



# **Wisconsin Society of Professional Engineers**

*A state society of the National Society of Professional Engineers*

## WSPE eNews

A publication from the Wisconsin Society of Professional Engineers

**October 2017 Edition**



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### **1. WSPE President-Elect's Message**

By: Martin Hanson, P.E.



#### **WSPE President's Message October 2017**

Welcome to WSPE!

Greetings WSPE Members! Introducing myself, my name is Martin Hanson and I was elected by write-in to serve as the WSPE President-Elect for 2017-2018. Since we do not have a current society president, I will also be serving as Acting President. I recently retired from a 40-year career in private consulting, federal government, and municipal government. I currently do a limited amount of consulting in the areas of transportation public policy and project management. I also teach at the undergraduate level at the University of Wisconsin Eau Claire. I am a past member and chairman of the Wisconsin Examining Board of Architects, Landscape Architects, Professional Engineers, Designers and Professional Land Surveyors and the Engineer Section of the

joint board. I like to spend my free time near Hayward, Wisconsin; preferably on the lake!

As we begin another year for WSPE, I would like to take a moment to thank Ed Rodden, for his service to WSPE. Ed served as the society's executive director for over six years. Ed has decided to pursue other interests as of June 30, 2017.

Our executive director position is currently vacant. For 2017-2018 the executive committee has decided to operate without an executive director position--we will operate on an all-volunteer basis. We have divided duties of the executive director among the current executive committee. We need additional volunteer help more than ever; if you have the slightest interest in lending a hand, please contact us. Many hands make light work for all.

I have not set any BHAGs (Big Hairy Audacious Goals, from Built to Last) for the coming year. Evaluating the executive director position will consume a fair amount of time and effort. We are open to all ideas from members. We will explore hiring a replacement, using volunteer(s), and partnering with other organizations, among others.

The society must also be vigilant on all impacts to licensure. We will continue to energetically advocate and monitor legislation that promotes the public health, safety, and welfare.

The executive board will look at the traditional major events during the year and strive to maintain the Discovery Conference, Governors New Product Award, and MATHCOUNTS. To pursue these great events will require members to step forward to help organize and facilitate the actual events. We need you!

WSPE has been sustained for quite some time now on the backs of a very small group of officers and volunteers. It is vitally important that we get more people actively involved in the governance and activities of WSPE to get fresh perspectives and ideas and lighten the load for everyone. The mission of WSPE to promote professional licensure and the ethical practice of engineering is critically important as we see more efforts to scale back regulation and drive down costs at the expense of quality and safety. Please help us continue this important mission by contacting one of the WSPE board members to discuss your interests and how you might be able to use your talents to serve WSPE.

If you have not picked up my theme for the year yet, here it is. To continue the success and important mission of WSPE will require more active participation from the membership. Please consider getting involved in WSPE by volunteering to work with one of our portfolio leaders, helping to plan and attend the Discovery Conference, assisting with the MATHCOUNTS competitions at the state or local level, participating in your local chapter activities, or even considering a leadership position at the state level. We are at a critical junction. It is not enough to simply pay your dues so you can claim membership, although that is still important. We need your active participation and active involvement to sustain WSPE and the many opportunities it creates for PEs in Wisconsin. We need to reach out to the education systems high schools, tech schools, and universities, to create more awareness of the PE credential and why it should be important to everyone; they use the infrastructure, products, and systems we create.

I look forward to serving you in 2017/2018. Let's make it a grand year! Send me your thoughts and ideas anytime at [HansonM@StarboardTackConsulting.com](mailto:HansonM@StarboardTackConsulting.com).

Martin Hanson, P.E.  
WSPE President-Elect  
WSPE Acting President

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## **2. Proposed New NSPE Membership Model**

**By: Jim Buggs, P.E.**

The National Society of Professional Engineers (NSPE), including the Board of Directors and the House of Delegates, has been working for some time to develop a membership model that will eliminate redundancies in administrative services between NSPE and its state societies, reduce billing errors, maintain an accurate and up-to-date member database, reduce administrative costs, and provide instant access for new members to the services NSPE and its state societies offer, all for a single uniform cost to each member. After approval by the House of Delegates at the NSPE Annual Meeting this past July, NSPE is moving forward with the new model and will begin implementation on July 1, 2018 with a membership fee of \$299.

Up to this point, there has been a mix of membership models. Most states, including Wisconsin, have been part of an integrated model where NSPE invoices members and they automatically become members of the national and state societies and their local chapter (3-tier). Some states have allowed members to join as state-only members and some or all of the billing has been handled by the states, with attendant issues such as delays in billings and transfer of funds, multiple member databases with increased risk of errors and discrepancies, and delays in member access to services. This has also made it more difficult for members to join and to receive membership service since there is not always a single point of contact for signing up or getting help.

The new membership model allows states to choose an integrated model or a non-integrated model. The integrated model involves invoicing by NSPE, provides automatic 3-tier membership, and offers four different service levels so state societies can choose the one that best fits their needs. (For a description of these services, members can log in at [www.NSPE.org](http://www.NSPE.org) and find the document in the Leadership Toolbox under “Membership & Communities” at <https://www.nspe.org/sites/default/files/resources/pdfs/LeadershipToolbox/NSPE%20Value%20Propositionv4.pdf>

State societies with smaller membership and/or large geographic areas might opt for the Full Service package where NSPE provides a broad range of services that would be difficult or impossible for those state societies to provide on their own. States with large membership and significant internal capabilities might opt for the Basic Service package where NSPE provides a variety of services to ensure consistency among NSPE and the state societies, but the state society provides a major level of service to its members. A state society will receive a fixed portion of the \$299 member dues based on which service package it chooses.

The non-integrated model involves invoicing by NSPE for a national-only membership and invoicing by states for state memberships (in other words, members of non-integrated states will receive two membership invoices). Non-integrated states will operate administratively largely independent of NSPE, although national members in those states will still enjoy all the benefits of NSPE membership.

This has been a complicated and contentious issue and the proposed model is not ideal since it will still have NSPE and some state societies operating independently, but it will be a major improvement over the current system because it will completely separate the administration of state-only memberships. If you would like to learn more about the specifics of the membership model and background, there is additional information available on the “NSPE Proposed Membership Business Model” page of the website.

The State Board and the Executive Committee of the Wisconsin Society of Professional Engineers (WSPE) have been following and discussing this issue as it has worked its way through NSPE. The Board favors the integrated model, likely starting at the Premium Service level where we will receive significant assistance from NSPE. Since WSPE is a volunteer-run organization, our ability to move to the next level where we receive a larger portion of the dues and perform more of our own activities is dependent on you, the members of WSPE. Please consider volunteering to serve on a committee at the state level. We need help with our Legislative committee (V.P. Glen Schwalbach), Membership Committee (V.P. Brandon Ebent), and Education Committee (V.P. Larry Steingraber).

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### **3. Professional Engineers Group Reviews Audit of WisDOT's State Highway Program**

By: Glen Schwalbach, P.E.

The Board of Engineer's Professional Responsibility (BEPR), an independent body of the Wisconsin Society of Professional Engineers, was prompted to conduct a review of allegations by some state legislators and members of the media of unethical behavior by Wisconsin Department of Transportation (WisDOT) engineers. The allegations were made after a state audit was requested by and presented to the Joint Legislative Audit Committee (JLAC) by the Legislative Audit Bureau (LAB).

The audit report reviewed only the state highway program as administered by WisDOT. It included about two dozen recommendations to WisDOT for improvements and five considerations for the state legislature. It did not suggest any unethical behavior by WisDOT staff, but some public figures made comments suggesting otherwise.

Since 69% of the engineers at WisDOT are registered (licensed) Professional Engineers (P.E.) who are legally bound to protect public safety and welfare before their own gain,

the allegations of unethical behavior required review by BEPR.

BEPR's approach was to review the audit to see whether its findings could be a result of unethical professional behavior and to gather information from other sources who have insight into WisDOT processes and outcomes. If the review found the possibility of unethical behavior by any P.E.'s, a complaint would be filed with the Department of Safety and Professional Services for proper investigation.

The BEPR review found no evidence of unethical behavior. In fact, it found significant improvement of the state highway program since 2011. Cost overruns were reduced by 75%. Lean Government Programs were initiated and involved both engineer and non-engineer staff. The cost estimating process was modified and improved. More standardized processes were being rolled out to WisDOT's district offices. These initiatives are still works-in-progress but seem based on a foundation of continuous improvement.

Of the audit report's recommendations and considerations, one was to include estimates of inflation in the original cost estimates and in future updates. Many of the highway projects took between 18 to 25 years to design, obtain funding, complete environmental studies, acquire right-of-way, and construct. Inflation impacts can be significant over such a lengthy project period; however, it appears that past state legislatures, review committees, and governors did not require inflation estimates, but instead accepted inflation as one of the reasons given for overruns. The DOT was transparent by always indicating the original and updated estimates were in current year dollars.

The audit also addressed the WisDOT's own self-imposed performance measures and pointed out where the measures were not met. But they did not account for the fact that highway design and construction are imprecise, ever-changing, inherently unstable and unpredictable processes that cannot be measured by the strict application of performance measures or goals. The myriad of variables in the design and construction processes, including such things as public opinion, project funding, environmental regulations, changing design standards, variable site conditions, and unpredictable weather, make every project unique and challenging. While it is good practice to establish goals and evaluate performance on a regular basis, the limitations of specific performance measures must be acknowledged in an environment where variables cannot be as carefully controlled as they are in a manufacturing environment. If experienced experts do not make an informed response to a changed variable because they feel compelled to meet a performance measure, then safety, quality, and costs could be compromised.

The audit report was comprehensive as to the number of processes and policies that were reviewed but the two addressed above were the most notable for correcting the critics' misunderstanding. The full BEPR audit review report can be viewed at [wspe.org](http://wspe.org).

Glen R. Schwalbach, P.E., NSPE Fellow  
Contact: 920-680-2436, [genschwalbach@netzero.com](mailto:genschwalbach@netzero.com)

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## 4. Discovery Conference - Call for Volunteers

By: Brandon J. Ebent, P.E.

WSPE has heard your feedback and is hoping to hold a Discovery Conference in the spring or summer of 2018. With the July 31, 2018 License renewal fast approaching, this could be a great opportunity to earn some of those important final PDH's to help meet your continuing education obligations, not to mention a great chance to network with your fellow engineers.

In order to make this happen, we need your help. We are calling for volunteers to lead or be part of a planning committee. There is a significant amount of work required to organize an event like this, but if we can get a few people to pitch in, we can accomplish a lot. If you are interested in volunteering, please contact [brandon.ebent@foth.com](mailto:brandon.ebent@foth.com) or call 920-737-3792. Your response is appreciated by October 25th.

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## 5. EFW Scholarships Increased

Engineers Foundation of Wisconsin (EFW) voted to increase the number of college scholarships by 2 this year. The application period is now open and schools have been notified.

Since 1988, the Engineers Foundation of Wisconsin has been dedicated to providing scholarships and support to outstanding high school and college students pursuing engineering as a professional career.

Sponsored by the Wisconsin Society of Professional Engineers, the EFW promotes engineering education through annual scholarships. These scholarships are awarded on the basis of academic achievement, community involvement, and extracurricular activities.

### **EFW College Freshman Scholarships (for current high school seniors)**

The Engineering Foundation of Wisconsin Scholarships:, 4 scholarships, each \$2,000.

The WSPE Past Presidents Scholarship, 1 scholarship, \$2,000.

The Behling Scholarship, 2 scholarship, \$2,000.

The Louis C Geiger Scholarship, 3 scholarships, each \$2,000.

The Yu-Hwa Terry Ni FREE Program, \$2,000 awarded in 1 or 2 scholarships.

Charles H Bennett Memorial Scholarship: established and administered by the WSPE Fox River Valley chapter may also be awarded.

There are other scholarships that are awarded through the local WSPE chapters to the students in their geographic area.

### **EFW Scholarships for College Seniors**

Michael Odill Memorial Scholarship: awarded to a Marquette University senior in civil engineering.

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## 6. Other Important Information

The **Legislative Committee** monitors legislative activities that could impact professional engineers. Members might attend regulatory meetings, hearings, or legislative sessions, consult with legislators and their aides, and coordinate with other professional societies and trade associations. This is a critical aspect of WSPE, especially in light of recent attempts across the nation to limit or eliminate the role of the professional engineer, including one attempt to eliminate professional licensure altogether. Glen Schwalbach has been doing a tremendous with legislative activities, but he needs your help.

The **Membership Committee** works on recruitment and retention (R&R) of members as well as developing periodic surveys to measure member satisfaction and gather feedback. There is plenty of flexibility in how to accomplish membership R&R and we are looking for people with passion and creativity to share their talents with WSPE in this important mission.

The **Education Committee** oversees activities such as the Discovery Conference, Governor's New Product Awards, and MATHCOUNTS. These programs provide continuing education opportunities for members, help to showcase the work of some of Wisconsin's engineers, and help prepare the next generation to become part of the engineering profession and related fields.

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### **ARE YOU ACTIVE ON TWITTER?**

If so, we encourage you to follow our new Twitter account @WISPE\_Comm for information about WSPE and our upcoming events & conferences!

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### **FREE 6-Month Trial Membership!**

Interested in WSPE but not sure if you want to join? Try a 6-month FREE trial membership, courtesy of WSPE.

Click here:

[www.wspe.org/WI%206%20months%20Free%20Membership%20Application.pdf](http://www.wspe.org/WI%206%20months%20Free%20Membership%20Application.pdf) to download an application. Contact WSPE at ExecDir@wspe.org for details.



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## We Need Your News!

Is your chapter hosting an event? Did your chapter get some new members? Have you started your own business? Is your company taking on a really challenging project? If you said "yes" to any one of these questions, or would like to share anything even remotely newsworthy with the rest of WSPE, let us know! We'd also like to include an article in the next eNews summarizing any recent changes or accomplishments to inform your fellow WSPE members.

Please contact WSPE Communications Intern, at [execdir@wspe.org](mailto:execdir@wspe.org) or (414) 531-1129 to share any news. We look forward to including your news in our updates!

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## Update Your Information with WSPE!

Did you... ..get a new job? ...get promoted? ...get a new phone number or email address? ...get your PE license? You can update your information yourself on the NSPE website!

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## WSPE Mission Statement

WSPE is an organization of licensed Professional Engineers (PEs) and Engineering Interns/Engineers in Training (EIs/EITs). WSPE enhances the image of its members and their ability to ethically and professionally practice engineering through education, licensure advocacy, leadership training, multi-disciplinary networking, and outreach.

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