



Guelph Engineering Society



Report on CFES CONGRESS 2009 at CARLETON UNIVERSITY,
JANUARY 4th to 9th 2009.

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1. Purpose of Conference

Congress is a nation wide event, hosted by a different university each year. The conference brings together student leaders from across Canada to essentially develop the profession, our engineering societies and the delegate themselves. Because of the unique length of this conference there were quite a varied number of events that took place including sessions with professionals and academics, round table sessions that focused on discussion between delegates, endless opportunities for networking and of course Plenary and associated sessions surrounding the main purpose of Congress: to act as the AGM for the CFES. The theme of this year's congress was 'The Lifestyle of the Engineer' which was meant to cover both the realities that we will face as the future engineers in a changing society and the fact that Engineering is more than just a 'job' but really a different way of life.

2. Personal Goals for Conference

I went to Congress excited at the opportunity to experience so many new things simultaneously. I had never been to a conference before, did not know much about the CFES, really was still in the grey area of what Engineering really meant (as I presume a lot of us are) and hadn't really had any big involvement with our Guelph Engsoc since I had started my program. Hence I looking to gain knowledge on the CFES, a better scope of Engineering as a profession and as a program at different institutions and make my first steps into the 'extracirricular side' of Engineering.

3. Summary of Events

- **CFES for Dummies**
 - "Since 1969, CFES has been a Canadian community strengthened and enriched by a nationally diverse engineering student body. To enhance student life, the CFES facilitates communication, the sharing of ideas, and the exchange of information between member schools. To ensure that students grow both personally and professionally, the CFES keeps abreast of the changes taking place in society affecting engineering students and the engineering profession. To promote the innovative and gifted student body, the CFES also actively promotes and showcases outstanding student achievements. By fulfilling these goals, the CFES is a unified voice for students both nationally and internationally, and assists in ensuring that Canadian engineering students grow and prosper in the 21st century."
(cfes.ca)

- 4 activities of the CFES: Canadian Engineering Competition, Project Magazine (currently centered at UWO), Congress and the Presidents Meeting
- 2 of our international partners:
 - i. bonding: a student initiative that primarily organizes large scale Job Fairs throughout several locations in Germany
 - ii. BEST (Board of European Students of Technology): 81 local groups in 30 countries; primarily run a large amount of academic and non-academic courses

- **GLBT Issues in Engineering Programs**
 - roundtable to discuss the presence of the Gay-Lesbian-Bi-Transgender (etc.) community within Canadian schools, specifically in the Engineering
 - two girls from Carleton ran the session; they help run the 'Q' group at their school which is a club for the GLBT community and friends
 - Q was chosen for the name because it represents so many things in Engineering (e.g. flow)
 - this group is for Engineers specifically
 - they mainly organize social events (e.g. video games night, bar nights)
 - this group was an idea from the President (?) of the Carleton Engsoc after he came out in his final year of school and shared his story (promoted understanding etc. within the engineering community)
 - all other schools at the round table did not have Engineering specific GLBT groups at their schools, as does our school (OUTline, Guelph Queer Equality, CampOut, SpeakOut)

- **Career Fair Roundtable**
 - round table to discuss how different Engsoc run their career fairs (Guelph Engsoc doesn't run our own one due to our smaller faculty but we have access to the general career fair run by the University)
 - University of Alberta runs a fairly large fair over two days, as does Concordia and Waterloo (could we get involved there?)
 - charge companies to come (makes profit for society), set up tables for them etc.
 - bonding = amazing work with career fairs
 - pull from a database of companies, have good contact with them
 - charges companies almost 2000 pounds/day for 8m²
 - huge fairs (up to 200 companies)
 - volunteers help run the fair, use an external company for set up etc.
 - discussion about CFES creating a website link for companies that are looking for students

- **Counselling Services Discussion**
 - round table to discuss how Engineering societies assist with issues of being in such a stressful program and what we can do to help with these issues

- Waterloo was the only school present that had a separate counseling services for the Engineering students (personal counseling); Waterloo has dealt with some suicides in the program and that's why they are pushing the counseling so much
 - there should be an effort made to decrease the taboo surrounding counseling within our Engineering student population because counseling services are extremely important; not much discussion was done on how this could be done and should be something Guelph should look into (for example the promotion of the Student Support Network and an effort to increase awareness of what UoG Counseling Services does etc.)
- **Involvement**
 - Roundtable to discuss how to promote Engsoc and get people involved
 - Involvement/understanding of the CFES: whose responsibility is it to spread the word, the CFES or the Engsoc?
 - Shared partnership
 - Application processes for conferences: are they too directed towards the Engsoc clique?
 - Engsoc members are generally the right type of people for these conferences
 - Look into getting different types of people to apply – make the engineering student community more aware of these opportunities
 - People already involved in their Engsoc are typically too busy to add more to their plate
 - How to keep CFES position holders to stay for their entire term?
 - split the work between more positions
 - more information on the dedication/time needed before the positions are run for
 - change the timeline of the positions
 - making the positions more visible earlier (get people thinking about what is involved so they don't double book with work etc.; these positions are usually taken up by graduating students who are about to enter the work force)
 - having people shadow positions so they are trained and aware enough to step in when needed
 - How to keep students enthusiastic about CFES year-round?
 - more events = more visible
 - VP externals are the main tie between Engsoc and the CFES
 - Complementary education courses
 - Merchandising
 - CFES officers at each school
 - Job portals on the website
 - More regional conferences
 - the idea of creating an 'Engineering First Years Coles Notes' was also brought up; would be hard to implement as the programs differ in Quebec where they have CEGEP

- **NCWIE**

- National Conference for Women in Engineering!
- Was started at Queen's and run for many years there; last year took place at UWO where it was very successful (over 30 speakers, over 100 delegates)
- Female enrollment is currently decreasing (18% female in undergraduate programs and 6% in the industry)
- Outreach is needed at an early age as there isn't presence of the field available for Engineering like there is for Medicine etc. (at the UWO conference, delegates were able to work on an outreach program with students in grade 6 from local schools)
- NCWIE is a very flexible conference to host: you choose your own theme, audience, budget (usually between 13-25 000)
- NCWIE would like to be adopted as a service (versus activity) of the CFES (motion passed later on that week)
 - Want CFES support so there can be a better bidding system for the conference and ensure that there the content is at par and there is a national representation at the conferences
- Some delegates there brought about the concerns that events like NCWIE are discriminatory and need to be broadened so that they are useful for more than just female engineers
 - As well, because the conferences have always been in Ontario, they seem to have been very focused on Ontario's issues etc.; move the conference around so it is more accessible

- **Public Policy**

- Speaker (Manager of Government Relations, Engineers Canada) covered what Engineers Canada does with government to bring light to engineering issues
- Engineers Canada regulates the profession, licenses engineers and is non-partisan
- There are only 6 engineers in the house of commons
- Started a grassroots program (volunteer based) which enhances the awareness of the profession and it's issues
 - Volunteers get in touch with their local government and speak with them regarding Engineering (politicians are scared of Engineering because they don't understand; once they do they realize how useful we are!)
 - Core issues: foreign credentials, infrastructure, climate change, mobility, licensing of federal engineering employees

- **Accreditation**

- Engineers Canada created the Canadian Engineering Accreditation Board; all members are volunteers
 - this board accredits undergraduate engineering programs, advises universities, advises Engineers Canada on academic issues, looks at

other countries to make sure that our programs are equivalent and acceptable on the global basis

- Washington Accord (signed 1989): “international agreement among bodies responsible for accrediting engineering degree programs. It recognizes the substantial equivalency of programs accredited by those bodies and recommends that graduates of programs accredited by any of the signatory bodies be recognized by the other bodies as having met the academic requirements for entry to the practice of engineering” (washingtonaccord.org)
 - Includes Us, Ireland, UK etc.

- **What Does Your School Do Best?**

- Guelph: teeter-totter-athon, Corn Roast
- UOttawa: some crazy bar hopping night where everyone makes terrible decisions (e.g. self piercing), DUSTED
- Concordia has a frosh t-shirt that doubles as a waiver form
- UofT’s advice: make friends with the campus police, do everything ‘underground’, create a group of anon. people that do stuff for Engsoc but are totally unrelated
- UCalgary/Alberta(?): snow-golf
 - o Go out to the middle of nowhere
 - o Competition to see who can shoot the tennis ball the furthest without throwing (e.g. building a very unsafe looking cannon)
- Western: Meat-Fest (similar to corn roast but with meat...)
- UVic: Keggers
 - o Pay the people to use their house, Engsoc cleans up the next morning
- Queen’s: frosh week
 - Costs \$150/student
 - Grease pole!
 - Have to work closely with faculty and even lawyers to ensure their events are permitted

- **Your First Job!**

- Going out to the work force to figure out what you want is recommended before entering grad school
- On your first job you may be the specialist in a certain area of knowledge
- Go to meetings to keep tabs on what the company is up to, you might up being useful on other projects etc.
- New Grad programs: maximum experience in minimum time; sometimes it’s hard to complete projects and the pay is less
- If you don’t know ASK!
- A lot of engineers don’t go into engineering – it opens a ton of doors (e.g. aerospace engineering + medical school = space doctor!)
- Soft skills, soft skills, soft skills → IMPORTANT!

4. Evaluation

i) Conference Organizers

As a Congress first-timer I really didn't have much to compare this event to. I noticed that there were some problems with organization but I don't think they had an effect big enough to really cause any harm to the conference overall. I was a little bit disappointed about how much the conference was centered towards members of Engsoc, but that is just the nature of Congress and I was prepared for this before attending.

ii) Delegate

After attending Congress I understand the CFES and what it does. I am glad to see that Engineering students from across the country are so into Engineering, so involved and enthusiastic and of course generally wicked awesome people. I attended as many sessions as I could while I was there, got involved in discussions, made sure to meet lots of people and remained enthusiastic the whole week through. So I do believe I attained all the goals I set out for myself going into Congress. Next time I head to a conference I think it would be beneficial to really read up on what will be going on and prepare some questions etc. beforehand. Although I loved Congress I think I would like to check out some other Engineering conferences that are less geared towards Engsoc.