

## Training for New and Continuing SWE Faculty Advisors and SWE Counselors

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### **ABSTRACT**

The Society of Women Engineers (SWE) promotes the advancement of both professional women engineers and aspiring female engineers. The Society's 1450+ collegiate members are served by 300+ collegiate sections, based at Universities and Colleges across the nation. Each collegiate section is required to have a SWE Counselor, who must be a SWE member, and is encouraged to have a Faculty Advisor, often required by the University. The responsibilities of these two individuals are both similar and dissimilar; however both encourage students to pursue the benefits that SWE provides. While the SWE Counselor is charged with responsibilities that focus on the collegiate members' interactions with SWE on a national level and their compliance with SWE section requirements, the Faculty Advisor serves as the collegiate members' link with their University and its policies and procedures. Both the Faculty Advisor and the Counselor need to maintain their knowledge of SWE and the opportunities provided by this organization

### **FUNCTION OF THE SWE COUNSELOR**

The SWE Counselor is elected each year by the collegiate members of the section and must be a paid member of SWE. In addition, the SWE Counselor is considered a non-voting member of the Collegiate Section. The Counselor is responsible to the Board of Directors, through the Region Collegiate Coordinator and Collegiate Interests Committee Chair, for the Collegiate Section's compliance with the Society Bylaws and its policies and procedures. The Counselor serves as a liaison between the collegiate section, the local industry and SWE, and thus should be knowledgeable of both the engineering industry in the collegiate section's area/region, as well as all aspects of SWE at the collegiate, regional and national levels. The Counselor's role is to advise the collegiate section, ensuring they are in "good standing", they have filed all required reports and bylaws. They should be knowledgeable about awards, scholarships, collegiate positions within SWE, dates and locations of the regional and national conferences, how to transition to professional membership upon graduation and all of the SWE competitions.

### **FUNCTION OF THE FACULTY ADVISOR**

It is strongly recommended that each Collegiate Section have a Faculty Advisor, who is a member of the faculty. The Faculty Advisor does not necessarily need to be a member of SWE, however it is greatly encouraged. Although SWE does not require a Faculty Advisor, it is good policy to have one; many colleges and universities require a Faculty Advisor for each recognized campus group. Assignment of a Faculty Advisor varies with location, so each Collegiate Section must handle this on a local level. There have also been recent conversations about whether or not the Advisor needs to be a member of the Faculty, as many campuses allow any member of

the University Faculty OR Staff to be considered an adequate “Collegiate Section Advisor”, as has been proposed within the Collegiate Interests Committee of SWE. The main responsibility of the Faculty Advisor is to act as a liaison between the Collegiate Section and the College of Engineering and the University. Each University and college conduct business in very different ways, thus the Faculty Advisor needs to be knowledgeable of their requirements for collegiate organizations with respect to travel, finances, ordering supplies, holding meetings, use of campus facilities, etc.

## **SWE COLLEGIATE SECTION REQUIREMENTS**

One of the primary duties of the Counselor is to ensure that the collegiate chapter follows all of the requirements to maintain/obtain their charter. The Faculty Advisor may assist in this process, however if he/she is not a member of SWE, they cannot access the electronic resources outlined in the next section. The requirements to maintain/obtain a charter include, but are not limited to, the following. The collegiate section must have at least 10 paid members – 50% of whom are women majoring in engineering or engineering technology. Each section must complete the Annual and Financial Reports (available on-line), due by June 30<sup>th</sup> – the end of the fiscal year. Sections who do not complete these reports will not receive their rebate checks. There have been some discussions in the past few years about the “signature” portion of these reports as they are submitted electronically, thus Counselors should require the section provide them with a copy prior to submission to headquarters. Counselor can check on the status of these reports using the SWE Communities, discussed below. Finally, each collegiate section **MUST** have a SWE Counselor who is a paid member of SWE. Collegiate sections are also required to submit three Quarterly Section Reports. There has also been a great deal of discussion on these, as the due dates conflict greatly with typical collegiate schedules (i.e. the first one is due on 8/25 when many schools aren’t in session yet for the academic year). These reports have been submitted to the Region Collegiate Representative in the past. With the changes in the governance structure of SWE, it is not known at this time whether these reports will now be submitted to the Region Collegiate Senator or another individual. Finally, each collegiate section must submit Collegiate Section Bylaws. A template for these bylaws is available on the SWE web site.

Several common compliance issues have arisen in the past and are worth mentioning here. No “co-officers” are permitted by the SWE bylaws. A section may have multiple Vice Presidents if their responsibilities are well spelled out in the section’s bylaws. However, a simpler approach is to utilize numerous Committee Chairs as they do not have to be defined in the bylaws and may be added and deleted as needed. There is no distinction between “national” members and “local” members, all SWE members are considered part of the national organization. In addition, collegiate sections may not charge “local” dues – charging fees for individual events is allowed. It is also a common misconception that the SWE Counselor is an appointed position. The SWE Counselor must be elected by the membership of the collegiate section each year, even if they are unopposed. If a new Counselor is needed, the local professional section or the regional

government will assist the collegiate section in finding someone to serve in that position. In addition, the SWE Counselor and the SWE Faculty Advisor may be the same person, however they must follow the requirements of the SWE Counselor, such as being a paid member of SWE.

## RESOURCES

The Society of Women Engineers provides Faculty Advisors and Counselors with a variety of resources to assist them. The primary resource is the SWE web site ([www.swe.org](http://www.swe.org)) and within it, the SWE Communities. In the past year or so, SWE introduced “My SWE Communities” to the SWE web site and encouraged members to enroll in all of the SWE Communities that they needed access to. This was a big change to the SWE web page and there has been some confusion and hesitation to using this aspect of the web pages. However, most individuals find that once they try it out a few times, they become easier to use. When first starting, a member simply clicks on the “My Communities” icon on the main page. The next step requires that the



individual logs in using their SWE username and password. An option is available for the user if they have forgotten either the username or password. This will then return a list of the Communities the user has joined in the past and access to all other communities. To join a Community, the user clicks on “Join Communities” and a list of communities will appear. There are 151 communities in total. Communities that contain information relevant to SWE Counselors and Faculty Advisor include; Collegiate Membership Community, SWE Region and Section Resources Community (Quarterly, Annual and Financial Reports), SWE Counselors and Faculty Advisors Community and Governance Documents Community (Bylaws Template). Other Communities may be needed for access to additional information and may be joined as needed. On this main page, there is also a link to a SWE Main Communities which contains a PowerPoint® presentation that acts as a tutorial on using SWE Communities.

## AWARDS AND COMPETITIONS

Another necessary body of knowledge for Counselors and Faculty Advisors to be aware of are the numerous SWE awards and competitions and their deadlines. Once again, the web site is the most useful source of information on these. The main page ([www.swe.org](http://www.swe.org)) has two easy links to the information about awards and competitions. One is on the top information bar, shown below, and the other is a box on the lower portion of the page.



The headings to choose from after clicking on one of the two links include; Collegiate Competitions, Individual Awards and Recognitions, Section/Regional Awards and External Awards. These links then list the numerous awards and competitions available, their requirements and deadlines for application. The majority of the collegiate members are unaware of the myriad of awards and opportunities for recognition available from SWE. They also need to be encouraged by their Counselor of Faculty Advisor to apply for these or to nominate themselves for them. Collegiate members often wait for someone else to nominate them for awards or scholarships, however, most of these award winners self-nominate.

## **CONCLUSIONS**

Collegiate SWE members are very capable and intelligent young women and men. However, they require the assistance of the SWE Counselor to connect them to the details of SWE membership and of all of the benefits that are reaped when they become an aware and active member. The SWE Faculty Advisor, while not required by SWE, is also a valuable tool for understanding the inner workings and requirements of their college of engineering and their university. These two individuals work in harmony to allow the collegiate members to benefit the most from their SWE membership and those collegiate members who become highly involved often transition to becoming the leaders of SWE once they have graduated. Thus, it is important for the SWE Counselor and the SWE Faculty Advisor to play an active role in advising the collegiate section and its members, as well as have an in-depth understanding of SWE on a local, regional and national level.