

Neda Winograd (SEASoN)

*You are given the responsibility to recruit students and recent graduates to participate with the Structural Engineers Association, how do you do it? Describe how you got involved with your YMG, state's SEA, and/or NCSEA and what strategies you would employ to encourage others to get involved.*

Recruiting people to join a new organization is always hard. How do you get people to know you exist? That is a difficult task in itself, let alone getting people to participate. Once you get the word out there, what's next? How do you move forward from there? That is my challenge currently. This question spoke to me most as I am currently working on recruiting members to start our own YMG in Nevada. My task at hand is not only to get people to know we are here but to get people to participate.

As a current board member, I reintroduced the idea of the YMG and was given the chance to get it started, hoping it would encourage more young people to get involved in our MO. I want to start with social media, using LinkedIn, Facebook, and Instagram we would be able to connect to as many young engineers as possible. The first step is to create a Facebook group and add my engineering connections in the local area and ask them to add anyone I'm not connected to, and so on, until we get a good starting network. This would be the best way to advertise events and quickest way to get direct access to those who would be most likely to take part. This would also give us a good idea of who would be interested in being on the Board of Coordinators. Using Facebook event pages, we would be able to not only inform everyone about upcoming events, but it would also allow us to disseminate information quickly and effectively to the group. Then I would do the same with a LinkedIn and Instagram. I would also use other methods, such as a Meetup groups and other events. That way we can reach others that may not be connected to Facebook or other social media outlets.

In college there was a SEAOSC student chapter, but it wasn't well known in the CE department, it was mostly just the architectural engineering students. Most of the CE students were involved in ASCE, but there was never crossover between the two student organizations. I didn't even know SEAOSC existed until my senior year. As far as recruiting student participation, connecting the two organizations would be a great way to get new members. The University of Nevada, Las Vegas (UNLV) does not have a student chapter for SEASoN. The place to start is with the local ASCE student chapter to let them know we are here. I am certain many of the students don't even know we exist. The goal would be to encourage them to attend meetings for both the YMG and the MO. Letting them know that by attending they would be able to network with professionals from local companies. This would help them to better their chances of earning an internship with some of those companies. Once we are more established, I would then work to get a student chapter of SEASoN set up at UNLV. I would also work with the local ASCE YMF group membership to encourage more participation. I would like to have joint events to encourage membership in both organizations.

As we are moving back towards in-person meetings for our MO, I would speak at the next meeting to introduce the YMG. I would educate the members of what the purpose of YMG is and the many benefits it can provide to them. My first meeting attempt was a virtual happy hour; however, we did not have the greatest attendance. I am currently planning an in person happy hour at a local establishment so that everyone can mingle and get to know each other. In general, it would be more of an introduction and networking event, the purpose of which would be to gauge interest in the group and see if anyone would like to be a board member.

Another avenue for recruiting young members is to start a mentorship program between older and younger members to help them grow in their careers. This will help to create more interaction between members who don't already know each other, as most meeting attendees tend to stick to groups of people they know. It would also help the older generation pass their knowledge and expertise to the younger generation. Along with the mentor program I would like to get PE and SE review groups started to help members prepare for the exams. Helping people prepare for these exams would be an added benefit to membership and would hopefully encourage more people to join.

I hope to use the NCSEA Summit to connect with other YMG chapters to get some ideas on how to get more involvement in our local group. I figure the best way to grow is to brainstorm with more established groups and use their expertise to help expand. I could use the connections I make at the summit to get ideas for events, good starting tips and best practices for recruitment and long-term sustainability of a YMG group here in Nevada.

I got involved with SEASoN when I first moved to Las Vegas. The company I started working for was very involved in the local MO and two of my coworkers were on the board. The vice president of the company was also a past president. They encouraged us all to get involved and attend the events, they even paid for it. One of my coworkers went on to become president of our local MO and wanted to try to get a YMG started but nothing came of it. When I moved to my next company a few years later, the president of the MO at the time was my boss and asked if I would be interested in joining the board. He and I were the only ones in the company that were involved in SEASoN. At my current company I am the only one who is a member of SEASoN, but I have been working on getting more coworkers to participate.

My hope is that by getting more young members involved in the YMG we can not only get younger members to join SEASoN but also get them more involved in the MO. This will not only benefit the YMG members but the MO as a whole.