



The

Windy City Wire

Society of Women Engineers Chicago Regional Section

SWE-CRS President's Letter – April/May 2010

Email: swecrs-president@swe.org

Dear SWE-CRS Members:

Since my Christmas letter to you, a lot has happened, both to me and to SWE-CRS. As many of you know, on Feb. 16, my home was the victim of incompetent construction crews and emergency response workers here in northern Indiana. A gas leak outside my home, completely unrelated to my home, ultimately caused my home to explode and burn to the ground. Three other homes were destroyed by the fire as well. Thankfully, no one was injured, but my husband and I did lose our beloved pet rabbits. Many of you generously contributed to a gift to help us recover, and for that we are truly grateful. We are so blessed to be in circles of generous and loving friends who have made this terrible time much easier. We wish we could thank each of you individually. I am also so blessed to have some wonderful SWE-CRS officers who operated in such a wonderful manner that I didn't have to worry about the section in the immediate aftermath of the tragedy.

And that brings me to my real point for this newsletter -- the wonderful officers who make our section run every day. To put on the level of programming you read about in this newsletter, on our web site and in e-mail blasts requires more than just the ten elected officers. It requires a team of about 30 people, working together for the good of the section and for the benefit of you, our 300 or so members. Right now, we are in the midst of developing a slate of candidates for FY11 officers. If you are interested in running for one of the three vice-president slots (membership and president-elect, professional development, outreach), one of the two secretary slots (communication, recording), treasurer or one of three or four section reps, please contact our nominating committee chair, Katie Amelio, at kamelio@ctlgroup.com as soon as possible.

If you are a little hesitant about a leadership position but would like to get involved, please contact the section at swe-crs@swe.org. We have plenty of committees needing leadership for next year, and plenty of former committee members and chairs to help you learn the ropes. Several long-time CRS members are moving on to regional or national roles, and we definitely need some new members to fill our leadership pipeline.

Please also take note of the special SWE 60th Birthday Party and the Awards Banquet information listed elsewhere in this newsletter. I hope to see all of you there!

Sincerely,

Cathy Pieronek

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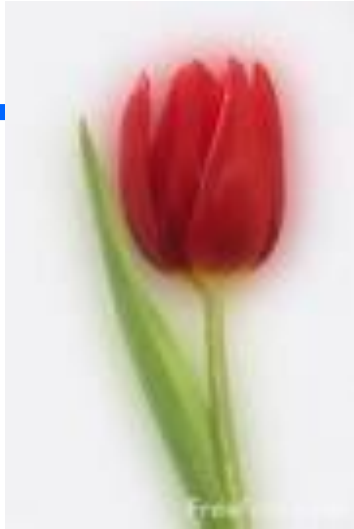
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Returning to Graduate School

by Diane Peters

Four years ago, as a member of the Chicago Regional Section of SWE, I prepared to say goodbye to friends as I moved to another state to return to school. This wasn't the first time I had gone back to school; in 1996, I started attending night classes at the University of Illinois at Chicago, and received my masters' degree in 2000. Both of these experiences have been challenging, and I'll readily admit I didn't entirely know what I was getting into either time when I decided to go back to school. It is possible, though, for a returning student to be successful, and many people have done it. Several of my friends within SWE have done so, and several of my friends and lab-mates at the University of Michigan have had interruptions in their education. Many other people have considered returning to school; when Anne Lucietto and I presented at the SWE National Conference in Long Beach on the topic of "Success and Challenges as a Returning Student", those who attended the talk seemed very interested. So, if you've been considering going back to school, I hope this advice will be helpful to you.

- **Know your motivation before you begin**
 - look at schools, investigate programs, debate full-time versus part-time study - consider your motivation. This will help not just in choosing the right program and school, but in getting you through tough times.
 - When you're struggling or frustrated, remind yourself why you're doing it, and how worthwhile your success will be. You can define success by any standard you like – decide what is most important to you. You may be trying to advance at work; one woman I know chose to pursue a Ph.D. because she works at a major university, and was unable to be a Principal Investigator on grants without a doctorate. In some companies, an advanced technical degree is a path to promotion; getting an MBA may be required to move into management positions in some companies. Other people have chosen to pursue a degree to qualify for a career change or re-direction. Or, returning to school may simply be a personal goal. My mother earned her initial bachelor's degree, in mathematics, at the traditional college age, right after high school, but later chose to get a second bachelor's degree when her children had grown up, simply because she wanted to learn more about computer science and couldn't take enough courses as a non-degree student.
 - Once you know why you're going back to school, you're better equipped to face the challenges ahead.
- **Re-establish contact with professors you've known**
 - Contact professors you knew the last time you were in school, particularly if you're planning on a research-based graduate degree in your field. They'll be able to tell you things that you can't find on a school's website, such as the fact that their colleague at another university is starting up a research program in an area that interests you, or that "Professor Smith is known as a good mentor to returning students." They can also suggest funding sources. When I was going back to school for my Ph.D., one of my undergraduate professors suggested that I apply for a fellowship from the National Science Foundation. I didn't get that fellowship; however, I never would have known that it existed without his advice.
 - If you've been out for an extremely long time, you may not be able to re-establish contact with former professors; the majority of them may be retired, or perhaps even deceased. In that case, you can make new contacts in the academic world. Your professional society contacts can help with this; let people know what you need, and your network can find people who can advise you.

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- **Plan for the need to review, refresh, and re-learn material**
 - One of the challenges I ran into when I started my Ph.D. was my knowledge of Matlab, a program that's widely used in many engineering schools. I had used Matlab before; Unfortunately, I didn't consider WHEN I had used it. I don't remember the precise year, but it ran from a DOS command line. Half of what I knew, I had forgotten – and the other half had changed! Fortunately, my younger classmates were willing to help me out, and I was able to come up to speed. Other students have found that laboratory equipment in their field advanced and they had to learn how to use things that younger students knew well. Finally, a friend of mine struggled in a class she had taken previously; however, the state of the art had advanced, and the equivalent class today included material that simply didn't exist when she was an undergraduate.
 - Fortunately, many people are willing to help you come up to speed. Younger students are often willing to show you how to use the equipment, or what the new software does. Professors are happy to tell you what the undergraduate text was for a given subject, and once they understand the challenges you're facing, they can often recommend a few key topics that you can review before class starts. In cases where the deficiency is more severe, I've known students who have audited classes they took fifteen years ago, or who sat in on particular parts of a class to help dust off the cobwebs.
- **Whenever possible, “kill two birds with one stone”**
 - If you're a part-time student, you may be able to combine a school project with work. For example, a friend of mine in the business school was able to use a project from work as a school project. This isn't always possible, both because of the types of projects and because of possible confidentiality issues, but it can be helpful when it is. If you're a full-time student working on a thesis for your degree, you may be able to combine class projects with part of your thesis. For example, a friend of mine who was taking an optimization class had to do a class project; she was planning to optimize a particular design in the course of her research, so that became her class project. In the case of group projects, this can be difficult if everyone wants the group to work on their research; but even if you can only do this in one or two classes, it can be a useful time-saver.
- **Build a support network**
 - Every successful returning student I've known has had a group of friends, family, colleagues, classmates, and professors who have encouraged and supported them. Going back to school is a major commitment of time and effort. It is much easier with a support network to provide encouragement when things are tough, advice on what to do, and information on available resources.
 - Having a support network can also help as you plan for various life situations – what do you do if your child is sick during exam week? If you're a part-time student, can you avoid business travel at critical times, and if not, how do you handle this? While in my masters' program, I had jobs that did not require travel, but one of my classmates did have to travel at times, and he relied on those of us who were always in class to get a copy of the notes to him. In the course of my Ph.D. program, an elderly dog of mine became terminally ill, and I relied heavily on friends and fellow students' support when I had to re-arrange my schedule to deal with his end-of-life care.
- **Know what resources are available**
 - At some schools, student parents can get assistance with child care. There may be support groups for “chronologically advantaged” students, loan programs, assistance with tax issues, graduate student parent groups, assistance for students with disabilities, free parking at remote lots with bus service, tutoring services, and a wide variety of other resources. If you need something, look around and see what's available.
 - Going back to school isn't easy, but if you're motivated to pursue further study, it's definitely worth it. It's more challenging, in some ways, when you've been out for a while, but those challenges can be planned for and overcome. If you're thinking of going back, ask around and you'll find colleagues who have done it – some after just a few years, others who have been out for much longer. There's no reason you can't do it, too.

SWE-CRS would also like to encourage you to share your own stories and articles for publication in this newsletter. Email your submissions to the newsletter editor – kate.jakubas@swe.org

Get To Know SWE Night

This year, Sargent and Lundy hosted the Get to Know SWE Night event.

Look for details about this event ! This April edition of the newsletter will be updated on the SWE website when information about the event is available, or, look for it in the next newsletter!

Don't forget, you can submit article about recent SWE events or other recent events of interest to SWE members. Email kate.jakubas@swe.org.

Right: one of the houses in the Frank Lloyd Wright Historic District in Oak Park.



Below: SWE members and friends stop for a photo while enjoying the tour.

Frank Lloyd Wright in Oak Park

On Sunday, February 28, 2010, a group of SWE-CRS members went on a guided tour of the Frank Lloyd Wright Historic District located in Oak Park, Illinois. The day began with a stroll through the neighborhood that showcases some of Wright's earliest work. Our guide shared stories about the families that commissioned the homes, some as investments, and some as wedding gifts. Through these stories we became acquainted with Wright in the early stages of his career.

Next we went on an interior tour of the Frank Lloyd Wright Home and Studio where Wright lived and worked between 1889 and 1909. The studio, which was added in 1898, is where Wright developed his uniquely American architecture, the Prairie style, which is inspired by the Midwestern prairies. The Home and Studio is restored to how it appeared in 1909, that last year Wright lived and worked there.

We would like to thank the Frank Lloyd Wright Preservation Trust for this informative tour.

Submitted by Shelly Gould



Ski Trip at Cascade Mountain with Burns & McDonnell

Burns & McDonnell extended an invitation to SWE-CRS members to participate in a group ski trip on Saturday, February 20th, to Cascade Mountain in Portage, Wisconsin. SWE members Rebekah Schulenberg and Mandy Wong attended the group ski event. Rebekah and Mandy carpooled together and enjoyed a unique opportunity to network and get to know each other. They had a great time and enjoyed a beautiful day that was perfect for skiing! This trip showed that even the smallest events can bring positive experiences to SWE members.

Submitted by: Rebekah Schulenberg

Mommy's Corner

Tips for Full Time Employees, Wives and Mothers

It is important to remember patience and understanding when you are a full time employee, wife and mother. We live in a time where women truly are capable of having it all. While we are making our long climb up the ladder; however, we want to remember that it is very important to be a good role model to our children and to teach them patience, understanding and grace. The pointers below are helpful even for working women that don't have children.

- 1. Be mindful of other people's feelings.** It is important to truly listen and HEAR what others are trying to tell you. This is important both at home and at work. Getting what you want isn't worth it if you hurt others along the way.
- 2. Be creative with the tools that your company offers and use them to your advantage.** It is also important that your kids see how committed you are to them. Sometimes you are just going to have to leave work in order to be with your kids. Be assertive with co-workers and let them know that you have other commitments. Let them know that you will get them what they need but that you have to leave at the moment. If your company offers internet webmail and networks, make sure that you utilize them to your full benefit. It is ok to log on after your kids go to sleep.
- 3. Be assertive, not angry, with your needs.** Write down the main points of the conversation that you need to have with the other person and let them know that you would like to have the floor until you are finished with your points. Refrain from yelling, being passive aggressive or sulking. Assertiveness is a way that we can communicate what is on our minds in a direct and clear manner, without allowing our emotions to cloud the meaning or tone of our words.
- 4. Learn to fight the important battles.** It is much less exhausting and time consuming to gracefully accept things that you don't like than to fight for hours about it or show anger around your kids. I guarantee that other people in your life are doing the same thing. When an issue becomes a hindrance, remember pointer 3.
- 5. Realize that sometimes it is ok to "throw away your money".** When I was younger, I didn't understand why anyone would want to pay others to do everyday work like cleaning, cooking, etc. A couple of years ago; however, my husband and I gave in to hiring a professional house cleaner because we were overwhelmed with him starting a business. It was the best money that we ever committed to spending every other week. It is such a treat to come home and find our house in spic and span condition and our weekends have opened up significantly. We no longer have to worry about scheduling in a massive house cleaning. This may not be what is needed for everyone, but if you are feeling overwhelmed, take a step back and consider if hiring someone to help you will make your life a little bit easier.

Submitted by: Rebekah Schulenberg



About C²ST

Our Mission

C²ST seeks to be the preeminent regional consortium for science- and technology-related education and policy and a prominent voice nationally.

Goals

- To be a voice and advocate for the scientific community in the metropolitan Chicago area.
- To enhance the public understanding and appreciation of science and technology (S&T) through public discussions of emerging and important S&T policy issues.
- To provide opportunities for members of the scientific community to meet each other and develop a greater sense of identity.
- To link academic, business, and public policy leaders to build consensus for science education, technology innovation, and robust knowledge-economy growth in Chicago and the Midwest.
- To maintain a working relationship with the science journalism community in the metropolitan Chicago area, providing special briefings on selected emerging issues.
- To attract new science, engineering and technology based industries to the Chicagoland area.

Learn more about c2st, including upcoming events and how to join their email list or become a member, at www.c2st.org

SWE 60th Birthday and CRS Year-End Party

Date: Wednesday, May 26, 2010

Time: 7:00-9:00 PM

Location: Sullivan's Steakhouse, 415 North Dearborn, Chicago, IL

Cost: \$15/person plus cash bar

Food/Drinks: Appetizers, SWE Birthday Cake, Coffee, Tea, and Soft Drinks

Who is Invited: SWE members and guests are welcome to attend

RSVP Deadline: Wednesday, May 19, 2010 at <http://www.swe.org/chicago/SWE60.html>

Come celebrate SWE's 60th anniversary and the CRS year-end party! We'll have appetizers and birthday cake to celebrate another successful year with CRS and 60 years with SWE.

The evening will consist of networking, CRS membership awards, recognition of FY10 CRS officers and committee chairs, and most importantly cutting the SWE birthday cake!

In honor of the SWE 60th Anniversary "Defining Success on Your Own Terms," we will ask you during the party to write down one way that SWE has helped you achieve success on your own terms. Door prizes will be given to randomly selected SWE success story participants.

Questions? Contact Karen Bireta at karen.bireta@swe.org



SAVE THE DATE!
2010 SWE-CRS Annual Awards Banquet

Date: Thursday, June 10, 2010
Location: The Metropolitan Club,
Willis Tower, 67th Floor, Chicago, IL
Time: Networking, 6:00 – 6:30 pm
Dinner, 6:30pm

The Awards Banquet is a great time for SWE members to meet, network, and celebrate a successful year. We will congratulate our scholarship recipients and thank our corporate sponsors. We will also award the CRS section awards, which consist of the Key Contributor Award, Consistent Contributor Award, Fund Development Award, National Contributions Award, Technical Award, SWE-CRS Section Outstanding New Engineer Award, Significant Supporter Award, and Newcomer Award. The Awards Banquet is also where we award the Golden Family and Collegiate Sections awards.

Our keynote speaker will be Nora Lin. Nora is a Senior Life member of Society of Women Engineers (SWE) and is currently serving as SWE FY10 President. She has broad working experience in engineering and has worked for more than 26 years in the defense industry. Nora is the manager of Supportability Engineering at Northrop Grumman Electronic Systems, in Rolling Meadows, Illinois. Nora was a recipient of Women of Color in Technology Career Achieve Award in 2008 and Asian American Engineer of the Year Award in 2009. In addition, Nora received numerous awards and recognitions from SWE-CRS and Region H.

Tickets are \$50 per person, \$90 per couple, and \$40 per student/unemployed. Invitations to follow soon!

Did you know that the Chicago Regional Section was chartered on March 15, 1952?

Looking for Historical SWE-CRS Information

Are you a SWE member who hasn't been around lately? Do you have valuable information from past years? The historian committee is actively trying to compile historical CRS information. If you have any information, including old officer lists, newsletters, and photos, please email them to swe-crs@swe.org, or mail to:

Society of Women Engineers
Chicago Regional Section
P. O. Box 95525
Palatine , IL 60095-0525

Historian's Corner

Contribute to the Newsletter!

The SWE-CRS newsletter depends on your contributions! We'd love to have your articles and submissions!

Kate Jakubas, the newsletter editor for FY10, can be reached at kate.jakubas@swe.org