Report on

IEEE Region 10 SAC/GOLD/WIE Congress

U. of Auckland, New Zealand July 7-10, 2011.

The Congress was very well-organized and the student volunteers did a wonderful job including preparing and distributing breakfast sandwiches and working lunch packets themselves to reduce expenses. Their enthusiasm and interaction during the cultural evening was commendable. The banquet was held in a floating restaurant in the Auckland Harbour where they also had a huge IEEE cake.

There were several IEEE leaders who presented talks ranging from humanitarian technology to emerging technologies such as micro-nano robotics. The WIE events were a great success.

The first was the interaction among the geographical WIE forums which provided me a snapshot of how cultural as well as governmental policies have made their impact on the issue of women engineers. One of the sections even organized a workshop on basic self-defence; another one has regular school visit programs to counsel high school girls on the role of engineering in daily life and also has set up special tutoring sessions for women engineering students. In the second, there were three 20 minutes’ lectures addressing the gender imbalance. The third session was a very lively panel discussion on overcoming obstacles in the career path of woman engineer.
I was invited as one of the three speakers in the second session, the other two being from New Zealand and Pakistan. As an academician, I presented the recent statistics (decade ending 2010) in higher education and how we are organizing our activities to reduce the gap so that more talented girls students are motivated to opt for a career in engineering in general and in particular engineering education as that is the burning need of India at the moment. This was immensely appreciated by many attendees including Dr. Lewis Terman.

The delegates were from all the countries of R10 with the largest foreign contingent from India. However, I was rather saddened to note that while many of the other sections in India, especially Delhi, Hyderabad, Kerala, Madras supported their Committee Chairs and student members with either full or partial travel grants, there was not a single student from the Eastern region although our Calcutta section is proud to have many student branches under its aegis.

Secondly, the GOLD participation as well as their new GINI members from the above-mentioned sections were notable. In view of this, they even won an award. In fact, a few of the other section leaders asked me why my section did not support more participants and students. I hereby suggest that our Section takes special initiative to encourage participation in similar events in future to provide exposure to several important facets of IEEE, over and above the travel grants for technical conferences.

There was a very active and fair-sized group of delegates from Pakistan, some of whom reported their participation in similar IEEE events in the past years. They came very well-prepared with their national flag, banners for their chapters and even hardcopies of their newsletters.