

## COMSOC'S STRATEGIC PLAN

Dear fellow ComSoc members:

It is my privilege to serve as your president for the next two years. I pledge to try my best to make ComSoc better: more inclusive, more influential in the area of communications and networks and of greater service to its members. For 2018-2019, I chaired the Strategic Planning Committee of ComSoc. The Society developed and approved at the BoG meeting at Globecom a strategic plan<sup>1</sup> which is summarized below. The main thrusts of the strategic plan are:

1. Reshape technical balance of and expand portfolio from Physical to Application Layers involving computing and services/applications.
2. Re-engage the industry and recruit new members working toward academic and industry balance in ALL portfolio.
3. Promote diversity in gender, geography and discipline in leadership positions and nurture new blood in the pipeline.

The plan will undergo continuous updates as new opportunities and emphases arise. No strategic plan will be useful unless there is a companion execution plan. It is becoming clear that certain thrusts will require extraordinary measures to achieve success. Broadening the network portfolio will require leaders with diverse multi-disciplinary knowledge, and alliances with other societies and councils are critical. The appointments of the appointed BoG members were done with these attributes and goals in mind.

Early in 2018, ComSoc's Board of Governors approved the following revisions to our Vision Statement and Mission Statement:

**Vision:** To bring the world together in harmony through communications and networking technology research, application, education, and incubation of new ideas.

**Mission:** The IEEE Communications Society promotes technological innovation and fosters creation and sharing of information among the global technical community. The Society provides services to members for their technical and professional advancement and forums for technical exchanges among professionals in academia, industry, and public institutions.

**A summary of the Strategic Plan:** There was a strong desire to make the inputs be as heterogeneous and broadly based as possible resulting in the following actions being taken by the committee:

1. Met with strategic planning committee several times via in person meetings and teleconferences.
2. Contacted selected members and leaders to solicit inputs.
3. Reached out to members of other societies unofficially for inputs (within IEEE and beyond).
4. Attended ComSoc local chapter meetings to discuss the role of local chapters within the strategic plan especially pertaining to member relations and recruitment.
5. Obtained reliable data on membership and analyzed trends.
6. Assessed status of actions taken by previous strategic planning committees.
7. Solicited ComSoc staff inputs.
8. Assessed volunteer/staff relationships and operations and recommended improvements.

The current strategic plan has evolved and further developed substantially from a plan from 2016/2017. The following cap-



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tures the three main thrusts of current plan:

**1. Reshape the technical balance and expand the portfolio:**

- a. Encompass physical to application layers.
- b. Include necessary touching disciplines of computing, signal processing, etc.
- c. Explore and incorporate new tools, e.g. AI, cognitive techniques, analytics.
- d. Energize/reshape Technical Committees (TCs) and Emerging Technology Committee Initiatives (ETCs), and augment with ad hoc committees to carry out the strategic plan.
- e. Reach out and make alliances with other societies when necessary to carry out broad agendas.

**2. Re-engage industry and recruit new members:**

- a. Increase industry participation in conferences and publications.
- b. Improve industry/academia interactions.

- c. Activate membership drives; increase value propositions for members, especially industry members.

- d. Invigorate and revive local chapters.

**3. Promote diversity in gender, geography, and discipline in leadership positions:**

- a. Through BoG appointments.
- b. Increase pipeline to appointed and elected offices by providing training grounds and experience.
- c. Introduce shorter term limits to elected and appointed offices.

To **execute the strategic plan**, a BoG retreat was held January 9-10, 2020 to translate the strategic thrusts to operational plans. The execution of a strategic plan should be the responsibility of the BoG including the President, VPs and standing and ad hoc committees led by Members at Large (MALs.) While putting together the slate of the appointed BoG positions, we have been actively seeking volunteers who are well matched to the thrusts discussed in the strategic plan. Working with other societies and councils will constitute a significant fraction of new activities. Many of the new BoG appointments have excellent multi-society contacts and a significant fraction belong to multiple societies. The activities within each initiative will have a detailed plan with well-articulated expectations. The end game should be a sustainable direction for the Society without requiring a constant high-level drain of resources (volunteer and staff time and funds).

Finally, a vitally important element of the plan is improved volunteer/staff communications, operational efficiencies, trust, and collaborations. New and enhanced channels of communications will be explored. The new ComSoc Executive Director embraces this new openness and significant improvements in communications already have been observed. To facilitate timely actions, each initiative should be led by a volunteer and assigned a staff member as the point of focus for execution rather than always working through top management. The volunteers will work much more closely with the staff and the staff will keep track of action items with a clear understanding of the intentions and desires of the stakeholders and deadlines for execution. It is imperative that ComSoc provides a warm and welcoming atmosphere for its constituents. ComSoc's vibrant growth toward the future must be built on goodwill and a harmonious environment. Short of progressive reforms, execution of any strategic plan will not be effective. We look forward to your active participation in the upcoming transformative two years.

<sup>1</sup> <https://www.comsoc.org/media/10606>