

Editorial | Student Opportunities at SEI

By Donna Friis, P.E., FSEI, M. ASCE

SEI is pleased to highlight two new opportunities for students: Student Membership Grade and Graduate Student Chapters. A joint effort of the Membership Committee and the Local Activities Division (LAD) – one of the four SEI divisions responsible for growing and supporting the local activities – students interested in pursuing careers in structural engineering are encouraged to join SEI.

Student members of ASCE, who enjoy membership without the requirement of dues, may also elect to join SEI at no additional cost. This is as simple as selecting SEI as a free Institute upon joining ASCE. Student members receive all of ASCE and SEI student benefits, including opportunities for networking with more than 20,000 SEI members and participating on SEI committees. Additionally, SEI offers many opportunities for students including the Student Structural Design Competition, the O.H. Ammann Research Fellowship, and the Student and Young Professional Program at Structures Congress.

Most recently, graduate students at any college or university who are ASCE/SEI student members are encouraged to form an SEI Graduate Student Chapter (GSC) to further reap member benefits. GSCs enhance the education of students who are preparing to become structural engineering professionals, and engage SEI student members in SEI for a successful transition from college to career. Graduate Student Chapters organize and manage visiting speakers, prospective student events, field trips, participate in SEI, perform outreach activities, and more. Participation in a GSC can help members connect with their peers and broaden their view of what it means to be a structural engineering professional.

This year, SEI welcomed the formation of its first three Graduate Student Chapters: Virginia Tech, the University of West Virginia, and the University of Texas at Arlington.

The first official SEI GSC was founded in January 2013 at Virginia Tech (SEI-VT). Chaired by William Collins and Faculty Advisor Roberto Leon, Ph.D., the mission of the SEI-VT is to develop the leadership skills and enhance the education of students who are preparing to become structural engineering professionals. SEI-VT will engage student members in SEI to encourage active, continuous membership and involvement throughout their professional lives.

The new SEI GSC at West Virginia University (SEI-WVU) is chaired by Daniel Estep and Faculty Advisor Udaya Halabe, Ph.D. By encouraging interaction between SEI student members and professional members, and providing opportunities for professional and educational development, SEI-WVU will facilitate a successful college to career transition and encourage its members to engage in SEI activities both at WVU and at the national level throughout their professional career.

The mission of SEI GSC at University of Texas at Arlington (SEI-UTA) – chaired by Istiaque Hasan and Faculty Advisor Nur Yazdani, Ph.D. – is to create a platform for the structural engineering graduate students at UT Arlington in order to facilitate knowledge sharing and professional networking among the students and the local/national structural engineering community.

In addition to the benefits of networking and education at the local level, SEI supports its GSCs in the following ways:

- Chapter announcements published on SEI website and in SEI Update
- Quarterly teleconferences to learn from and collaborate with other SEI Chapters
- Funded participation in the SEI Local Leadership Conference

- Membership in the SEI Graduate Student Chapter Leadership Council
- One complimentary ASCE Continuing Education webinar sponsored by the SEI Endowment Fund (maximum value \$250)
- SEI outreach supplies
- Use of SEI name and branding
- A 2-foot x 5-foot vinyl banner with chapter's logo

As a GSC, funding for faculty advisor and graduate student chair is provided to attend the annual SEI Local Leadership Conference – an annual meeting of all SEI Chapter and Structural Technical Group chairs. Members participate in the SEI Local Leadership Conference to learn about new initiatives, share insights and best practices, participate in technical tours and training, and to network.

This year's SEI Local Leadership Conference is planned in conjunction with the ASCE Texas Centennial, September 11-12. It will include a day-long leadership training session and a technical tour of the Cowboys Stadium. To learn more about the ASCE Texas Centennial Conference visit www.ASCE.org/SEI.

The Graduate Student Chapter Leadership Council (GSCLC) is an entity within the Local Activities Division that will add oversight and program development guidance to the GSCs. Membership in the GSCLC includes each chapter's student chair and faculty advisor along with an LAD appointed chair. The first chair of the GSCLC is Caleb Cheng L. Hing, Ph.D., P.E.

Becoming an SEI Graduate Student Chapter is easy, and includes the following steps:

- Request permission from your local University and submit a letter of support from the sponsoring Department Chair.
- Complete the Sample MOU with your local University signature authorizing creation of an SEI Graduate Student Chapter.
- Submit SEI GSC Application online.

SEI believes that today's students are the future of our profession. SEI would like to invite students with an interest in structural engineering to join us, at no cost, to learn about SEI and what it can offer your professional growth. Learn more about student opportunities at www.ASCE.org/SEI. ■



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