CSS Governance: Theory and Practice

The theory-to-practice gap exists in education and research. It also exists in the timely reporting on society governance. For example, this article appears in the August issue of *IEEE Control Systems Magazine*, immediately before the IFAC World Congress in South Africa; however, it is written in early April. The amount of IEEE Control Systems Society (CSS) governance that occurs in the April to August, four-month interval is quite large. In theory, I would be reporting these matters in this August message; in practice, it is not possible.

CSS GOVERNANCE PRIMER

The CSS is governed by a Board of Governors (BOG). The BOG consists of the executive officers, the editors of the Society publications, and 24 members. Six members are appointed to a one-year term. The remaining 18 are elected directly by the CSS members, six per year for three-year terms. This election occurs each year in the spring. Traditionally, the BOG meets twice a year, at the American Control Conference (ACC) and the Conference on Decision and Control (CDC).

Between these BOG meetings, the operations of the CSS are managed by the Executive Committee (ExComm). The ExComm consists of the past president, president, president-elect, director of operations, and five vice presidents (VPs), one for each of the following areas of activity: Conferences, Financial, Membership, Publications, and Technical. The ExComm slate of officers for the next year is proposed to the BOG

at its meeting during the ACC. The main criterion for nomination to this slate is an established record of excellent service to CSS.

At both the ACC and CDC, the ExComm meets as a whole at least three times, in addition to smaller meetings and meetings held by the VPs such as the Conference Activities Board (CAB), Member Activities Board (MAB), Publication Activities Board (PAB), and Technical Activities Board (TAB). It is these and other meetings (such as editorial boards, conference operation committees, and technical committees) that organize the Society activities and formulate issues or new ideas for the BOG and the ExComm.

To conduct CSS business and prepare for the ACC and CDC meetings, the ExComm also meets for a day and a half in both the spring and the fall. The editors of all CSS publications are invited to the spring meeting to enable direct discussion of various editorial appointments and items of critical importance to them. The incoming officers are invited to the fall meeting to smooth the transition between outgoing and incoming officers.

The CSS budget for the subsequent year is determined in the May–July time frame. The main sources of income are conferences, publication revenues from IEEE *Xplore*, and membership fees. The main expenses are conferences and publication activities. The goal for net revenue is reinvestment in activities defined by CAB, MAB, PAB, and TAB, as approved by the BOG.

A SOCIETY OF VOLUNTEERS

Our Society is a very large enterprise with operations led and conducted, for the most part, entirely by volunteers. This is rather incredible given the high quantity and quality of our technical activities (for example, workshops, conferences, and publications).

Every few years, the debate reopens as to whether CSS should hire paid staff to run the Society operations and assist with its governance, thus alleviating the burden of these tasks on CSS members, freeing their time for other interests, such as research and technical interactions. One argument against hiring professionals is cost, but I believe there is a stronger argument.

Jay Farrell, Elena Valcher, and Tariq Samad at the IEEE Technical Activities Board (TAB) meeting in Los Angeles in February 2014.

It is the work of organizing and leading CSS activities that has produced a pipeline of experienced and capable leaders, knowledgeable about the various aspects of our Society and dedicated to delivering the highest technical quality, while maintaining low costs for CSS activities and services.

All CSS volunteer positions are short term: one year for president, one to three years for vice presidents, three years for BOG, and so on. Short-term appointments provide a flow of new ideas and fresh perspectives that continuously challenge the status quo.

CSS LEADERSHIP IN IEEE

CSS leadership experience has yielded a growing number of leadership appointments within IEEE: John Baillieul as chair of the TAB Publications Service Committee, Christos Cassandras as a member of the TAB Periodicals Committee, David Castanon as chair of the Society Review Committee, Michael Polis as chair of the TAB Periodicals Committee, Tariq Samad as editor-in-chief of IEEE Press, Yutaka Yamamoto as a member of the TAB Publications Service Committee, and Steve Yurkovich as director of Division X. CSS operates within, but may not always agree with, the IEEE governance structure. Perhaps with our growing representation at IEEE, CSS can affect positive change.

YOUR OPPORTUNITY

When this article appears, Elena Valcher (president-elect) will be leading the effort to organize the slate of over 600 volunteers to lead and perform the day-to-day operations of the CSS in 2015. If asked to help, please consider the request seriously. If you are interested in serving, please let us know.
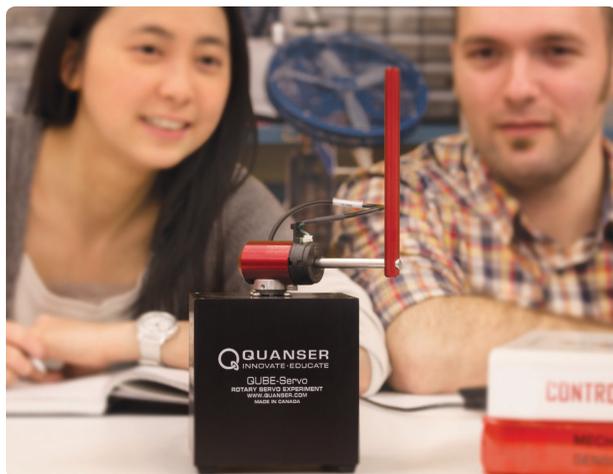
CLOSING

When participating in volunteer-led organizations, such as CSS, please forgive mistakes, point out successes, and thank the organizing committee. Many of them are performing their duties for their first time, working hard to learn how to perform them and how to do better than their predecessors, and perhaps experimenting with a new and improved approach. Without their enthusiasm and energy, our Society and its activities could not continue in their present forms.

I hope to see you at the IFAC World Congress in South Africa later this month. I can be reached in person at the IFAC or by e-mail anytime at farrell@ee.ucr.edu.

Jay A. Farrell