



## The IEEE Signal Processing Society Needs Your Talent — Become an SPS Volunteer

**T**he IEEE Signal Processing Society (SPS) is an international organization whose purpose is to advance and disseminate state-of-the-art scientific information and resources, educate the SP community, and provide a venue where people can interact and exchange ideas. To achieve its mission, the SPS relies heavily on volunteers working in the area of SP, governed by collaborative organizational practices in decision making that are transparent and fair. By bringing volunteers together, the SPS catalyzes advances in the field of SP in its pursuit of excellence.

This article is a call to SPS members to use their talents and ideas for the advancement of SP by becoming SPS volunteers. There are many opportunities, with varying levels of responsibility, for individuals to be involved in this way.

For example, one can be a local SPS activity organizer or Chapter chair, a reviewer of papers submitted to a journal/conference, an associate editor for a journal, a member of a workshop or conference organizing committee, a mentor to students and young professionals, a member of various SPS boards and committees, and more. There are also technical leadership opportunities, such as a role in a technical committee (TC), standards activities, Distinguished Lecturer (DL) and Distinguished Industry

Speaker (DIS) positions, and liaisons and representatives who focus on specific areas of study within the SP field. Our Society is international—all of these volunteering activities help build interpersonal and multicultural skills.

Volunteers who sit on SPS boards play a key role in shaping the Society's present and future. The boards and committees oversee long-term and day-to-day activities. Alongside the Board of Governors and Executive Committee, the Society has established boards that oversee award activities, technical directions, education, publications, conferences, and membership, and there are numerous standing committees that oversee Chapter, women's, and students' and young professionals' activities as well as member subgroups and more. These are opportunities to interact with notable SP professionals in academia, industry, and policy-making institutions as well as grow personal leadership skills.

Becoming an SPS volunteer is a great way to get exposed to cutting-edge research trends, build a professional network, promote one's own research, and exercise leadership in where the field of SP is heading. In addition to all of this, SPS involvement carries prestige that can strengthen one's curriculum vitae or résumé. This is because volunteer appointments are vetted by one or more SPS bodies.

For example, to become a member of an SPS TC, one first needs to be nomi-

nated. Then, a vote is conducted among the current members, and new TC members are selected based on the number of votes they receive, following a rigorous selection process. TC membership is a clear recognition of one's contribution to the field and evidence of one's technical leadership. Every TC member has the opportunity to contribute ideas that can introduce emerging trendsetting research areas and promote current ones; add to the educational content of emerging areas; organize workshops, special issues in journals, conferences, or summer schools; and nominate candidates for DL and DIS positions as well as all levels of SPS awards.

DLs and DISs are individuals who are recognized experts in the field of SP and generously give back to the community by giving lectures at Chapter meetings. Being an SPS DL or DIS is also an honor that is bestowed to an SPS member after a substantial vetting and approval process by the Awards Board and Board of Governors.

### Diversity

Our Society draws its power from a global community of volunteers who contribute unique perspectives and ideas. The SPS recognizes the diversity of that community as its greatest resource and a driving force of innovation and productivity. Following IEEE, the SPS is committed to providing a welcoming environment to its members regardless of their race,

gender, sexual orientation, ethnicity, or socioeconomic status. Our Society takes very seriously the IEEE policy that prohibits discrimination, harassment, and bullying, and all volunteers are subject to that policy.

Given the SPS's commitment to achieving diversity, we have devoted a lot of effort in attracting female volunteers and adopted the Women in Engineering pledge to ensure gender diversity in all SPS boards, committees, and events. Although there is still much to be desired, our proportion of women to men across our boards and committees is higher than the same ratio for our membership, which is around 11%.

While we are making progress in appreciating the challenges women encounter when trying to be integrated, in the past, we have not paid enough attention to the issues LGBTQ+ people face. Such underrepresented groups experience a range of hardships, from misgendering, to job insecurity, to violent hate crimes and prosecution in some countries. We are already trying to take steps to increase inclusion. For example, we are working to ensure convenient gender-neutral bathrooms at all of our events and include pronouns on name tags and speaker bios. We are also planning to send out a survey to iden-

tify key problems in the community. However, we want to make sure that we can continue to make improvements for all marginalized populations, and we cannot do that without your valuable contribution.

Another inclusion issue that we plan to address is the underrepresentation of various parts of the world on our boards and committees. For example, while our membership has been growing the fastest in Region 10, representing 40% of the membership as of January 2022, the number of SPS volunteers from that Region is rather small.

The SPS is actively developing procedures that will generate nominations from Region 10, is now setting meeting hours that do not always burden volunteers from that Region, and will devote staff support during working hours in that area.

There are also geographical areas underrepresented among our volunteers because the SPS membership in those Regions is too low. To focus on such areas, the SPS has implemented developing-nation and low-income-economies pricing for SPS membership dues. We are actively considering new initiatives to target underserved populations. One of these, the SPS PROGRESS (PRO-motinG DiveRsity in Signal ProcESS-ing) Workshop, aims to motivate and

support women and underrepresented groups in pursuing academic careers in SP and offers grants for aspiring as well as current members to attend.

Industry is also not well represented on our boards and committees, despite the fact that 42% of SPS members come from industry. We are now actively looking into meaningful ways to get these individuals to become part of the decision-making process by accommodating their participation in meetings via telepresence. Industry volunteers are instrumental, as we are planning significant industry- and entrepreneurial-focused activities at our conferences.

You can find out how you can become a volunteer by contacting the volunteer leaders or SPS staff or visiting <https://signalprocessingsociety.org/community-involvement/volunteer-opportunities>. I look forward to seeing a more diverse volunteer body, and, as always, I welcome your comments and suggestions.

### Acknowledgment

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SP

**Our Society draws its power from a global community of volunteers who contribute unique perspectives and ideas.**

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