

Side by Side: Presidents' Perspectives

President Yassi M. Myers, PE, Vice President, URS Corporation

I thought my last president's article would be the easiest to write. I was wrong. This, by far, has been the hardest one to prepare. Perhaps it is because I am not ready to pass the gavel on to D. Edward "Ed" Davis, PE. It feels as if I was just installed as your president, so how can this year be over already?

I must admit, this has been an absolutely phenomenal year for me, one that I will remember for many years to come. It has been fun, rewarding, humbling, exciting, and at times, downright challenging and tiring. This has also been a great year for FES, as we have reached a number of major milestones. Let me share some of the highlights of my year:

- Visiting thirteen chapters throughout the state, from Miami to Niceville, meeting a fine group of individuals who have great passion for the profession and FES.
- Cutting up the mortgage for the headquarters, with assistance from FICE President Kimberlee B. DeBosier, PE. We also paid it off five years early.
- Watching the leadership of FES getting fired up during the strategic planning retreat, and expressing passion and priorities for the Society.
- Visiting our freshman representative and friend, Steve Precourt, PE in Tallahassee. Steve is our third engineer on the Hill, and a member of FES.
- Exceeding a major milestone with our membership numbers as they surpassed 4,400.

Last year, I outlined my priorities for my term in the *Side by Side* messages. They included updating the society's strategic plan and implementing the membership recruitment and retention plan, which was developed in early 2006.

I am extremely pleased to let you know that we have developed the strategic plan for the Society and expect to get it formally approved by the Board during this annual conference. This plan was developed with the help of a committee consisting of sixteen leaders from throughout the state, and further refined by a smaller group of seven. My goal was to develop a plan that was simple, focused, and would fit on one page. It also had to outline our main goals for the Society, with a number of objectives under each goal. We accomplished what I set out to do at the beginning of this process. This plan consists of three main goals: promote the engineering profession, participate in public policy at all levels, and provide outstanding service to members.

We also developed four objectives under each goal.

Once this plan is formally approved by the Board, it will be implemented immediately following this annual conference. I would like to thank Mark L. Mongeau, PE for doing an outstanding job chairing this committee, Kelly Harris Jones for phenomenally coordinating all activities, and all committee members who worked hard, and perhaps more importantly, for putting up with Mark and me as we went through the process.

At the beginning of my term, we also implemented our membership recruitment and retention plan. I truly believe that the engineering community is not totally aware of the full range of activities FES undertakes to promote and protect our profession, promote ethical practices of engineering, promote licensure, develop leaders and promote leadership in the community, encourage community involvement, and hold paramount the safety, health, and welfare of the public. This list could easily fill up my entire message. Truthfully, until I had the privilege of serving as your president and seeing all our committees in action, I don't think I had the same appreciation for FES as I do now. Speaking of watching the committees and people in action, I have been working with a number of volunteer organizations throughout my career. I have never seen a group of individuals more dedicated and committed to the goals and mission of their organization as our staff in Tallahassee.

Each chapter was provided with the Membership PowerPoint® presentation, highlighting the benefits of membership to FES, and was asked to develop a specific plan to implement this program. I believe this presentation is a valuable tool to convey our message to the engineering community. Thanks to the hard work, passion, and commitment of a number of officers and volunteers within each chapter, this plan was implemented statewide. Most chapters have developed a specific plan, and have either visited or are planning to visit a number of engineering firms within their area before the annual conference. Our membership figures and statistics speak to the success of this plan, as we surpassed the 4,400-member mark, with an unprecedented net growth rate of over 4%.

We have also made great progress with our K-12 program, the brainchild of past president John R. Hall, PE. The goal of this program is to provide a lead role in

making Florida a model for excellence in K-12 engineering awareness. With a registry of over 500 volunteers, we are ready to move into the next phase of the project, connecting volunteers with the schools. We are in the process of finalizing the presentation packages for the volunteers to use when visiting schools. If you have not yet registered to become a volunteer, I urge you to consider joining us and becoming part of a program that will eventually help our profession regain its well-deserved stature in society.

It has been an honor and privilege to serve you and the Society in this capacity. I know I will miss being your president but rest assured, Ed Davis will be transitioning into this position seamlessly. Ed has been involved in a lot of initiatives implemented over the last two year and is very eager to continue this momentum, including implementing the strategic plan. In fact, I have a new name for Ed Davis: the Great Implementer.

I am looking forward to co-chairing the Florida Engineering Leadership Institute, along with FICE President Kimberlee B. DeBosier, PE this coming year. This program will be in its fifth year of existence and is one that you don't want to miss being a part of. Get your application in and join the class.

Well, she just didn't want to go! What else could I do? Yassi had to be booted. She should be used to this by now. Ten years ago, I had to do the same thing. Way back in 1997, Yassi was President of the Central Florida Chapter of FES and I was President-elect. I hope this isn't habit forming!



President-elect D. Edward Davis, PE, Vice President, CH2M HILL

Yassi, let me know if you are planning to run for President of NSPE!

Seriously, Yassi has been very committed to serving FES for many years and I want to take this opportunity to thank her for her dedication and hard work. Yassi had

two major focus areas this past year – membership and revision of the Strategic Plan. Membership development will continue as a priority, for we can only remain a viable and energetic organization through the activities of our volunteer members.

Strategic Plan

The revision of the Strategic Plan will have numerous, long-lasting impact on the Society. As I write this message, the Strategic Planning Task Force has completed the initial draft of the new plan and presented it to the Board of Directors at the June meeting. While it is still in draft form, I believe the goals and objectives of the plan will remain very close to the following:

Goal 1

Promote the Engineering Profession

- Encourage Engineering as a Career
- Enhance the Stature of the Engineer
- Encourage Community Involvement
- Promote Engineering Licensure and Ethics

Goal 2

Participate in Public Policy at all Levels

- Promote Public Involvement by Engineers
- Strengthen Legislative Activities
- Influence Rulemaking
- Strengthen Relationships with Public Entities

Goal 3

Provide Outstanding Service to Members

- Improve the Professional Development Program
- Strengthen FES Structure and Governance
- Strengthen Communication and Interaction among Members
- Engage Young Engineers

The task force concentrated on what we, as a society, can do better than anyone else and things that we are passionate about. Thus, we have streamlined and simplified

the Strategic Plan from our current six goals to these proposed three goals. Each of the goals includes four objectives. At this point, the task force decided not to include the usual list of "action items," but, instead prepared action narratives that provide broad discussions and suggested strategies for each objective. With this approach, the development of specific tactics and action items is left to others as we implement our new Strategic Plan. So, one of my areas of focus for the coming year will be implementation of this plan.

In addition to the Strategic Plan implementation, there are two focus areas for this year: the continued development of our K-12 Program and taking our Professional Development Program to the next level.

K-12 Program

The first objective under Goal 1—Promote the Engineering Profession is to encourage engineering as a career. I feel this is one of the most critical issues facing the engineering profession today. Anyone who has had difficulty filling their staffing needs understands that we are fighting a "war for talent." This term means different things to different people. I am not talking about a war between competing consulting firms, between state and local governmental agencies, or between other organizations that hire professional engineers. I am instead referring to the war between the engineering and the various other professions. Our youth are being attracted in greater numbers to professions that appear more exciting, lucrative, and appealing than engineering. The enrollment in engineering programs around the country has dropped over the past decade. We must reverse this trend and I believe our work on the K-12 Program will have an impact in this area. We must promote engineering as a career throughout all levels of education. Waiting until high school is simply too late. We must get into the grade schools and middle schools and send our message to students at an early age. However, we have found that we may need to modify the message to increase its effectiveness. A recent study funded by the National Science Foundation (NSF) and conducted by a committee of the National Academy of Engineering (NAE) recommended reframing the way we talk about engineering away from discussing the need for math and science skills to one where engineers are viewed as making a world of difference, helping to shape the future, and being essential to our health, happiness, and safety. The K-12 Program

Continued on Page 38

SIDE BY SIDE: PRESIDENTS' PERSPECTIVES CONTINUED FROM PAGE 5 will be instrumental in sending this message to students in Florida.

Professional Development Program
The first objective under Goal 3 – Provide Outstanding Service to Members is to improve the Professional Development (PD) Program. FES promotes continuing education activities by providing members with an extensive menu of professional development opportunities through the PD Program. These opportunities consist primarily of traditional in-person seminars, but also include web-based and published CD/DVD courses. The PD Program has been greatly expanded over the past several years and now accounts for a large percentage of our revenue. Unfortunately, this growth has not been accompanied by a corresponding increase in member participation on the PD Committee. We are taking several steps to improve the program. First, I have asked and received approval from the Board of Directors to conduct a retreat of the PD Committee this Fall. The purpose of the retreat will be to brainstorm ideas such as our delivery methods, program topics, and how to expand our learning opportunities. This brainstorming session will be facilitated by an outside specialist. Second, I have asked several individuals to join the committee. These are people I believe will bring a new passion to the program. I have also asked for a renewed commitment from the current committee membership. I have received wholehearted support from each person. Third, we are going to try something a little different with the makeup of the committee membership. We are going to include human resource and training specialists from the

organizations of some of our members. We hope this will bring a new perspective to the PD Program and open new avenues of education and service to our members.

In addition to these main areas of focus, we will continue to improve and build upon our current programs. FES does many things very well. In fact, I feel we do many things better than anyone else, such as:

Legislative and Governmental Affairs
While the 2007 Legislative session was something of a quiet one, there were several issues affecting the engineering profession. FES/FICE successfully lobbied to eliminate the \$100 million raid on the Transportation Trust Fund. The Legislature also appropriated \$200 million to clean up the Florida Everglades and Lake Okeechobee as well as \$300 million for the Florida Forever program. We successfully opposed the Fabre Fix on Apportionment of Damages, which would have allowed trial lawyers to determine who they want to sue. This would have allowed the lawyers to selectively choose the plaintiffs with the most financial resources and undo the progress made last year, when the doctrine of joint and several liability was abolished. The FES/FICE lobbying team was successful in removing language from a bill that would have allowed firms that are under a continuing contract to bid against each other, thus undoing major changes that we fought to have put in the statute 2 years ago. We also defended Chapter 471 from changes that would have allowed a great many types of business organizations to do engineering on complex structures without licensing. These were just a few of the issues that the Commission on Legislative and Government Relations Committee and our Tallahassee headquarters dealt

with this year.

Florida Engineering Leadership Institute

In its fourth year, I am honored to be a part of this year's class that will graduate at the annual conference. With the goal of developing a strong and diverse network of professional and community leaders, the year-long program consists of six sessions held throughout Florida in which participants have an opportunity to develop leadership skills from a diverse group of presenters, facilitators, and leaders. It has been a truly enriching experience for me personally and I would strongly recommend participating in this program. The application for enrollment in the 2007-2008 class is now available on the FES Web site: www.fleng.org.

Membership Development

While other states are struggling to retain members, FES continues to grow. We have seen growth over the past several years and thanks to Yassi's emphasis on membership development, we should continue to see growth in the future. We will continue to use the membership presentation developed last year to communicate the benefits of being a member of FES. Each of you can assist in membership recruitment. Discuss your experience as a member with your friends and colleagues. Tell them what FES membership means to you. You are our best recruiter! But, we can only continue to grow if we provide outstanding service to our members and that's exactly what we plan to do.

I look forward to serving you this coming year. Together we can make great things happen! ■



Peter Sheridan, PE,
Co-Chair
Keith Jackson, PE,
Co-Chair



The Annual Conference Steering Committee has had a lot of fun planning the FES/FICE 91st Annual Summer Conference & Exposition. The committee has met at least once per month beginning with its very first meeting on the last day of last year's

annual conference. The result? A fun and educational program for all at one of our favorite locations—the Marco Island Marriott Beach Resort, Golf Club and Spa.

Themed “*Discover the Treasure of Leadership*,” the committee has secured a nationally-known keynote speaker, developed a fantastic lineup of educational sessions, and will play off the theme to showcase pirate-related entertainment for the entire family to enjoy.

Pre-conference optional functions begin Wednesday, August 1 with the newly updated *Florida Laws and Rules for Professional Engineers course... plus Professionalism and Ethics*, and the annual Florida Engineering Foundation informal dinner at the Clubhouse at Key Marco. The conference will officially open on Thursday evening, August 2 at 6:30 pm

Annual Conference Steering Committee Annual Report

with a reception in the Exhibit Hall.

Friday brings a full day of education and networking opportunities. Beginning at 7:30 am, all FES practice sessions will host individual breakfast meetings. The Student Professional Development Committee will also be hosting a breakfast for student attendees during this time. At 9:15 am, the Opening General Session will feature keynote speaker Captain Larry Brudnicki, the real-life Captain of the Coast Guard ship that performed two dramatic rescues during *The Perfect Storm*. Captain Brudnicki says that his experience with these rescues amount to only 100 hours of a 30-year career of assessing risks, making decisions, and inspiring teamwork. Brudnicki is obviously a true leader and will share his “treasure of leadership” insight during the keynote presentation.

Following lunch in the exhibit hall, the Professional Development Sessions will be presented in four concurrent tracks, consisting of a variety of one-hour presentations. Presentations include topics related to mechanical/electrical, civil, students, leadership—and offer an opportunity for attendees to earn up to four professional development hours of technical engineering credit.

Following the continued honored tradition since its inception, the Florida Engineering Leadership Institute Class of 2007 will be officially recognized as graduates at our opening general session. If you have not had the opportunity to be a part of this great program, then perhaps you may take the initiative for the Class of 2008.

Applications are available on the FES Web site and will be available at the conference.

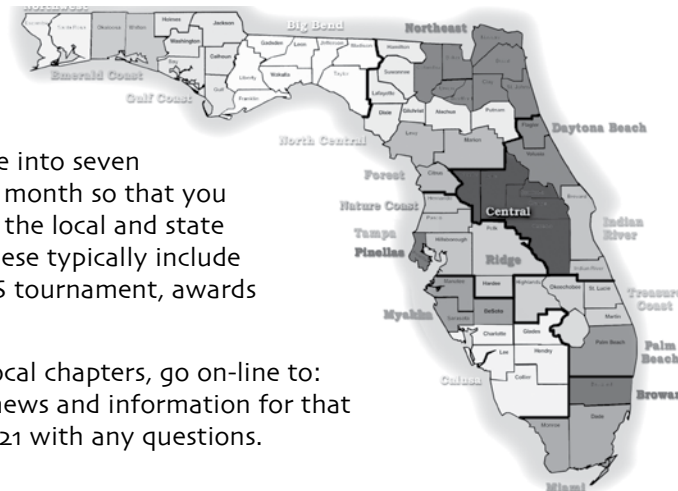
Lastly, the committee was successful in securing the sites for the next two conferences. In 2008, the annual conference will be held at the Ritz-Carlton in Naples, and the following year at The Breakers in Palm Beach. The committee is very pleased with being able to secure an affordable rate at these exquisite properties. The committee feels we have successfully accomplished the goals of planning, promoting, and organizing this year's conference and hope that after you have attended this year's conference, you will agree with this assessment.

Thank you to all the committee members for their participation, ideas, and assistance for this year's conference. It has been an honor to work with all of you on this great event and we could not do it without all of your help. Further, in true pirate theme, the crew sometimes became too creative with ideas, but there was one person who kept us on course. In fact, much of our success is attributed to her hard work, great ideas, positive attitude, and the many contributions at our meetings. So, on behalf of this year's pirates, we would like to thank Dee Kring, CMP, Director of Member Events, so that we could “*Discover the Treasure of Leadership*.” Aarrgh... thanks Dee. ■

FES Chapters

FES comes to you through our local and student chapters. To make ourselves part of your community, we have divided the state into seven regions and 20 FES and 11 student chapters. Chapters meet once a month so that you can network with your peers and learn about what's happening in the local and state engineering community. Each chapter sponsors its own events. These typically include an annual Engineers' Week Banquet in February, a MATHCOUNTS tournament, awards programs, golf tournament, and educational events.

To learn more about the seven regions with their corresponding local chapters, go on-line to: www.fleng.org/chapters.cfm. Select any area of the map to view news and information for that chapter. Please call the FES Membership Department at 850-224-7121 with any questions.



We hope you will join us next year for the
FES/FICE 92nd Annual Summer Conference & Exposition

**August 6–9, 2008
at Ritz-Carlton Naples**



**Make your reservations now by calling 800-241-3333.
FES/FICE room rate: \$139/single or double.**