

President's Welcome

I am very pleased to welcome all participants of the 2004 Joint International Neural Networks Conference (IJCNN), and of the IEEE International Conference on Fuzzy Systems (FUZZ-IEEE). The first conference is sponsored this year by the IEEE Neural Networks Society (NNS) and organized in technical co-sponsorship of the International Neural Networks Society (INNS), while the second is entirely sponsored by the NNS.

I would like to take this opportunity to acknowledge the dedicated efforts of the Organizing and Technical Committees that have worked so hard to put together an exciting technical program. The technical sessions will highlight 10 plenary lectures by leading researchers, and feature regular and special oral sessions (held in parallel in four or five tracks). In addition, plenary poster sessions will provide plenty of opportunities for face-to-face interaction between participants.

One of the pre-conference activities, Welcome Reception and Joint IEEE-INNS Awards Ceremony, will be held on Sunday, July 25 at 7pm, and will be co-hosted by the 2004 IEEE President-Elect, Mr. W. Cleon Anderson, the President of the INNS, Dr. Jose C. Principe, and me. Other, such as the Conference Banquet, will combine an exciting social event with a Danube boat ride. In addition, our venue, the city of Budapest, offers an abundance of remarkable sites, historical monuments, and activities for the attendees and their companions.

NNS is one of thirty-eight IEEE Societies. Its focus is the theory, design, application, and development of biologically and linguistically motivated computational paradigms emphasizing neural networks, connectionist systems, genetic algorithms, evolutionary programming, fuzzy systems, and hybrid intelligent systems. Formed in 2002, the Society is actively seeking new members to add to its current membership of over 5,500 and expand its international and local presence. To join NNS and become an active member of our community, please visit www.ieee.org/join.

NNS has a tradition of supporting student travel to its premier conferences such as IJCNN and FUZZ-IEEE. This year 17 travel grants have been awarded to students from the following countries: Belgium (2), Greece, United Kingdom, Sweden, Portugal, Finland, USA (6), China (5), Japan, Canada, Germany (2), Singapore, and Argentina. European recipients' stipends were US\$500 while those from outside Europe received US\$650 to accommodate the additional airfare cost.

As most of you know, the NNS is in the process of changing its name to Computational Intelligence Society. Effective in the fall of 2004, only the new name of the Society will be featured in promotional flyers, on the periodicals' front covers, and in the renewal materials. The new name is more descriptive and inclusive than the old one, which only covered a fraction of the Society's scope. With the change, the profile of our publications and conference efforts will be more appropriately represented.

Activities in all technical areas are coordinated by one of the Society's eight Technical Committees: Neural Networks, Fuzzy Systems, Evolutionary Computation, Emergent Technologies, Bioinformatics and Bioengineering, Intelligent Systems Applications, and Autonomous Mental Development. The Committees serve as forums for the exchange of technical information, the dissemination of ideas and the initiation of new topical trends. It is at this level of involvement where ideas and topics are incubated for special sessions of conferences, new workshops and seminars, and special issues of our journals.

The NNS offers its members an amazing range of technical involvement. It publishes three Transactions as well as the NNS Newsletter, organizes three major conferences and specialized symposia and workshops. The NNS also supports educational opportunities through its multimedia tutorial program, and summer research programs. Other activities include the Distinguished Lecturers Program, Technical Field Awards, Best Paper Awards, Pioneer Awards, and Meritorious Service Award. The Society's newest project offers special opportunities for women in computational intelligence. All of our members are invited to take full advantage of these options.

New activities can also be initiated within the local territorial entities of our Society called Chapters. To become involved in a Chapter, a member needs to contact the appropriate regional Chapter Chair. If no Chapter has been established in your area, you may create one by collecting 12 signatures of existing NNS members and contacting Dr. Vin Piuri, VP for Member Activities, at piuri@dti.unimi.it.

Our members are not only encouraged to get involved in Technical Committees, or Chapters. The Society also needs more volunteers to run its business. We need people for our Standing Committees, such as Education, Multimedia Tutorials, Standards and other committees. In addition, the Society members also elect its governing body called Administrative Committee (ADCOM).

As you can see, the Society offers all its members opportunities to get involved, be active and participating at the technical level or in its self-governance. We need your support, time and talent, and I am eagerly awaiting your participation in the Society, your contribution to the field, and the further advancement of the society as a whole. For more information, please check our website at www.ieee-nns.org.

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