Choices, Challenges, and Changes

I am pleased to report to members of the IEEE Computational Intelligence Society that CIS is doing well and that we continue to make progress for the benefit of our members and profession. By all accounts, 2004 and 2005, my Presidency term, have been exciting years for the CIS. The Society’s membership has been strong, conferences have continued to attend scores of participants, its three Transactions have had many readers and many submissions, this Newsletter enjoys popularity, and our financial health is excellent. New events, initiatives, chapters, and special opportunities are popping up monthly, if not weekly. And we embrace more grass-roots initiatives than we could ever think of before.

Indeed, there is a widespread sense of satisfaction that members and officers are sharing with me, that our Society is growing, energetic, and vibrant. This is thanks to the outstanding volunteer base, and to the Society’s scope that leaves room for both professional and personal growth of its members. The opportunities are indeed plentiful, and while I am happy to make their recount below at the Society level, you might as well recognize it as an encouragement for initiatives at the local chapters. This message is to invite you to contribute both through your membership at the local level, and to get involved at the Society life.

The Society is proud of adding an unusually high number of seven newly elected IEEE Fellows, Class of 2005, to its membership base. We also welcome five prominent individuals, newly elected 2005-07 AdCom members, who will assist in running the Society at the legislative level. I am also pleased to welcome two new Society members as officers: David Fogel, VP-Membership, and James Keller, VP-Publications, both elected for 2005-06.

This year will see several new volunteers in service to the CIS as committee chairs: George Lendaris as Neural Networks Technical Committee (TC) Chair, Witold Pedrycz (from Region 7) as Intelligent Systems Applications TC Chair, Edward Tseng as Computational Finance and Economics TC Chair, Leszek Rutkowski (from Region 8) as Standards Committee Chair, Pablo Estevez (from Region 9) as Distinguished Lecturers Program Chair, Robert Marks as Awards Committee Chair, and Paul Werbos as Technology Transfer Ad Hoc Committee Chair. Please join me in wishing all these individuals a successful and productive year.

I will keep you informed about our continued efforts to improve the Society. During this year you will read more in this column about the new CIS Magazine planned for 2006, continuing education and standards efforts, and expanding activities in direct support of Regions 8-10 that involve our colleagues from all over the world. The Society also plans to increase its global conference efforts at achieving a better geographical distribution of key volunteers and board members, and to better streamline the nomination process for both officer and AdCom member slates.

One of the important services to our members is providing them with information about the Society’s technical and volunteer activities. Towards this aim, we worked hard on the Society’s new website since the beginning of 2004. While
dozens of individuals have contributed the content, the leadership of Vincenzo Piuri, 2005 President-Elect, and the technical expertise of Tomasz Cholewo and Piotr Habas has proven to be invaluable. The site has been up since fall of last year. We have also started the CIS Virtual Community as a forum for discussion and informal news exchange for a broader, more open community than an email list could possibly provide. In addition, last November we launched the CIS E-letter that stemmed from the technical activities lead by Gary Yen, VP-Technical Activities. Edited skillfully by Derong Liu, the E-letter brings you monthly up-to-date news about upcoming deadlines, publications, special issues, conferences, elections, nominations, awards, regional volunteer opportunities, and other events.

One of CIS’s objectives is to reward its most distinguished members or entities with Society awards. The CIS is now soliciting nominations for the following CIS-level Awards: three Outstanding Paper Awards (one for each of its Transactions), three Pioneer Awards and one Meritorious Service Award. For the first time, Outstanding Chapter Award and Outstanding Ph.D. Dissertation Award will be conferred in 2005 (please contact Chair of CIS Awards Committee, Robert Marks at robert_marks@baylor.edu for more details on how to nominate or otherwise support CIS Awards). In addition, beginning in 2005, nominations are solicited for the CIS-sponsored IEEE-level award, named the Frank Rosenblatt Technical Field Award. The award recognizes outstanding contributions to the advancement of the design, practice, techniques, or theory in biologically and linguistically motivated computational paradigms including but not limited to neural networks, connectionist systems, evolutionary computation, fuzzy systems, and hybrid intelligent systems in which these paradigms are contained. Please contact the Chair of this Awards Committee, Piero Bonissone at bonissone@crd.ge.com for more details on this Award.

The years to come are also years of changes and challenges. As our members realize, the main reason for IEEE’s existence is to actively create, distribute, and share the intellectual property (IP) contributed by its members in electrical, electronic and computer technologies. This field, however, also attracts commercial competitors. To face this challenge, IEEE has redefined the formula for income received by the societies and councils that are contributors to IEEE IP. Beginning in 2006, societies and councils will be paid in proportion to the number of papers they contribute to the body of IEEE IP, combined with the actual number of readers (called PDF views) of their papers. This represents an important shift in the income computation paradigm. According to the new formula, periodicals that are integral parts of the electronic subscription package (known as the IEL) that are not read, will no longer bring substantial income.

Among the many issues facing the CIS is the challenge of embracing the fast-growing membership and technical talent in the Far East, or IEEE Region 10. To this aim we are planning to organize CIS sponsored conferences in Asia, or with “Technical Co-sponsorship” support in addition to numerous conferences “In Technical Cooperation.” Conferences with “Technical Co-sponsorship” are especially important in this effort as they involve CIS volunteers working with their foreign colleagues to help them learn the conference business. These activities are dedicated to further the Society’s and IEEE goals in remote geographical locations that we could not otherwise access.

At any given time, several hundred volunteers are donating their time and talent to the Society. While we value experience, we do not favor recycling the same people as officers, chairs, and board members. This is because we are an organization of volunteers, and the incoming volunteers need to learn the skills that we possess and to bring fresh enthusiasm. This is necessary in order to add a new vigor and knowledge, and eventually, to continuously reinvent and revitalize the Society. We are therefore happy to serve not only as leaders, but also as mentors of future leaders for the sake of the benefiting the Society.

In my second and final year as your President, I pledge to continue my full commitment to our Society and its membership, and look forward to the successful and fast growth of the CIS. However, we need your support, time, and talent, and I am eagerly awaiting your participation in the Society and your contribution to the field. For more information, please check our website at www.ieee-cis.org.