IEEE ComSoc
35th North America Regional Chapter Chairs Congress 2018
(NA RCCC 2018)

Kansas City, MO, USA
May 19-20, 2018, in conjunction with ICC 2018

MINUTES

Present:

Day 1	Day 2
Wahab Almuhtadi – NAB Director	Wahab Almuhtadi – NAB Director
Fawzi Behmann – NAB Vice Chair	Fawzi Behmann – NAB Vice Chair
Scott Atkinson – Past NAB Director	Scott Atkinson – NAB Past Director
Raed Abdullah – Secretary & Moderator	Raed Abdullah – Secretary & Moderator
	Khaled B. Letaief -- President
	Nei Kato - Vice President, Member and Global Activities
Song Guo, Director Member Services	Song Guo, Director Member Services
Newman Wilson – R1 Representative	Newman Wilson – R1 Representative
Irfan Lateef – New Jersey Coast (ComSoc)	Irfan Lateef – New Jersey Coast (ComSoc)
Julia Upton -- Maine	Julia Upton -- Maine
Sundar M. Sundaramurthy – Worcester County	Sundar M. Sundaramurthy – Worcester County
Paul Cotae – R2 Representative	Paul Cotae – R2 Representative
Doug Holly – Washington DC	Doug Holly – Washington DC
Kafi Hassan – Northern Virginia	Kafi Hassan – Northern Virginia
Anna Romaniuk – Baltimore	Anna Romaniuk – Baltimore
Devon Gayle – R3 Representative	Devon Gayle – R3 Representative
Titus Lo -- Seattle	Titus Lo -- Seattle
David Lips – Atlanta	David Lips – Atlanta
Larry Horner – R5 Representative	Larry Horner – R5 Representative
Tim Weil – Denver	Tim Weil – Denver
Mehdi Roopaei - San Anotnio	Mehdi Roopaei - San Anotnio
Zhensheng Zhang – R6 Representative	Zhensheng Zhang – R6 Representative
Eman Hammad – Toronto	Eman Hammad – Toronto
Francois Chan -- Kingston	Francois Chan -- Kingston
Qiang Ye – Canadian Atlantic	Qiang Ye – Canadian Atlantic
	Cheng Li – Newfoundland & Labrador
Susan Brooks - Executive Director	Susan Brooks - Executive Director
Carol Cronin - Executive and Volunteer Services Administrator	Carol Cronin - Executive and Volunteer Services Administrator
Adam Greenberg - Technical Activities and Industry Outreach Director	Adam Greenberg - Technical Activities and Industry Outreach Director
Kerrianne Sullivan, MD Manager	Kerrianne Sullivan, MD Manager
Mike Fallenstein - vTools Committee Chair	Mike Fallenstein - vTools Committee Chair

DETAILED MINUTES

A. Welcome & Introductions Wahab Almuhtadi, North America Director.
WahabA warmly welcomed each of the participating chapter and regional chairs and outlined the agenda and objective of the NA RCCC.

B. Executive Director's Report Susan Brooks, Staff
SusanB provided detail on who's who within the ComSoc's staff team for supporting ComSoc activities and volunteers. A few adjustments were made and are being made in the organisational structure and staffing. She also outlined the present improvement undertakings like: new ComSoc website because branding is important, elimination of W-8/W-9 forms for sponsorships, Chapter [support] Kits, plus a new initiative being explored is allowing for people around the world to pay options other than, for example, credit cards or USD. They are exploring how to add member value while attracting new explorers who may become members. The Member Relationship dB is being rethought because of the EU's GDPR.

C. Nei Kato, NAB VP Member & Global Activities
Membership increase, retention and activities are NAB bylaw objectives. Membership decline showed some plateauing in 2018 to date. Focus on students and graduate students – they were greatest gain in 2018.

New initiative started Mar'18: rewarding chapters that get 50 members with $500USD ($250 y1 & y2 @ Globecom). You can collaborate with nearby sections to add member gains together. Ways for dealing with global currency and lack of credit cards in some countries are being addresses.

Issue raised: if you gain these members, how will you retain them?

D. Khaled B. Letaief, President
Impressed upon the participants that the chapters are the core of the society; they are at front line with members and more interactive with them. There are many good things happening in ComSoc; there is representation from all profession types;

conferences are notes as best quality and are consistently high in attendance; against journals on communications, ComSoc has four of top five for impact factor in journal Citation Reports; budget is managed more efficiently – more fiscal responsibility.

We're at cross-roads though: doing well, but technology is changing, companies changing, so how do we move forward. Need to ask: why would people want to join ComSoc; what distinguishes ComSoc from the rest; what services are needed to be provided; what technologies need to be pursued; how do we attract more students and practitioners; how do we stay more relevant with publications and conferences; do we reintroduce free membership, and if we do, how does that affect retention? Networking helps people feel part of a community; this happens at conferences and needs to happen at chapter level too.

We need to promote technology in communications and exchange information amongst each other and the outside world.

We need to focus on ComSoc's value proposition and image.

At the BoG, the major agenda item is membership; "we're all in this together."

Questions, Issues, Comments raised:
- "Don't count your chickens before they hatch, but when they do, you end up running around after them."
- "When we want to focus on a topic, we focus on it as a big deal; so for membership, we need to do the same and focus big, make a big deal of it!"
- "We need the data on membership to be able to manage the problem."
- "Central Texas is experimenting: involving high school kids in Smart Cities initiative with community, government, industry and academia. Also did one on public safety, health care, transportation and 5G role in crossing each. Consider workshops or summits to target grouping of diverse people."
- "How can ComSoc up its game and make itself more prominent like commercial companies do?"
- "Employers don't ask if you're part of ComSoc; need to encourage employers ask if you are part of ComSoc."
- "When systemic problems exist, need top down for strategic approach, but also need bottom up for tactical. Local chapters can approach local company human resources on encouraging ask if staying current through ComSoc."

- ◼ "Think like business: chapter chairs become marketing persons, but when talking to a prospective member, having a "kit" with list a values to articulate would help."
- ◼ "RCCC is a great bi-annual meeting, why not collaborate more frequently to share learnings and support each other? Also, we need to be more agile: other organisations I belong to have great tools and have virtual conferencing regularly and bring vendors, presenters and information consumers to learn and share monthly."
- ◼ "ComSoc charges for some training, why not provide some for free to chapter chairs as a motivation to volunteer?"
- ◼ "Target advertising – it works; relate technology used to what ComSoC did to make it happen."

Answers: ComSoc is a community of volunteers – all ComSoc boards are volunteers; ideas like these are important to make happen and the ComSoc needs to support them as chapters make them happen. Perhaps we need to find ways to make ComSoc appear when relevant Internet searches are made. Don't feel bad about not being a good sales person; everyone has their own need, but what is ComSoc's value proposition – the elevator pitch – as the present mission and vision may be out dated. Motivation and recognition of volunteers are important.

WahabA encouraged participants to make sure the NA RCCC voice is heard by the BoG and taken seriously. The NA RCCC members are respected industry or academia employees, and without their support through to the chapter level, there won't be a ComSoc.

E. **Technical Activities & Industry Outreach Adam Greenberg, Staff**
   AdamG described the value of ComSoc involvement in "Future Direction" initiatives that bring many societies together to make new things happen like IoT, Green/Sustainable ICT, SDN, Big Data, Smart Grids, etc. Members of these initiatives may seek a society membership home to continue their interest in more depth. He brought to attention that IEEE EAB honoured ComSoc with their Society/Council Professional Development Award. One reason behind this was that 92% of surveyed ComSoc course takers stated the courses were so great that they would recommend them to others. New is a partnership with KPMG for delivering and sharing in certification courses worldwide, but starting in Singapore for now.

   Suggestion made by participant:

- Wireless Communications Engineering Technologies (WCET) Certification found difficult; many wireless engineers wanted to certify and found the training didn't prepare them enough. Perhaps example tests, or other better preparation material provided?
- The 5G Roadshow should involve the local Region and Chapters who should also be informed of anything else being held in their area.

F. North America Region Report Wahab Almuhtadi, North America Director

WahabA's theme was "Let's Work Together as One Team." The goal, aligned with the NA RCCC's Bylaws, is to "Increase ComSoc Activities - Lead to Membership Increase and Retention." He brought to attention that:

- There are 93 ComSoc Chapter in NA (MGA R1-7), and potentially 97 with several more being a potential; this is 44% of worldwide chapters. ComSoc has four Regions: North America, Asia/Pacific Region, Europe, Middle-East, & Africa Region (EMEA), Latin America Region (LA).
- ComSoc Membership worldwide has dropped ~50% between 2014 and 2017. This is despite free ComSoc membership with IEEE membership that started in 1998 into 2010. The conference fee including membership fee for non-member registrations also disappeared in 2015.
- IEEE ComSoc was 1st largest society and now 3rd behind Power and Energy, and Computer Society.
- The agenda for today was to understand the issues facing the chapters, membership growth and retention and what's needed to improve the situation. Additionally, training will be provided on vTools and Membership Development topics of most interest to the attendees (from the list of topics). The final activity will be to share ideas on the go forward map we'll each chart.

WahabA noted that ComSoc is the most generous to chapters: they provide money for chapters completing activity questionnaire and awards most active ones. He encouraged chapters to submit completed questionnaire and stretch to win as the money award can be used to enhance their chapter activities.

Some attendees raised the following observations:
- There may be an issue with how some Organisational Unit (OU) stats may be combined and should be distinct i.e., San Antonio and Austin statistics may accumulate under Central Texas.
- In Maine, population is aging and few are entering STEM fields, so may be why membership is declining.

- NY and NJ lost over 10k jobs when communications companies relocated to places like TX. Industry is generally declining.
- Worcester County is overshadowed by nearby (25mi away) Boston Section.
- Need to see if membership increasing in areas absorbing relocating companies.
- IEEE ComSoc has the highest retention rate amongst all societies – 78%.
- Need to gauge "small" sections differently from "large" sections.

G. Identification and Prioritization of Hot Topics, Challenges and Suggestions:

Facilitated by Panel Discussion; ALL ATTENDEES

Many in attendance belonged to more than three societies. Stats show that to be the general case: CompSoc, Signal Processing and Vehicular Technology were top three. Question: how many volunteer for more than ComSoc? Why ComSoc?

Issues Identified were:

1. Members change their interest areas, or companies and hard to retain.

2. Can't market activities outside chapter member base.

3. There are tens of thousands of engineers and only thousands are members, why? IEEE was known for research, academic and networking strength, how do we stay relevant when there are competing providers: open source, free, available faster, networking available, addressing present and near present issues and solutions not those far out in time. How do we appeal to millennials?

4. Need IEEE Roadshow type material train on how to deliver pitch in a systematic way on what IEEE can provide prospective members and volunteers.

5. Asking someone to volunteer is taken as adding more workload.

6. Members vote in what's relevant by showing up or not. Especially millennials will turn to what and who provides them with best value and IEEE competes internally and externally for their attention.

7. ComSoc doesn't have any humanitarian or public society development activities.

8. Greying members are leaving: interested, but not enough to remain members when dollars compete for life or health insurance.

9. IEEE membership is the first barrier to then becoming or remaining society members.

10. Geographic dispersion, traffic congestion, venue availability and affordability are becoming worse.

11. Access to IEEE Xplore is free to members of employers or academia that get a package access.

12. Employers are not reimbursing for membership, and many may see IEEE volunteering competing for employee time and attention.

13. Distinguished Lecturers may only be too rigid in sticking to certain talks that are not as relevant.

14. People are interested in open source tools that they can access for free and or can contribute to for improving employment opportunity or fame. If they are members and can get that, there may be benefit.

15. ComSoc not on Collabratec.

Suggested Considerations were:

1. Work with other society chapters in section – are in same membership and prospective geographic footprint -- and non-profit providers on joint activities.

2. Get to know your members - focus on relationship building - and start them in attending some events and then help with small volunteer tasks. Pitch to the specific interest they have: networking, publishing, meeting key people, etc.

3. Do broader non-member activities, and non/low-technical popular activities that attract those with some interest to those involved in STEM areas; may get lawyers, patent folks, government, high school, accountants, in-career transition folks, etc. to attend and may become members or at least increase IEEE and ComSoc visibility.

4. Sell networking with like-minded folks.

5. Demographic issue not unique to IEEE; however, ASME has increased membership by adapting organisation to the new realities. Need to transform IEEE.

6. Tailor pitch to demographic, in a specific applicable strategic way.

7. Need to understand volunteering / membership "camel hump": 1st hump is the student and YP when time is available, career building is important; 1st trough is where career maturing and family building takes most time; 2nd hump is when career and family is mature so more time is available. So, latch prospects on 1st hump cycle, keep relationships in trough, and bring back at 2nd hump.

8. Encourage student branch participation in section and chapter activity – should have advisory role.

9. Create activities to provide leadership, cultivate volunteers (non-members, and members).

10. Take initiative to ask people to get involved, they may not ask to involved, but will accept being asked.

11. Pitch volunteering roles as leadership roles, and leadership development opportunities. In some cases, framing "volunteering" as a "way to give back" may be received better.

12. Universities are seed beds for members and activities. Outreach to students is very important. Professors are great recruiters.

13. Industry needs IEEE.

14. Create student summits that students lead.

15. Reach out to high school kids in final year.

16. Document Best Known Practices (BKP) – build pipeline on how to strengthen bonds.

17. Ask hiring managers to include in job postings the need to describe how applicants stay current, what activities they participate in outside work, what memberships do they have?

18. Coach volunteers, don't alienate them or leave them helpless.

19. Stream events or record them for future view at person's own time.

20. Use social media to appeal to genre / demographic intended – millennials don't email.

21. Focus on relevant topics and publicity method to appeal to broad audience.

22. If employer doesn't pay membership fee, note that they don't pay for your driving license either.

23. Offer courses for "retooling."

24. Learn from other organisations that program for younger kids so they hear the brand and understand its value early.

H. vTools Training

Mike Fallenstein, vTools Committee Chair

Only key points are noted in these minutes.

Topics selected by participants in order of most interest were:

1. OU Analytics (covered)

2. IEEE Web Hosting

3. Remote Conferencing and Screencasting

4. IEEE Vitality Dashboard (focused on the Chapter) (covered – OU Analytics)

5. List Serve (on its way out)

6. vTools eNotice

7. vTools Events (Meetings)

8. WebEx Request Form List serve

9. Survey Access Request Form

10. vTools Officer Reporting (covered – related to getting access to OU Analytics & vTools eNotice)

To find the appropriate tool, use one of two methods:

1) redesigned MGA home page: mga.ieee.org

2) search starting with "ieee vtools"

OU Analytics (same as IEEE Vitality Dashboard)

Note: SAMIEEE and OB will be retired and OU Analytics will take over after May 25, 2018.

If downloading the data, do so in the Google Drive associated with your @ieee.org email account. This allows IEEE to work at remaining GDRP compliant. The @ieee.org can be used as a Google email address vs just a redirector; the privacy terms applicable are IEEE's and not Google's. Rather than downloading and saving data, best to save the query – name it – and re-run when needed. Can create your own

dashboard and "subscribe" (click on "Subscribe" in top menu ribbon) to have updated reports emailed to you when on a regular basis.

Encourage members to select keep information updated and available to receive IEEE information. Analogous to "ordering in a restaurant": if you don't tell the waiter/res your preferences, you may not get what you want. The IEEE account expires with membership drop.

Data for reporting is limited to permissions for your position. There are some amalgamated anonymized reports that everyone can see.

Interesting reports are: other societies members may belong to, volunteer history,

Historical comparative reports coming soon.

VTools (General)

Issue raised: log-in is too small to find on the portal.

For any features or fixes wanted, use "Contact" in vTools. Mark fixes with "URGENT" so it gets priority attention.

See the "Blog" section of vTools to see what is being worked on and tips. Before sending a Fix request, check to make sure the problem wasn't known.

vTools eNotice

Great way to get email messages to those within your chair area of influence. It does not need pre-approval as based on trust; sent automatically. If anyone has their own email lists, GDPR requires getting deletion of this and thus eNotice can be used as who receives the information is IEEE managed.

vTools Officer Reporting: the officers reported here will get the permissions automatically assigned to the role. Chair can assign certain positions including vTools Coordinator, and eNotice Coordinator.

Issue raised: person assigned to new position is given the effective date and the end-date is not selectable. With new chair, the existing position doesn't change until it is manually ended in the reporting tool.

Collabrotec

It is a tool for interaction. Anyone can belong – members and non-members (~74k); ComSoc can be a Community or Group, open to all or exclusive to a smaller set. ComSoc committees can do same. It's a great way to get message to appeal and message to willing population of members and prospects. Available as an APP too!

Webhosting

Wordpress is the base and templates exist; looking for an alternative to keep current with web types. ComSoc also has templates with ComSoc branding for chapters to use. Web hosting is a great task to delegate to young volunteers.

Direction with vTools is to: (1) add integration tools so don't have to use multiple tools and copy / paste over events and reporting; (2) have APPs for multi-platforms.

I. Membership Development

Kerrianne Sullivan, MD Manager; Raed Abdullah, ComSoc NAB Secretary

Topics selected by participants in order of most interest were:

1. MD Officer Training (covered)

2. Elevator Pitch for Recruiting New Members (covered)

3. Recruitment Best Practices

4. Center for Leadership Excellence (covered)

5. MD Officer Training presentation

6. Retention Best Practices

7. IEEE Member Grade Elevation on IEEE.org

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8.   Benefits of Membership (covered)

9.   First Year Member Toolkit

10. Membership Reporting Training

11. MD Manual - English

MD Officer Training

Go to www.ieee.org/md   Meetings are held monthly webex.

There is an annual IEEE Membership Cycle that guides when to reach out to members, for what reason, and with what messaging. Key step in becoming a ComSoc member is to first be an IEEE member.

Questions:

Why isn't an email notice being sent alerting of when next ComSoc magazine being available? Answer: ComSoc was sending ~40 emails/month alone and members were complaining about number of IEEE emails.

Can myIEEE be flagged with the notice of new magazine or be used to communicate ComSoc messaging? Answer: myIEEE is being phased out to Collabrotec.

MD Recruitment Kit

The MD Portal is a wealth of information, like the monthly guidance sheet on tasks and checklist of what to do.

Elevator Pitch & Value

The ComSoc "Value" – what is it?

- "We are the Network"
- Prestigious to be a member,
- ComSoc offers free sponsored training on-line; members get access to more free and special pricing pay learning opportunities i.e., IEEE TV ComSoc has some free, a discount for IEEE members that are non-ComSoc and charge more for non-members.
- Discounted conference fees – not issue if employer pays registration anyway.
- Discounted publications.
- Conference quality of ComSoc is much better than others (and staff is amazing!). you have an opportunity to work on a conference, learn soft skills, meet who's who, and use great ComSoc tools.
- Top Five (5) Reasons to Join (as provided by members):

1. Obtain ComSoc materials / publications
2. Professional Development opportunities
3. Career Relevance Enhancement
4. Enhance stature in communications
5. Remain Technically relevant

Belonging to IEEE is being one (1) amongst 400k! How about a pitch like: "Being in ComSoc brings you closer to people you need to know and what you need to know in your area of interest."

Note: @comsoc.org is migrating to @ieee.org

Recruitment Best Practices

- Invite prospective volunteers for "Pizza and Beer"
- Lead by Example – invite to an event
- Hold Senior Member elevation events and invite others
- Come to the world's largest professional organisation & build leading electronic devices
- Volunteer can attend some events like conferences the volunteer for – free
- We'll make you "…." Char
- Networking – meet re-known people in the area of your interest (DL talk)
- Can learn how to lead
- Use event sign-in sheet, also ask "what's of interest, are you willing to help, are you willing to become a member…"
- Feed people who come to an event – especially general audience events

Centre for Leadership Excellence (CLE)

Overview was provided, including view of the video on CLE. There are modules for position training, leadership training, and other learning opportunities. All courses taken are tracked for the member.

Can do the VoLT 3-month training program and get certified.

Can make argument to employer that IEEE membership fee in exchange for all the free training is great value.

IEEE Member Grade Elevation

Student elevation happens twice per year: June and August, when they drop off and move to member status. Important to remind students to retain member number and just transition status (true even with those who change name, drop and restart membership etc.).

J. Example Activities:

Toronto: 10 experimental events …

Maine: invited engineer involved in "Easy Pass for Highways" project to present low-tech jargon on how it worked. It attracted the highest number of participants in section's history and engaged diverse participants who were mix of member/non-member for twice as long as intended, with many great Q&As. Used broad publicity means. They will organise one on Machine Learning soon.

Washington DC: Use Slack to communicate between members and prospective members.

K. HOT TOPIC Suggestions to ComSoc BoG

(in order brainstormed, though clusters into similar topic).

1. Marketing
    a. Need a pitch for i.e., IEEE Members, Students, and Professionals. A "30sec-3min.-30min." (what it is, why, what value and how to take advantage) pitch with slide aide would help.
2. Region and Chapter Matters
    a. Focus on getting member feedback continuously and act.
    b. Fund suggestions provided on feedback forms completed by chapters who provide the issues and solutions.
    c. Make membership Organisational Unit data available to North America Regional, Region and Chapter chairs automatically when position assumed without need for ComSoc President approval. If they don't know what's happening with membership in their area, then they can't manage it.
    d. Provide a forum for chapter chairs to collaborate: post questions, issues, solutions. ComSoc doesn't have a Collabrotec Community.
    e. Need support for dealing with non-responsive / under-performing chapter chairs.

  f. Structure Chapter to balance representation from industry, students, government and academia.

3. Open Source Activity:
  a. IEEE developing an Open Source Community in low profile trial now.
  b. Provide Students and Young Professionals training on Open Source platforms and initiatives, and provide them the tools.
  c. Make most cited papers automatically open source as it contributes to the body of knowledge. (Publications belong to IEEE and not ComSoc once in IEEE Xplore)
  d. Consider how Google leverages their AI platform for their business, IEEE can do same.
  e. IEEE Xplore provides access to Code Ocean where access to algorithms and code cited in papers can be accessed.

4. Recognition
  a. Establish Student scholarships like Power and Energy Society. May be expensive, so can consider a limited number of IEEE ComSoc memberships per chapter (need to consider IEEE membership entry fee).
  b. Label "volunteering" as "leadership" roles
  c. Recognize most active/ successful volunteers
  d. Create a "Friend of ComSoc Chapter" award to recognise supporters. Empower local chapters to issue.

5. Outreach to Potential Members
  a. Develop strategy for catching engineers in 1st/2nd year, before they specialize. This has a current impact; section and student branches need to be involved.
  b. Develop strategy for catching high school kids to get into STEM. This is a five to six year lead time pipeline; section and student branch need to be involved; TISP needs to be involved.
  c. Connect the community with famous IEEE ComSoc people (i.e., when DLs visiting chapter, can visit these folks).
  d. Establish a ComSoc humanitarian / developmental activities. This appeals to many regardless of genre.
  e. Collaborate with other affiliate organisations (i.e., chamber of commerce) to get access to industry and pitch the IEEE value. Distinguished Lecturers brought to a chapter can also be asked to do present to these organisations.

6. Membership Fees and Types
  a. Work with local professional engineering associations to provide CEU/PDU credited activities that if taken, can be used to reduce membership fees.
  b. Create a "peekaboo" for non-members, and provide members only access, benefits, privileges.

    c. Consider offering tiered membership fees, packages, or pick & choose menu, and focus some to specifically industry, academia, government, students, affiliates, etc.

    d. Consider "Loyalty" points program to aid retention and alleviating future member costs.

L. Closing Remarks

WahabA thanked everyone for attending and requested that if each chapter chair was able to recruit five (5) new members, then ComSoc in North America will have added at least 450 new members. If the same was done around the world, that number would grow by at least 1050.

RaedA thanked: Carol Cronin for organising the event; Kerriane Sullivan and Mike Fallenstein for providing the great training covering the most important topics selected by the participants; WahabA, Nei Kato, and Scott Atkinson for their participation, guidance and interest in what the chapter and region chairs had to say; the chapter and region chairs participating for taking time to be actively part of this exercise.

Photos taken can be emailed to RaedAbdullah@ieee.org

Draft minutes and the photos will be available for all to view in the next few weeks, and hopefully in a Collabrotec ComSoc Community.

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