

Student Program Chair Guidebook

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This document is intended to provide some guidance to ANS National Meeting Student Program Chair [SPC]. The students who participate in the Student Session Assistant [SSA] program often have more experience with the program than the SPC themselves, and this document provides a way to share that collective experience. Originally prepared as a set of “Lessons Learned” following the 2001 Annual Meeting (Milwaukee, WI), a need has presented itself for a more comprehensive document.

In summary, the SPC is responsible for the following aspects of the student program at ANS national meetings:

- Organizing the student mixer
- Organizing and managing the Student Session Assistant [SSA] Program
- Facilitating the Student Travel Reimbursement program

Student Mixer

Before the Meeting

Most of the effort to organize the student mixer goes on before the meeting, in close collaboration with the ANS Meetings department. Unfortunately, it is hard to predict the right number of students to plan for. There are usually a few session assistants who choose not to go and occasionally a few people who want to by extra tickets for friends. On top of that, there is rarely any good idea of how many session assistants there will be either.

1. With input from students and young professionals living near the conference location, and the help of the ANS Meetings department, identify an appropriate location for the mixer. Some considerations for the mixer location:
 - The mixer should be held at a location that allows students of all ages to attend.
 - Ideally (although often not possible or achieved), the mixer should actually be in an environment to facilitate mixing!
 - The mixer should have a modest cost per student participating in the mixer.
2. It is often left to the SPC to secure appropriate funding for the Student Mixer. These funds typically come from the overall meeting budget/fundraising and therefore the SPC should discuss this at the earliest possible time with both the ANS Meetings department and the Local Organizing committee of the meeting.

At the Meeting

Be sure that all students know where and how to purchase extra tickets for the student mixer. Check with the ANS Meetings department staff so that you know the answers to these questions prior to the student orientation meeting and make that one of your announcements.

Student Session Assistant [SSA] Program

This program is one of the most important ones from the point of view of the students. It is this program, often more so than the travel reimbursement program, that tips the balance when students are deciding whether or not to attend the meeting. Consequently, the organization of this program often benefits from recent experience as a participant of the program, hence the reason for this document.

Some general comments on the program:

- The SSA program does not traditionally have a cap on the number of participants.*
- The SSA program requires a balance between being firm enough to plan properly and being flexible enough to accommodate the (at times disorganized) students. Many of the comments/recommendations below are based on experience finding such a balance.

Before the Meeting

The work done on this program prior to the meeting WILL make or break the (perceived) success of this program. This work also results in the greatest positive impact on satisfaction of student participants. In chronological order, please consider the following activities that are then elaborated upon in more detail.

1. Work with the ANS Meetings department to prepare the letters and materials sent to ANS Student Sections and members.
2. Work with the ANS Webmaster to establish the online registration material and form.
3. Collect the results of the online registration process and establish the best possible matching of students with technical sessions.
4. Communicate the results of this matching with the student session assistants by email before the meeting.

1. Prepare letters for dissemination to ANS Student Sections/Members

The meetings department typically contacts the SPC for final approval of the wording that is sent to ANS Student members/Student Sections regarding the SSA program. Most of the content of this material is standard, but it is often important to think ahead to the other tasks below, including those that go on at the meeting, to ensure that they are appropriately described and/or referenced in the letters.

2. Establish online registration material

In recent years (since 1999), there has been a great deal of positive feedback from the process of pre-assigning student workers to technical sessions with the help of an online registration process. The availability of this process has been sporadic, but was implemented for the first time by ANS HQ for the 2002 Annual Meeting, signaling that it might continue to receive support from ANS HQ in the future. The following information is considered important as part of that online process.

- **Name and contact information of the student.** Most important is the email address, but the postal address and phone number are also valuable.
- **Expected meeting attendance/availability.** One successful way to collect this information for each participant is simply as a list of available session blocks (e.g. Monday AM,

* The ANS Student Sections Committee believes that there should be no cap on this program. The real costs of this program are generally determined by the number of sessions and not the number of participants. The lost registration fee is arguably not a relevant as many students would simply not attend without the possibility of registering with this program.

Monday PM, Tuesday AM, Tuesday PM, etc). Since students may have obligations over the course of the meeting (technical presentations, private side meetings, etc), so it is not enough to know the arrival and departure dates of the student.

- **Top three session choices.** Allow each student to select up to three preferences for the specific technical sessions at which they would like to work, chosen from the published preliminary program.

3. Create optimum matching of workers and sessions

Using the results of the online registration, including ***both*** the three preferences identified by each student AND the session availability of each student, create a schedule that attempts to optimize the number of students getting first choices, etc... One useful mechanism to collect this information is for the online registration process to create a single file with all the information, including a time/date stamp for when the student registered. If appropriately formatted, such a file can be sent by the ANS webmaster to the SPC and read into a spreadsheet package and used directly.

Unfortunately no well-established algorithm exists to create the optimum matching of students with sessions, but it shouldn't take too long to do it by hand. While the SPC has the right to cut-off the registrations at the published deadline, it is at the discretion of the SPC to decide when to actually cut-off the registration.

4. Communicate SSA info to students by email

Many students now expect this information and some have been known to change their attendance plans if they do not hear that they are working.

Day-to-Day

1. ***Prepare all the signs and name tents for each day on the night before.*** It may require some juggling and even a key to the student HQ, but it will make it easier to manage the morning rush.
2. ***Arrive at student HQ 40 minutes before the first session.*** Double-check all the sessions, at some meetings there is an early-starting outlier.
3. ***Check regularly with the conference office for room changes.*** It is possible that sessions are shuffled from room to room up the minute that the session starts. The more proactively you check, the more up-to-date you will remain.
4. ***Depending on the venue, a radio may be helpful.*** If the venue is such that many of the rooms are far from the student/conference HQ and there is no phone service between the two (such as in Milwaukee) then it might be preferable to arrange some alternative communications, ie. a walky-talky/radio.

Training

1. ***Ensure that you have all the necessary materials prior to the training.*** Do not expect an ANS staff person to be there and bring those materials.

- SSA Instruction sheet: This usually includes some brief instructions and contact info for reaching the conference office. It is usually prepared by the ANS meetings staff.
 - SSA Signature Sheet
 - Student Travel Reimbursement form
 - Training Notes (see below)
2. ***Go through details of A/V operation.*** Don't assume that the students are familiar with all the A/V equipment, especially LCD projectors.
- If a bulb blows in an overhead projector, students should check for a built-in, installed reserve bulb, but should under no circumstances open the projector.
 - Make sure students understand the power up and power down procedures of the LCD projectors. Some projectors have a warm-up delay on power up. In this case, some users might press the power button again, only succeeding in putting the projector into its power down sequence causing further delay.
3. ***Training notes.*** The following instructions may or may not be on the instruction sheet given to the students. You may want to prepare your own sheet. Some of these are not as much instructions as they are suggestions as to how to do the job well.
- Arrive at student HQ 35 minutes before the session starts.
 - If it is a morning session, pick up the appropriate sign. Note, embedded topicals often have different sign backgrounds. Either instruct the students to be aware of this, or prepare the signs ahead of time (see item 1. in the "Day-to-Day" section).
 - If necessary, pick up printed name tents, blank name tents, and a marker.
 - Deliver sign (and name tents) to session ASAP, ideally 30 minutes before start.
 - Introduce yourself to the session chair (see meeting program) and offer your assistance.
 - Before the session starts, introduce yourself to each speaker and ask if they have any special A/V needs/requests.

Some Ideas for Future Experimentation

1. ***Alternative Sign Preparations.*** It is common for the students to be late (less than 30 minutes before) to their afternoon sessions, occasionally for reasons out of their control (e.g. Honors & Awards banquet). Here are some ideas to at least have the signs for those sessions in front of the rooms 30 minutes before the sessions start. Both of these will run more smoothly if the signs are prepared the night before (see item 1. in "Day-to-Day").
- a. Double-sided sign boards – The sign boards delivered in the morning will have the morning session on one side and the afternoon session on the reverse side. When the morning session student leaves at the end of their session, they simply turn the sign around.
 - b. Extra sign – The morning student takes the printed session sign (the small one that gets stuck to the background) for the afternoon session scheduled in that same room. As they leave at the end of the morning session, they stick the afternoon sign on top of the morning sign. (This is a variation on the above.)
2. ***Drop-in SSA Training.*** In an effort to increase the ability of students to participate in the ANS governance program, training could be offered throughout the afternoon on Sunday. It would still be mandatory, requiring a signature from the Student Program Chair, but would consist of

a short presentation (maybe 20-25 minutes) starting each 30 minutes. It would require an appropriate amount of written material in an easy to digest fashion. This is primarily in response to an increasing desire to involve students in the governance and division business of the Society.

3. ***SSA Training Signature.*** One thing tried at the Milwaukee meeting as a means to both enforce SSA training session attendance, but also allow carefully controlled excused absences, was to require the Student Program Chair's signature on each student's SSA signature sheet. The simplest way to accomplish this is to hand these forms to each student personally and have the SPC signature photocopied onto a controlled set of forms.
4. ***SSA Session Reporting.*** Since the role of the SSA is becoming less and less burdensome (most presenters handle their own A/V configuration quite ably) we should consider requiring each SSA to write a one page summary of the session. This report could serve as input to a division newsletter for the division that sponsored the session and could also be used by the home university in return for travel support and/or missed classes. It has the added benefit of ensuring that the SSA stays in the session for its duration and pays attention.

Appendix A: Past Student Program Chairs

2004 Annual Meeting, Pittsburg, PA – Meghan Firster, Westinghouse
2003 Winter Meeting, New Orleans, LA – Prof. ?????, LSU
2003 Annual Meeting, San Diego, CA – Chris ????, General Atomics
2002 Winter Meeting, Washington, DC – Sama Bilbao, Dominion
2002 Annual Meeting, Hollywood, FL – Karen Vierow, Purdue U.
2001 Winter Meeting, Reno, NV – John Bennion, U. Idaho
2001 Annual Meeting, Milwaukee, WI – Paul Wilson, UW-Madison
2000 Winter Meeting, Washington, DC –
2000 Annual Meeting, San Diego, CA –
1999 Winter Meeting, Long Beach, CA –
1999 Annual Meeting, Boston, MA – Heather MacLean, MIT (student)
1998 Winter Meeting, Washington, DC – Heather MacLean, MIT (student)
1998 Annual Meeting, Nashville, TN –
1997 Winter Meeting, Albuquerque, NM – Robert Busch, UNM
1997 Annual Meeting, Orlando, FL –
1996 Winter Meeting, Washington, DC – Reed Johnson, UVa
1996 Annual Meeting, Reno, NV – John Bennion, U. Idaho (?)
1995 Winter Meeting, San Francisco –
1995 Annual Meeting, Philadelphia, PA –