

## THE COMSOC PRESIDENCY: FAREWELL MESSAGE

Here we are, at my 24th President's Page, signaling the end of my two-year term as President. I hope you have found this column both interesting and helpful in learning more about your IEEE Communications Society, hearing about its accomplishments, and meeting the Society's top leaders and contributors. The column will continue, but under the able hands of my successor, Byeong Gi Lee, who takes office in January 2010. I would like to use this last column to say "what it meant" for me to be your president, summarize "where we are" towards implementing the vision of ComSoc 2.0 (see January 2008 President's Page), acknowledge our "team effort," and finally hint at "what's next" for our Society.

## BEING PRESIDENT

Being your President has been one of the high points of my career and the opportunity of a lifetime. It "began" in July 2006, with a phone call from the ComSoc President, Nim Cheung, letting me know that I had won the election (this was my third try, and "the third time was a charm" – rather than "three strikes and you're out"). Being President is a multi-year commitment. In 2007, my official role would be as President-Elect (though I also continued serving as VP Society Relations). With the much appreciated guidance of the current President, Nim Cheung, I learned the ropes and engaged in activities that set the stage for the following two years.

Almost immediately after my election, colleagues began telling me they were interested in being appointed to various positions (e.g., director). I quickly realized that, per the ComSoc Bylaws, it is not simply up to the President to appoint anyone he or she wants to the limited number of leadership positions. Not only do the Bylaws (which I had to become very familiar with) require recommendations of the various Vice Presidents, but appointment confirmations are also needed by the ComSoc Board of Governors (BoG). In the end, the VPs and I, along with BoG approval, put together an outstanding team for our two-year terms that began in January 2008.

A main responsibility of the President is to run the Society's main administrative meetings. These are the Management Retreat (typically in January or February each year), the Spring and Fall Operating Committee meetings (OpCom, which is a subset of the Board of Governors that conducts business in between BoG meetings), and the BoG meetings at each ICC and GLOBECOM (ComSoc's two flagship conferences). I chaired both the January 2008 and 2009 retreats, even though, due to the focus on strategic planning, these are often chaired by the Strategic Planning Committee chair. The first one (held in conjunction with CCNC 2008 in Las Vegas to save on time and travel) provided an opportunity to work with the VPs, CIO, Treasurer, Executive Director and others in mapping out the key programs for the next two years. The second one (held in conjunction with a GLOBECOM 2009 planning meeting in Hawaii), provided an opportunity to assess status and plan some mid-course corrections. Globalization, convenience and cost savings were important considera-



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tions in selecting the locations for the four OpComs: 1) Salvador, Brazil at NOMS 2008; 2) Long Branch, New Jersey with significant local attendance; 3) Myrtle Beach, South Carolina with low costs; and 4) Krakow, Poland, which included meetings with industry and IEEE leaders from Europe. The NOMS 2008 venue also provided an opportunity for ComSoc's leadership to recognize the 20th anniversary celebration of this major conference, while strengthening our relationship in this rapidly growing part of the world.

As President, I was an automatic member of the IEEE Technical Activities Board (TAB), which meets three times each year. In addition, there were obligatory appearances at several important conferences, where I represented the Society and strengthened relations in line with goals such as new chapter formation and membership growth in rapidly developing countries. In 2007, as President-Elect, I visited India along with a small ComSoc delegation to explore how ComSoc could better meet industry needs while growing ComSoc membership. In 2008, I did likewise in Vietnam. In 2009, I was called upon to participate in an IEEE Commemoration Medal ceremony in Russia (which carried other obligations as well). Outside of ComSoc, I was selected to serve on the TAB Management Committee, which involved three more meetings, each held prior to each TAB meeting. In addition to lots of jet lag, this travel has resulted in establishing stronger bonds for ComSoc, as well as creating friendships that will last beyond my term as President.

## VISION ACCOMPLISHED

The January 2008 President's Column laid out the ComSoc 2.0 vision: "ComSoc 2.0 will be member driven, aiming toward providing even more meaningful and affordable services to its members, focusing on what the members want from their Society. In addition, it will provide a professional environment through which ComSoc members can work together with each other, the Communications Society, and the IEEE in serving humanity."

Over the past two years, the four Vice Presidents and I, along with the Society's officers and staff, worked together to:

- Solicit and respond to member opinions on ComSoc's publications, conferences and other activities.
- Encourage online communities, interest groups and seminars.
- Team with local Chapters and Sister Societies to expand our lecture series to reach more members.
- Enable on-line content selection to provide customizable newsletters and publications.
- Broaden standards activities to visibly enhance our relevance to and support from industry.
- Collocate more conferences with related industry events or trade shows to stimulate attendance, networking, learning, and making business contacts, while reducing costs.
- Offer free and low-cost continuing education products, in collaboration with industry and academia, such as online tutorials and Web-based seminars to aid members' career growth.
- Pay more attention to worldwide differences in profes-

sional needs and economic situations, including collaborations with national and regional professional organizations on publications, conferences, and overcoming financial and language barriers.

In addition, we worked with the IEEE and other Societies on initiatives and projects that benefit the members, our profession and humanity. We also worked toward engaging significantly more recent graduates in our activities, especially providing opportunities for them to gain experience and eventually become the leadership engine of the future ComSoc.

To help gauge our success, I refer you to the 22 President's Columns, co-authored with key contributors, describing detailed accomplishments toward achieving the ComSoc 2.0 vision. You may reach your own conclusions on how close we have come to achieving the vision. The columns were as follows:

### 2008

January: ComSoc 2.0 – Member Driven, Doug Zuckerman.

February: Technical Activities – Bedrock of the Society, with Andrzej Jajszczyk.

March: Publications – Polishing ComSoc's Crown Jewels, with Sergio Benedetto.

April: Conferences - Where People Meet, with Mark Karol.

May: Member Relations - Touching the World, with Byeong Gi Lee.

June: Standards – Making it Work in the Real World, with Alex Gelman.

July: Awards – Achievement Recognized, with Steve Weinstein.

August: Communications – Faster-Higher-Stronger IEEE ICC 2008 in Beijing, China, with Ke Gong, Khaled Ben Letaief, and Zhisheng Niu.

September: Strategic Planning – Shaping an Uncertain Future, with Stu Personick.

October: ComSoc's Chief Information Officer – Technology Serving the Society, with Harvey Freeman.

November: A Perspective on the IEEE Landscape – Recent Changes and Future Directions, with Roberto de Marca.

December: ComSoc's "Behind the Scenes" Professional Staff, with Jack Howell and Carole Swaim.

### 2009

January: Finance – the Business Side of ComSoc, with Stan Moyer and Bruce Worthman.

February: Certification – Meeting and Industry Need, with Celia Desmond and Rolf Frantz.

March: Women in Communications Technology, with Heather Yu.

April: ComSoc Serving Humanity – A Global Example, with Jay Pearlman.

May: Steering the Society's Flagship Conferences, with Rob Fish and Heiner Stüttgen.

June: Marketing and Industry Relations – Translating Value, with Robert Shapiro.

July: The Path to Becoming an IEEE Communications Society Conference, with Fred Bauer, Raouf Boutaba, and Merrily Hartmann.

August: Graduates of the Last Decade – ComSoc's Road to the Future, with Soon Wan and Angela Zhang.

September: The IEEE Board of Directors – A Division III (Communications) Director's Perspective, with Curtis Siller.

October: Sister and Related Societies – Extending ComSoc's Global Family, with Roberto Saracco.

November: Educational Activities – Helping Careers Flourish, with Stefano Bregni.

December: The ComSoc Presidency: Farewell and Welcome, Doug Zuckerman.

After reading through these columns, I hope you would agree: "Vision Accomplished!"

### A TEAM EFFORT

One of the most satisfying parts of being President has been working with the highly dedicated team consisting of both volunteers and staff. Nearly every day, there was an issue needing resolution. Thanks to this highly effective team, we were able to successfully meet the challenges, always moving forward and doing the best we can for the members.

This was truly a team effort and I would like to thank all those who contributed. This includes the entire Board of Governors; the standing and ad hoc committee chairs; our representatives to other IEEE societies, councils and activities; and last but certainly not least, the ComSoc staff.

Special thanks go to:

- Nim Cheung, my predecessor, for his mentoring, friendship and "always being there" when I sought advice.

- Jack Howell, our hard working Executive Director, who, with his outstanding staff, was instrumental in "making things happen" for the Society.

- Carole Swaim, whose tireless role before, during and after our OpCom and BoG meetings kept us on track.

- Curtis Siller, our Division III Director (and also a past president), who worked closely with me and others in addressing important issues at the IEEE level.

I also thank my wife, Patricia, for her ever positive support of my ComSoc endeavors, even though, admittedly, I may have carried it too far by checking email on my iPhone during dinner time.

Finally, I thank all my friends and colleagues around the world for their support of the IEEE Communications Society, and look forward to continuing to work with them in different roles going forward.

### WHAT'S NEXT

Starting January 1, 2010, Byeong Gi Lee from Korea will succeed me as President. During 2009, I worked closely with Byeong to bring him up to speed, following the model set by Nim Cheung when I was President-Elect in 2007. Byeong will present his vision for ComSoc in the January 2010 President's Column. Not to steal his thunder, his vision will focus on three points: 1) globalization, 2) young leaders, and 3) industry. To learn more, please read the January column. I plan to continue working hard for ComSoc as well as become more involved at the IEEE level.

It has been an honor and pleasure being your President, and I thank you all for your support.