

USSD Young Professionals Committee 2019 Annual Update

The primary role of the Young Professionals (YP) Committee is to increase membership and participation of young professionals, defined as members 35 years of age and under, within USSD. To these efforts, the committee has enjoyed growing success in fulfillment of this mission over the last year. Since the 2018 Annual Conference, the YP Committee has achieved the following milestones:

Exceptional YP of the Year Award: Over the last year, the YP Committee championed development of the Exceptional YP of the Year Award, an annual award recognizing a YP who exemplifies the four organization initiatives of Advocate, Educate, Collaborate, and Cultivate, through their personal and professional contributions to the dams and levees industry. The award proposal was submitted for Board approval in August 2018 and accepted on the Board's subsequent meeting. With support from the Awards Committee, the YP Committee developed nomination and selection criteria, modified the website for award advertising, solicited nominations, coordinated a selection panel of past and present Board members, and identified the first award recipient, who will be recognized at the annual conference in April.

Emergency Response Communication Workshop: Based on the overwhelming positive response to last year's Communication Workshop, hosted by the YP Committee in Miami, the committee will host another workshop in Chicago this April. In an effort to exemplify the Educate and Collaborate initiatives, the YP Committee has teamed with the Committee on Public Safety, Security & Emergency Management for Dams, to host an Emergency Response Communication Workshop. This workshop is anticipated to be the first of an ongoing series of workshops aimed at collaborating with technical committees to simultaneously increase YP involvement in workshops and bolster technical committees' abilities to host workshops. Workshop content is in the final stages of development under the leadership of Brandan Vavrek

Student Outreach Subcommittee: During the committee meeting in Miami (May 2018), ongoing initiatives aimed to increase student participation and conference attendance were unified into the YP Committee's first official subcommittee on Student Outreach. Efforts are still ongoing to formalize the processes by which this subcommittee will achieve its goals. To collaborate with the USSD Scholarship initiative, former scholarship winner Ali Reza Firoozfar was engaged to spearhead subcommittee efforts and his appointment as Subcommittee Chair has been submitted to the Board for approval at the April meeting.

YP Edition of the USSD Bulletin: The committee was approached in mid-2018 to garner content for a special YP-focused edition of the tri-annual USSD bulletin (Issue 176). Committee leadership engaged the YP constituency and Website & Social Media Committee YP Vice Chair Micah Smidt stepped forward to lead the effort, which included extensive coordination and review of all submissions. The bulletin was published in Fall 2018, and the Committee received strong positive feedback for the YP-generated content.

YP Board Advisor Selection: The term for one of three incumbent YP Board Advisors – Brian Gettinger – will expire at this year's annual conference. To fill this upcoming vacancy, the YP Committee solicited applications from the committee constituency. The Leadership Committee unanimously selected

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applicant Brandan Vavrek from the received nominations, to replace Brian as the next two-year term YP Board Advisor. The Board approved this nomination and will assume his new role at the April Board meeting. Brandan recused himself from all activities pertaining to selection process and will step down as Committee Chair upon assuming his new position. Another nomination will be held in early 2020 to replace outgoing advisors Tina Stanard and Melinda Dirdal, whose positions will be consolidated into a single two-year positions. Thereafter, a new YP Board Advisors will be selected on an annual basis to fill the alternately vacant position.

Conference Social Events: In addition to the YP Committee's flagship event, the YP Networking Social, the committee hosted the first annual Mentoring Luncheon during the 2018 Conference, organized by Aimee Corn. The event aimed to engage YPs with a diverse group of accomplished USSD members, including several Board and ex-Board Members in an exclusive, semi-casual environment. Due to the events success, it has been adopted as a regular event and will again be on Wednesday following the Tuesday evening Networking Social.

YP Vice Chairs: The Leadership Team continues to advertise vacant YP Vice Chair positions for other technical and non-technical committees as they become available. This year saw the largest fulfillment of these positions, with only four open positions of twenty at the time of this reports drafting.

Meetings and Membership Growth: The YP Committee membership continued to enjoy steady growth, now including over 350 members on our email distribution list (d-list), which has increased from around 250 since early 2018. The committee also continues to hold quarterly teleconference meetings in addition to the in-person meeting at the annual conference. These meetings are typically well attended and offer ways for committee members to learn of upcoming engagement opportunities and provide feedback to the Leadership Team. Additionally, to engage members unable to attend the quarterly calls, the Leadership Team emails the d-list with committee updates an as needed basis, advertising vacant positions (e.g. YP Vice Chairs for other committees), requesting support on active initiatives, and summarizing committee activities.

Leadership Team: Several changes have been made to the YP Leadership Team in the 2018-2019 term. Following the nomination of Brandan Vavrek, current Committee Chair, to the YP Board Advisor position, senior Co-Vice Chair Emily Schwartz was promoted to Committee Chair, pending Board approval at the April meeting. The vacated Co-Vice Chair position will be filled in the second quarter of 2019 following the same procedures utilized in 2017, when Aimee Corn was elected. Additionally, Ali Reza Firoozfar was selected to serve as Student Outreach Subcommittee. The in-coming 2019 Leadership Team is as follows:

Chair: Emily Schwartz (2019 to 2023)

Vice Chairs: Aimee Corn (2017 to 2021)
Vacant (2019 to 2023)

Student Outreach Subcommittee Chair: Ali Reza Firoozfar (2019 to 2023)

YP Board Advisors: Melinda Dirdal (2017 to 2020)
Tina Stanard (2017 to 2020)
Brandan Vavrek (2019 to 2021)