

Section Student Activities Chair Quick Start Guide

Welcome Message and Brief Description of Position

Welcome to the Section Student Activities Committee Chair Quick Start Training. This training assumes you have recently been elected or appointed to the position of Section Student Activities Committee Chair and want to quickly learn the basics of your position. You've found the right place.

As Section Student Activities Chair you are a member of the Section Executive Committee (ExCom). You report to the Section Chair. The Student Activities Committee is usually abbreviated "SAC" and the Student Activities Committee Chair as "SAC Chair." The rest of this training will use the term SAC Chair to refer to Student Activities Committee Chair.

Your principal responsibility is to promote student activities in all IEEE student organizations within your Section. You will be working with Student Officers, Counselors, and Mentors as well as your Regional leadership team to ensure that your Section has a strong and vital student activities program. A number of topics have been identified that are important to address in your important work as your Section's SAC Chair. Good luck in this important endeavor!

Know the Organization and its Stakeholders

The first step in assuming your new role is to ensure that you are familiar with the IEEE Member and Geographic Activities (MGA) organization and where the SAC Chair fits. The information about various student benefits and programs are available in the Student Resources Page of the IEEE Website and the organization of Student Branches and Chapters are available in Section 9 of the MGA Operations Manual.

MGA is one of six major IEEE organizational units. MGA is responsible for the oversight of IEEE geographic organizational units, and is responsible for IEEE membership and member development. The geographic units of IEEE are organized into ten geographic regions (Region 1-10). Some Regions are further divided into geographic organizations called Areas. Each Region is subdivided into local geographic units known as Sections. An IEEE Section's activities typically focus on events and programs in the major cities of the Section. Finally, the Student Branches, Student Branch Chapters, and Student Branch Affinity Groups are part of the Section organization. Most Sections have more than one Student Branch. Student Branch Chapters have ties to one of IEEE's Technical Societies with a focus on technical activities associated with their parent Society.

It is particularly important to understand the organization of the student organizations and how the units interact with each other and their parent Section. This information can be obtained from your Section Chair or your predecessor Section SAC Chair.

Establish Contact with Student Branch Leaders

Your next major activity is to establish contact with student activities leaders in your Section -- the Student Branch Officers, Student Branch Chapter Officers, and Student Branch Counselors of all the IEEE student organizations in your Section. Inform them of your appointment. This will enable Student Branches to reach out to you as the point of contact within the Section. You can request contact information on these leaders from the Section Secretary or by using SAMIEEEE, the IEEE membership database tool. SAMIEEEE provides you with instant access to membership statistics and member information for Student Branches in your Section. You can design your own filters and ad-hoc queries for retrieving information that you need. Information provided by SAMIEEEE can be very helpful in developing strategies for student activities in areas such as membership growth and member retention.

It is recommended that you establish face to face contact with your student activities leaders as early as possible. A good way to do this is to attend Student Branch and Student Branch Chapter meetings. This will not only give you an opportunity to meet the student leaders and their Branch Counselor, but an opportunity to share your goals for the coming year.

You will also want to attend Student Branch ExCom meetings on a regular basis. This will keep you informed on progress and plans for the Branches. Of course, since you are a member of the Section ExCom, you will be attending these meetings. This gives you an opportunity to build a stronger bond between the Section and its Student Branches.

Be Familiar with Student Branch Reporting Requirements and Other Organizational Information

Since Student Branch leaders frequently reach out to you for guidance, it is very important that you are aware of standard operations and reporting requirements of a Student Branch. In addition, faculty and students from universities without Student Branches may reach out to you for information on how to start new Branches, Chapters, or Affinity Groups. Be prepared to answer questions that may come your way. If you are not able to answer a question, it is always possible to take the question to your RSAC. Always follow through if you cannot resolve a question.

Some basic information that a SAC Chair should be aware of is:

- How to form a Student Branch
- How to form Student Branch Chapters and Affinity Groups
- Student officer reporting
- Student Branch activity reporting

It would also be beneficial for you to review the Student Branch Chair and Student Branch Counselor responsibilities. You will be working closely with these volunteers. You can find more information about each of these in below sections.

Know Your Responsibilities

As Section SAC Chair it is your responsibility to act as the interface between Student Branches and your Section. It is within your purview to review and recommend funding requests and proposals that are submitted to the Section for student events.

The Section SAC Chair is also responsible for encouraging Student Branches to participate in Regional and MGA SAC competitions and to apply for awards. Additionally, the SAC Chair may organize a Section Student Congress and may institute some Section student awards.

Finally, the Section SAC Chair is responsible for endorsing nominations and applications for grants to Regions and other IEEE organizational units.

Know Regional SAC Contacts and Events

Each of the ten IEEE Regions has a Regional Student Activities Chair (RSAC). RSACs work with their respective Region leadership teams and are responsible for organizing and conducting student activities within their Region. Typical activities include paper contests, design contests, robotics competitions, software development contests, and ethics paper competitions. By virtue of their position, RSACs also serve on the MGA Student Activities Committee (MGA SAC). You should contact your RSAC as soon as possible after your appointment as SAC. Your Section Chair can assist you in contacting your RSAC. RSACs can provide valuable information on Regional student events scheduling and possible assistance in funding for travel to the events.

Planning and Organizing Sectional Student Meetings

As SAC Chair, you will be encouraging your Student Branch Counselors and Student Branch Chairs to organize and hold activities and events in their Branches. You should also organize and conduct joint meetings and events for the various IEEE student organizations in your Section. A good example of this is a Section Student Congress. A Section Student Congress has the following goals:

- Align all Student Branches in the Section to the IEEE SAC Mission Statement & Vision
 - SAC Mission: To deliver a common, high-quality IEEE student member experience globally, to encourage lifelong professional success through IEEE membership
 - SAC Vision: To be recognized as the global platform to inspire, enable, develop, and support students as the future leaders of their profession.
- Empower and motivate potential IEEE student leaders to engage and mobilize members as well as potential members
- Create a networking opportunity for sister Student Branches

An event of this nature could be used to elect volunteers – student and faculty, who will help organize other Section-level student programs which will benefit students across the Section. All Section Student events can be venues where Section student awards are announced, annual reports of Student Branches are presented, and student volunteers from different Student Branches network with each other.

Topic 7: Training Student Volunteers

An active SAC Chair should take responsibility for training student volunteers and Branch Counselors in the Section. This training can be conducted as part of a Section Student Congress or can be organized as a separate event.

The Center for Leadership Excellence (CLE) and the IEEE web site provide a number of excellent training resources for Student Branches.

This material can be used for group or individual training. The Learn More section below provides examples of some particularly helpful training resources. These materials are helpful for all Branch leaders, especially those just becoming familiar with the organization.

Conclusion

Congratulations - once you have launched your term as Section SAC Chair with the previous Quick Start topics, you have the basic tools to hit the ground running in your new role. Your role will continue to evolve as you carry out the important work in building a strong and vital student activities program in your Section. Additional materials are available in the additional recommended training section of the Section SAC Chair training page, and it will continue to expand as more training material is incorporated.