From the 2018–19 President

By Steven Collins, PhD, PE
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By the time this issue goes out, Mr. Volga Mermut will have assumed the position of President, and WSPE will have started its 2019-20 administrative year. In my last President’s column, I look back on our past year and forward to the coming year under our new leadership.

This past year was our first under NSPE’s new membership business model. NSPE’s House of Delegates approved the new model in July 2017, and over the following year the various state chapters decided whether or not to integrate with NSPE in a unified national-state membership. Having decided on an integrated affiliation under a new NSPE-State Society Agreement, WSPE last fall drew up new Bylaws and Policies to bring governance into alignment with the new model; they were voted on and accepted at the Board of Trustees winter meeting in February.

Strategic positioning was a focus of the past year. We had much discussion about WSPE’s value proposition to its members and how we could concentrate our resources on building value in a small number of areas. We reaffirmed commitment to an earlier strategic plan that directs activities toward three goals: enhancing public welfare, enhancing the image of the PE, and promoting engineering education.

An example of action around the goal of public welfare was WSPE’s continuing participation in the Architects and Engineers Legislative Council (AELC). As reported regularly in this newsletter, WSPE members were quite active with AELC during this past legislative session, tracking legislation that bears on our profession and communicating our preferences to our
legislators. These efforts culminated in an “Architects and Engineers Day on the Hill” in Olympia on March 19, at which several WSPE and AELC members met with legislators and testified in hearings on bills of interest.

Another example was WSPE’s continuing communication with and representation on our state’s Board of Registration for Professional Engineers and Land Surveyors (BORPELS). After many years of dedicated service to NSPE and WSPE, including 10 years as a member of BORPELS, our colleague Neil Norman passed away last September, as reported in the December issue of this newsletter. His successor, Mr. Doug Hendrickson, is another distinguished member of NSPE and WSPE, thus continuing a long period of continuous WSPE representation on BORPELS.

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*The position of Vice President East is vacant*

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Autonomous vehicles (AVs) was another area of activity for WSPE this past year. Through its AV Task Force, WSPE brought the voice of the PE community to bear in discussion of policy within the Washington State Transportation Commission’s Autonomous Vehicle Work Group, as this newsletter has periodically reported.

An activity addressing both public welfare and the image of the PE was our engagement with issues raised by some in our membership concerning interpretation of statues regulating engineering title and practice in our state. One of our members, Mr. Paul Tappel, filed suit claiming that the regulations were being interpreted too loosely, effectively allowing unlicensed engineers to do work that a proper interpretation would find unlawful. His position is laid out in an article he contributed to the January issue of this newsletter; it is also the subject of an article in the current issue of PE Magazine. WSPE leadership has made efforts to understand all sides of this issue in the context of the larger controversy surrounding engineer title and practice playing out nationally, and it will continue doing so in the coming year.

WSPE addressed the third goal, support for engineering education, on several fronts. The Engineering Education Foundation continued its Engineering Scholarship Program directed at students in the state’s community colleges who are transferring to ABET-accredited universities in the state. Some of our local WSPE chapters also ran scholarship competitions for high school students. And WSPE volunteers from our state chapters gave generously of their time in support of MATHCOUNTS. This year 72 schools participated in 8 regional competitions; 126 students from 35 schools participated in the state competition, and the four finalists finished fourth in the national competition.

To learn more about how we can best serve members, the WSPE Board surveyed its membership early this year. Mr. Volga Mermut summarizes the results in the next article. An example of an activity we hope adds value to membership is this newsletter. Initially edited and distributed by NSPE last fall, the WSPE Board decided to take on the task of putting it together as a WSPE publication and distributing it to members. The newsletter has appeared monthly since December, and we aim to continue to distribute it on a regular basis in the year to come.
In closing, I’d like to introduce our new Board members and 2019-20 leadership team.

**Volga Mermut, PE, President**
Mr. Mermut is Operational Architect Principal Engineer at Comtech Telecommunication in Seattle, provider of 911/emergency-related core services throughout the US. He has over 20 years experience in the global telecommunications industry. He also serves as President of WSPE Educational Foundation. With a passion for fostering young engineers and raising the profile of PEs, he looks forward as President to increasing membership in WSPE, while involving students and newly graduated engineers in WSPE activities. He’s especially interested in exploring ways of stimulating interest through activities like design competitions, social media communication, WSPE chapter meetings, guest lectures at universities, discussions with industry to show the value of a PE, and support of Order of Engineers ceremonies throughout the state.

**Mark Cole, PE, President-Elect**
Mr. Cole is a licensed professional civil engineer with over 30 year of experience in private practice. He’s a Senior Project Manager responsible for client/project management and business development with Otak, a multi-discipline design firm in Washington State and other areas in the Northwest. He has been a member of NSPE/WSPE for more than 25 years, having previously served as Lake Washington chapter president, WSPE-PEPP Chair, and society delegate to the A/E Legislative Council. As a former member of NSPE/PEPP’s Professional Development Council, Mark is a strong supporter in development of the Young Professional and advocates this through his additional involvement with American Public Works Association (APWA), MATHCOUNTS, and volunteerism at Higher-Ed. career events. As President-Elect, Mark appreciates the opportunity and is eager to begin working with the other WSPE leadership team members in continuing their efforts and initiate other programs to enhance value for our members and strengthen WSPE.
Chris Lane, PE, Treasurer
A graduate of the Naval Postgraduate School in Monterey, CA, and Nuclear Power School, Submarine School, Mr. Lane served 5 years sea duty on the missile submarine USS Thomas Edison. After leaving the Navy, he worked at Bechtel Power on design and licensing of the Vogtle Nuclear Power Plant before moving on to WESTEC Services, a small San-Diego-based firm overseeing development and operation of several small geothermal and cogeneration power plants. When WESTEC was acquired, he struck out on his own to form POWERPLANT Consultants, Inc., later changed to his current business POWERPLANT Specialists, LLC. He has done design work and a lot of field commissioning and testing of all types of power plants. He was Propulsion Systems Integrator for design, construction, and crew training for the 144-Auto Ferry class of large commercial ferries in Puget Sound, WA, a project that lasted 14-years. Along the way, he worked as an expert witness for over 100 cases in several countries, mostly involving power plants and marine propulsion. Now semiretired, he lives in Seattle and does only expert work while enjoying tennis almost everyday with his wife Mary Jo.

Ed Addicks, PE, Vice President West
Since graduating from Texas A&M in 1982, Mr. Addicks has enjoyed planning, designing, and administering construction of transportation infrastructure, mostly in Texas, Florida, and Wisconsin. He recently sold his 20-year old Texas engineering practice, and he and his wife of 38 years are relocating to their new home in beautiful Washington State to enjoy the numerous outdoor activities here and to prepare for eventual retirement. He is looking forward to heavily focusing on the “returning” phase of his career by serving the engineering community.

Finally, I’d like to acknowledge those board members completing terms as executive officers of WSPE. Nate Palmatier, my immediate predecessor as President, completes his term as Past-President. Sean Comstock finishes his term as Treasurer. Thomas Smailus completes his term as Vice President West, and Ryan Peterson steps down as Vice President East. Their dedication and service to WSPE and the profession inspire us all.
News from NSPE

- **New class of eleven NSPE Fellows** announced for 2019. Said Amy Barrett, PE, F.NSPE, chairwomen of the executive committee of the Council of Fellows, “Their selfless involvement in state and local activities inspires pride in our profession and displays a level of dedication in which the public can be proud to put its trust in professional engineers.”

- NSPE, in a [letter](#) to the National Institute of Science and Technology (NIST), encourages policy makers “to protect the public health, safety, and welfare when developing artificial intelligence technical standards and considering complex AI issues.”

- NSPE issues [statement on mass shooting](#) in Virginia Beach, VA. Longtime NSPE member and former Virginia Society of Professional Engineers President Rich Nettleton, PE, was among the twelve victims.

- In a [blog post](#), NSPE President Michael Aitken reflects on the importance of volunteers in NSPE.

- NSPE’s PE Institute to host [P3s: Opportunities and Risks](#), a one-hour live webinar, July 10, 2019, 10 am Pacific Time.

- NSPE announces plans for celebrating the fourth annual [Professional Engineers Day](#) on Wednesday, August 7.

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**Events**

1. **NSPE Professional Engineers Conference—July 17–21, Kansas City Marriott Downtown** ([link](#))
2. The Engineering Network, Portland/Vancouver (TENPDX) July Networking Event, Feral Brewing Public House, July 18, 4:30 pm. ([link](#))
3. IEEE WIE International Leadership Summit, hosted by Women in Engineering affinity group of the Richland chapter of IEEE, Pacific Northwest National Laboratory Discovery Hall, July 30, 8:30 am – 6:00 pm ([link](#)).

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**Washington Society of Professional Engineers**

*A state society of the National Society of Professional Engineers*

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WSPE Member Survey

By Volga Mermut, PE
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As part of its membership development, WSPE’s Board of Trustees conducted a survey of its current membership in February-March of this year. The survey was designed in Survey Monkey and the link sent by email to members. Although we did not have a large response (24), here is a summary of results from those who responded.

1. The newsletter is being read and appreciated. Suggestions for content include news about members, projects, scholarships, discussions of engineering ethics and law, recap of meetings, legislative issues, environmental regulations, and information about licensing and private practice.

2. Valued benefits include opportunities for professional networking, local chapter events, engagement with government and the legislature, PE Magazine, and advocacy for licensure and PEs.

3. Activities respondents would like to see more of include seminars related to licensure and private practice, continuing education and training with certificates, outreach to younger engineers, programs to encourage students to become engineers, and more chapter gatherings focused around infrastructure/site tours and networking.

4. Respondents indicated that email is the preferred means of communication.

Overall, we had a positive response. However, we do have a dwindling membership, as well as local chapters that are struggling and in need of more help. High cost makes it difficult to sustain membership, visibility could be improved, and more should be done to promote the value of membership and benefits of a PE. Finally, we need to explore ways to reach out to young engineers and communicate to them the value of membership in WSPE.

News

1. NSPE Board of Directors Updates, May 15–31, 2019 [link], June 1–15 [link]

2. NSPE Update, June 2019 [link].

3. PE Scope, June 2019 [link]