ComSoc Education Board Initiatives for the Young Generation

The initiative was pursued by Michael Devetsikiotis and Fabrizio Granelli, members of the IEEE Communication Society Education Board, with the support of the Chair of the Education Board Stefano Bregni, to increase the visibility and awareness of telecommunications among the younger generation, university students and even high-school students, the future telecom engineers. The goal of the initiative is to help students understand the importance of the telecommunications field and also the great value of belonging to an international community of professionals, such as the IEEE Communications Society.

Cape Town was identified as a suitable location to organize the first event of this kind - being the venue of one of ComSoc’s flagship events: ICC 2010. Three days of events of outreach were organized in order to inform local groups about the latest advances in telecommunications and to promote:
Communications as a service for society

- Communications as a service for society (to show the major impact of communications in society)
- Working in the field of telecommunications (about job opportunities and positions)
- Telecommunications in the context of humanitarian challenges (future trends in the field and initiatives)

The success of such events required the support by outstanding technical experts, able to communicate with the young generations and to involve them in the fascinating field of telecommunications. For this reason, Michael and Fabrizio contacted a number of highly qualified and experienced people to seek their support for this initiative by participating in the events and by providing a presentation on a topic close to their interests.

The events took advantage of ComSoc’s “Distinguished Speakers Program” (DSP) and the fact that several ComSoc Distinguished Lecturer series participants and other technical experts were in Cape Town attending ICC 2010 during these days. A portion of the event series was a half-day collection of distinguished speaker seminars at the University of Cape Town, set up by local IEEE chapters, with crucial assistance from local contacts Sunil Maharaj and Richard Wilkinson, and overseen by Yigang Cai, coordinator of the ComSoc DSP program.

The Distinguished Speakers portion of the series took place on Wednesday, May 26, at the Department of Electrical Engineering, University of Cape Town. The event was hosted by the UCT IEEE Communications Society Student Branch Chapter, UCT IEEE Student Branch, UCT Center for Broadband Networks, IEEE Communications Society & Signal Processing Society Joint Chapter, IEEE South Africa Section, IEEE Communications Society, South African Institute of Electrical Engineering (SAIEE), a sister society of the IEEE Communications Society, and the UCT IEEE Women in Engineering Student Affinity Group.
High school events took place on May 25 and May 27.

The **high school outreach events** took place on May 25 and May 27. They intended to reach a younger audience from local schools and to promote engineering in general, and telecommunications more specifically. The venues were arranged with the crucial help of local contacts Sunil Maharj of the South African Chapter, and Joyce Mwangama of the Women in Engineering chapter at UCT. Joseph Wamicha of the local student chapter was the invaluable driver and escort during the visits. On May 25, from 10 am to 12 noon, Fabrizio Granelli, Celia Desmond and Roberto Saracco visited the Oaklands High School. And on May 27, Michael Devetsikiotis and Fabrizio Granelli visited Oude Molen Technical High School, from 1 pm to 3 pm. The visitors met with the school principals and science teachers, were given tours of the facilities and met with the students, to whom they talked about telecommunications, engineering and all the exciting possibilities arising from the progress in the field. The students asked questions and participated in interactive activities involving demos of optical fibers, telephone devices and smartphones.

As a long term plan, the organizers of the initiative envision a series of repeating events, following ComSoc flagship conferences, and combining elements and strengths from the Distinguished Speaker programs with educational outreach to universities and local high schools.

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