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SEAMASS YMG

NCSEA Young Member Summit Scholarship

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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 young members to professional societies is not an easy job. Students and recent graduates are being pulled in a multitude of directions and becoming active in a Structural Engineering Association rarely tops the list of priorities. By reflecting on my personal experiences and asking some simple questions, I have come to a few conclusions on the best way to grow an engineering group.

In 2019 I attended my first SEAMASS event. It was the annual dinner and it was being hosted outside of Boston at Gillette Stadium. After the dinner, we were invited to watch the New England Revolution game. Shortly after attending the dinner, I found myself at a YMG meeting and I have been involved with the SEA ever since. While the experience that I had does not appear profound, it does highlight some overarching themes that should be considered when trying to recruit the next generation of leaders in structural engineering.

I first found out about the event via a forwarded email. Dinner and a soccer game? Sounds like fun! Just like that, an email had generated interest. Without interest, there is no recruitment. Sharing a career with a group of people is one thing, but sharing an experience is another. SEAs need to offer something in order to generate interest. So what can we offer that other groups can't? That question should be our focus. Anyone can offer free pizza, but only we can offer a tour of an active construction site and free pizza. Events and programs that are unique generate interest and with that we generate a desire to attend events.

The dinner event sounded interesting, but it cost \$60. To some that might not seem like much, but at the time I was fresh out of school, paying off loans, and in the process of moving. As a result, money was tight. My company offered to pay for the event which removed that hurdle. Affordability needs to be a main concern for the organizers of events. While some companies may cover costs, that is not a given, and we lose potential members as a result. Now that I help plan events with the YMG, limiting costs is one of the main concerns that I have, as this is one of the barriers to entry that we can try to control. Additionally, to help mitigate this, support from SEAs in subsidizing events for younger engineers can relieve the burden on the members of our profession with the least means.

It isn't easy to get from my office in Boston to the stadium in Foxborough. At the time there was no public transportation to get there and if you had a car, it would take over an hour to

drive with traffic. As a young engineer living in the city, I had no real way to make the commute. It was only because some co-workers offered a ride that I was able to attend. Location directly influences the decision of whether to attend an event or not. In-person events need to be easily accessible. One lesson learned over the pandemic is the value of virtual events. While they are not my preferred type of event, I do believe that they serve a purpose. Currently, the SEAMASS YMG mainly consists of members from the Greater Boston area and young engineers from outside the metro area are not well represented. By making attendance at events easier with webinars and online networking sessions, we can reach a broader audience and engage more members. Attendees at virtual events may even be inclined to make a commute for an in-person event after being introduced to the group during a virtual event. Easy access must be a priority.

While at the dinner, I talked to some members of the YMG who invited me to attend a meeting. They were friendly and we exchanged business cards. Soon thereafter I was at a YMG meeting and being given responsibilities. By including people as soon as possible we can foster active participants. An engaged member is an active member and it is up to us as leaders to involve others.

As I assume a leadership role in the SEAMASS YMG, I am keeping in mind what got me to this point and how I can use my experiences to help grow and strengthen our organization. We need to remember who we are and how we got here as we try to see the world through the eyes of a prospective member.