Growth Through Engagement and Teamwork

**Michael Braasch
VP – Conferences**

January 28 & 29, 2021

Virtual Officers Meeting

Mission
Conference Committee

- Enable high quality conferences/symposia/workshops

- Produce high quality technical content

- Facilitate the production of reasonable surpluses without sacrificing quality

- Refine and promote Best Practices in planning and managing conferences*

- Explore new conference delivery mechanisms*

* Virtual and Hybrid events present new challenges

Big Picture
Conference Committee

- COVID has changed everything

- Much of 2020 was spent in converting traditional conferences to virtual offerings

- Over 1700 IEEE events went virtual (1549) or hybrid (162) [per MCE Top Line Q4 2020]

- MCE has new hybrid/virtual guidelines: https://ieeemce.org/planning-basics/virtual-hybrid/

Big Picture (cont'd)
Conference Committee

- Hybrid (in-person/virtual) conferences appear to be the way of the future
  - Silver lining is that, if done well, such offerings can yield increased attendance
- Regional workshops may offer opportunities in locations with regional travel restrictions

6/2/2021

List of Goals
Conference Committee

- Short-term:
  - Update conference guidelines
  - Review all conference budgets
  - Strengthen liaison for financially-sponsored conferences

- Status:
  - Guidelines were temporarily sidelined
  - Budgets are always reviewed
  - Liaisons are reviewed with each conference application

List of Goals
Conference Committee

- Three-year goals
  - Work with MCE to ensure budgets/peer-review/MOUs are meeting objectives
  - Increase surplus through new conferences and regional workshops
    - Revise? Encourage chapters and panels to consider new conferences and workshops?
  - Ensure all conference chairs are cognizant of guidelines and are examining historical results

List of Objectives

- AESS conference guidelines update
  - Research/implement best practices for virtual and hybrid

- Conference budget review process

- Peer reviews / budgeted surpluses

- Conference leadership

- New TCS requests

- TCS quality

Update AESS Conference Guidelines

S – Review and update the guidelines; <mark>research/implement best practices for hybrid conferences; use MCE guidance as a starting point</mark>

M – Review and acceptance by the BoG

A – Assigned to: entire Conference Committee

R – ensuring conference quality

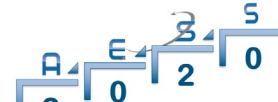**T** – draft by Spring BoG; final by Fall BoG

Conference Budgeting

S – Work with MCE to facilitate conference budget reviews

M – Tie conference budgets to applications

A – Assigned to: Braasch

R – helping to promote reasonable surpluses

T – NLT Fall BoG meeting

Peer Review / Budgeted Surplus

S – Ensure peer review / budgeted surplus

M – metric: Yes/No on each conference

A – assigned to: Braasch

R – relevant to which goal(s) and how? keep eyes on peer review and budget

T – time period for performance: executed each time a conference application is reviewed

Conference Leadership
AESS Involvement

S – AESS members on organizing committees

M – metric: Yes/No on each conference (more generally: percentage of all conferences)

A – assigned to: Braasch

R – relevant to which goal(s) and how? keep eyes on peer review and budget

T – time period for performance: executed each time a conference application is reviewed

New TCS Requests

S – Agree to TCS when appropriate

M – metric: Yes/No decision in each case

A – assigned to: entire conference committee (and tech panels as appropriate)

R – relevant to which goal(s) and how? Core mission (entire committee is polled for input)

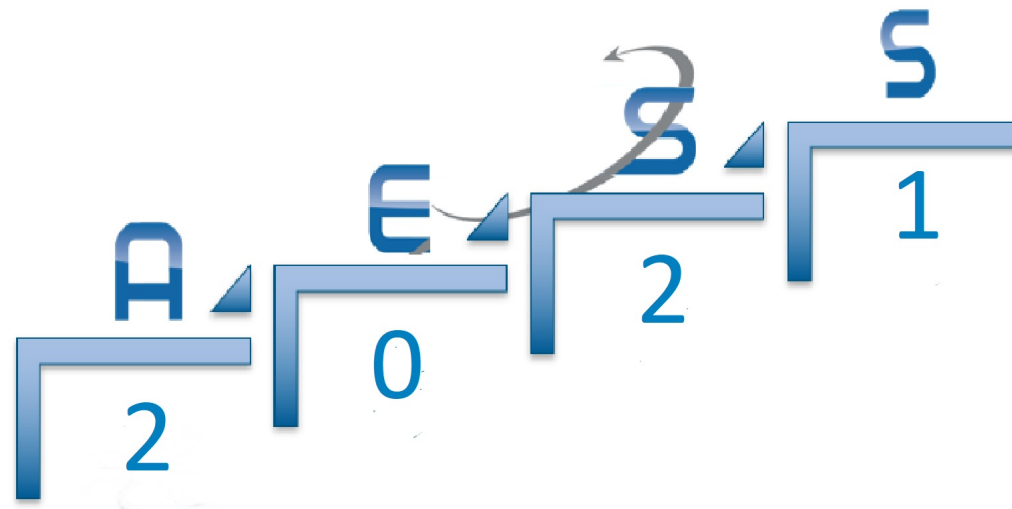**T** – time period for performance: executed each time a new conference requests TCS

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TCS Quality

S – Ensure quality in TCS conferences

M – metric: rigor of peer review process (e.g., number of reviewers on each paper)

A – assigned to: Braasch

R – relevant to which goal(s) and how? Core mission

T – time period for performance: executed each time a conference application is reviewed

Growth Through Engagement and Teamwork

Conferences Breakout Session Outbrief

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Virtual Officers Meeting

Overall Consensus:

There is 'violent agreement' that we must go back to traditional in-person conferences in the long run

But in the short and medium term ...

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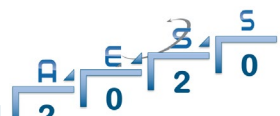for Humanity

Near-Term: Virtual conferences

- Generally two models:
  - Live sessions: more expensive
  - Recorded presentations: less interaction
- Pre-recorded, on-demand content appears to be the most popular
- Virtual allows a larger number of world-renowned experts to participate in panel discussions due to low time commitment
- Industry sponsorship will be significantly lower; they see little ROI

Medium-Term:
Hybrid conferences

- IEEE is pushing for these
- Hard to plan for; difficult to know how many in-person attendees there will be and thus how much venue space is needed; venues are playing hard ball and are unwilling to be flexible
- Hybrid conferences add work and stress to the organizers; you're essentially organizing two simultaneous conferences
- Live streaming is expensive and the quality is generally low
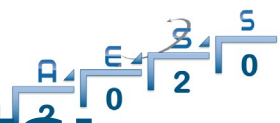
Medium-Term: Hybrid (cont'd)

- One model is to pre-record the presentations for the individual/break-out sessions and make them available on-demand; only live-stream the major keynote presentations and panel discussions

- ACTION: Solicit AESS support for the additional costs associated with the on-line component of the conference (e.g., for 2022 Aero, Radar, MetroAeroSpace)

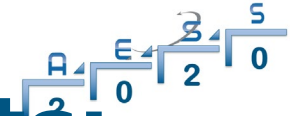# Additional Thoughts/Comments: Virtual/Hybrid/In-Person

- Human interaction (whether for networking or other reasons) is a major component of a successful conference
  - This is particularly true for students and young professionals
  - Student participation in virtual conferences appears to be low
- Currently brainstorming ways to add value for students/YPs; perhaps some live on-line event in conjunction with a given conference

Additional Thoughts/Comments: Virtual/Hybrid/In-Person

- Need to consider how the Conference Committee can interface with Education, Industry Relations and Tech Ops to assist and promote AESS

- Membership: promotion at the conferences

- Education: e.g., tutorials and short-courses held in conjunction with the conferences

- Industry Relations: e.g., panel discussions (Mike Noble already has this in progress)

- Tech Ops: promote tech panels

Additional Thoughts/Comments: Virtual/Hybrid/In-Person (cont'd)

- Some academics will participate, no matter what, simply to ensure they get a paper published

- Companies are determining that working from home is not reducing productivity and some are likely to limit employee participation in conferences to on-line only (to save travel costs)

- If too many attendees stay home, though, it may 'take the life out of' the in-person component of the conference

Wrap-Up:
How to Move Forward

- We lack sufficient data to make good decisions
  - What value do attendees place on on-line conference content?
  - Pre-recorded or live technical presentations? Pre-recorded or live plenary speakers? Panel discussions?
- ACTION: Conference committee to work with MCE to generate a survey to go out to all AESS members

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Wrap-Up:
Oh, And One More Thing…

- The quality of the website used to provide the on-line content for a conference has a major impact
  - Easy-to-navigate websites make the experience pleasant
  - Poorly-designed websites make the experience such that the attendee may never come back
- A standard, high-quality, website model could alleviate the problems but a given conference may not want to use it