, Georgia.)

**Figure 3.** The wrap-up meeting of the 2017 Ph.D. SSI students. (Photo courtesy of Lyle Photos, Atlanta, Georgia.)