

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.

I graduated from a small technical school which specialized in engineering. Unfortunately, my college did not have a student SEA chapter. However, there was a strong ASCE student chapter of which I was an active member and participant. I quickly learned the value of a professional organization, however, I was disappointed by the lack of emphasis placed on structural engineering. Even before graduation I knew that I wanted to be involved in my state's SEA. Fortunately I was able to take a position after graduation that both connected me with the organization and encouraged my participation. Thus upon graduating with my master's degree I moved to Kansas City, where I became involved in the Structural Engineers Association of Kansas and Missouri (SEAKM) and served as their secretary for two years.

Following a change in the direction of my career and relocation to Kentucky, last year I was offered the role of treasurer for SEAK, which I eagerly accepted. SEAK was struggling with low membership and participation after COVID and needed fresh energy and engagement to revitalize it. After a year of service as secretary during which time I continually pushed the organization to operate at a higher level, I was asked to be the president of SEAK for a two-year term. Now, currently in that role and having recently attended the NCSEA's Leadership Retreat, I am not only planning the next two years of SEAK activity, but striving to set up an infrastructure that will sustain and grow SEAK for years to come. At the core of that infrastructure is a Young Members Group (YMG). The YMG is a pipeline for membership and leadership in a state-level SEA. It draws students directly from college to the YMG, and once there, they are groomed as future members and leaders of the state organization. Thus, recruiting quality YMG members is the key to growing a successful state organization, and the recruitment of such individuals must be not only intentional, but strategic.

There are several key facts I point out to all potential YMG recruits, the most affecting being that participation, education, and leadership within the SEAK are excellent resume enhancers for all members and can open the door for new roles or promotions. Beyond that, participation in the YMG and SEAK provides members an opportunity to positively influence the profession and advocate for the structural engineers across Kentucky. However, I also recognize three distinctive subgroups within the YMG: college students; non-licensed recent graduates (NLRG); and licensed recent graduates (LRG). Because robust participation at each level is essential in cultivating a healthy and active YMG, there are specific strategies I employ when attempting to recruit within these subgroups.

College Students

When considering why college students would want to be members of SEAK's YMG as opposed to just participating in ASCE, there are several driving motivations. Most obviously, college students are concerned with getting a job after they graduate. Because the non-student members of SEAK are employees of the firms that the students want to work at after graduation, I emphasize that participation in the YMG allows students to network with those practicing engineers which helps them connect with their future employers. More benefits include opportunities to attend continuing education events, go on site tours that focus on the structural design of buildings, and even get invited to the annual SEAK conference. While college students do not yet need CEUs for licensure purposes, attending such events via the YMG gives them an early glimpse into the profession they are entering.

Leveraging these unique motivations, as president of SEAK I plan to provide donations to the Student Steel Bridge Team and the Concrete Canoe Team at the four state universities within Kentucky and stipulate that each team provides a presentation to SEAK about the design, construction, and performance of their respective bridge and canoe at their competitions. Likewise, SEAK will provide a structural engineering presentation to the organizations, as well as volunteer structural advice for the teams. Typically, only the most active and enthusiastic students will participate in academic teams like this, meaning they are prime candidates for joining the YMG.

Non-Licensed Recent Graduates

Recent college graduates who have not yet achieved their licensure are presumably focused on securing those credentials. In order to recruit and secure membership within the NLRG group, the YMG will provide PE/SE prep sessions. While there are PE and SE preparation resources available for purchase online, most are expensive, impersonal or remote, and do not provide one-on-one learning or the opportunity for Q&A with a licensed structural engineer. The YMG, working with the broader SEAK organization, will provide in-person, topic-focused sessions that help members learn and retain subject matter in a way that a pre-recorded online video just can't accomplish. Understanding that NLRGs no longer have access to the social atmosphere and network available at universities, it is unsurprising that NLRG membership is driven largely by a desire to engage socially within the profession. I will provide the YMG with a non-trivial budget and the encouragement to spend it on professional meetings as well as a robust social calendar. YMG social events allow members to socialize, network, and make friends inside the

profession but outside of the office and work hours. Such friendships are invaluable due to the unique stresses and strains structural engineers often face. Providing the YMG a social budget encourages the formation of these relationships while also alleviating any financial hindrance to participation that such events could create.

Licensed Recent Graduates

A universal commonality amongst all licensed recent graduates is the need to complete CEUs each year to maintain their licensure. While there are many opportunities online to acquire free or cheap CEUs through webinars provided by any number of organizations, SEAOk and the YMG can provide the opportunity to get those CEUs in two ways. First, the annual SEAOk conference draws much of the state's structural engineering profession together and provides both an unparalleled learning opportunity, along with networking opportunities with every major structural engineering firm in state. Additionally, the YMG will also provide CEU opportunities throughout the year, and not just through presentations, but through in-person events that can't be replicated virtually such as site tours of buildings under construction, demonstrations by contractors, in person presentations with Q&A sessions, moderated panel discussions, etc. Finally, LRG are more likely to fill leadership roles within the YMG due to their experience within the profession. I plan to create a pipeline program that prepares LRGs within the YMG for leadership in the broader SEAOk organization.

While any one person may implement good policies and practices in an organization, if no one follows in their footsteps, all that good work can be undone in a short time. The YMG is the foundation upon which a strong SEA is built, by cultivating today the leader for tomorrow. While I carefully consider the unique motivations for each subgroup mentioned above when developing a recruitment plan for SEAOk, I ultimately recruit members of SEAOk and the YMG by urging potential recruits to take charge of their profession, help shape the future of structural engineering, and raise the standards by which successes are judged. In doing so, I hope to attract a caliber of engineers who deeply value their craft and aim to improve it for the betterment of all.
Thank you very much for your time and consideration.