

## **Introductory Cover Letter To Leaders of All AIChE Entities**

Volunteerism, now more than ever, is the lifeblood of AIChE. Everyone involved in AIChE recognizes the importance of recruiting, rewarding, and retaining volunteers, but yet every entity struggles to maintain the necessary volunteer base. The impact is not small. Many local sections have moved to inactive status, in large part due to burnout of the few remaining volunteers; the activity of some Committees and Divisions has been severely limited by available volunteer resources; and the national organization is struggling to provide the same value to its members that it once did with a much larger paid staff as volunteers are not available to perform many of these activities.

The CEOC developed this packet as a means to help our AIChE leaders build and maintain a solid volunteer base. We have drawn from the Volunteer Participation Workshop held at the 2002 Leadership Development Conference, the discussions of the 2001 Critical Issues Task Force, and the experience of our members as part of a comprehensive review. We offer no easy answers or quick fixes, but we believe this list of Best Practices can be converted to concrete specific actions that will have an impact and can be, adapted to the needs of any organization. In general, they are not expensive and require minimal effort. Many seem obvious, but chances are they have not been put into daily practice.

This package has also been provided to the National AIChE Board of Directors, for their review and action. We recommend that the leaders of every AIChE entity review and discuss this package and use it as the basis for strengthening their volunteer base.

CEOC welcomes your comments and suggestions to strengthen this package. We view it as a living document that will be continually updated as feedback is received and new Best Practices are identified. We welcome your comments and suggestions, including actions CEOC can take to help you. We plan to update these Best Practices as we receive feedback.

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This document, prepared by AIChE's Career & Education Operating Council (CEOC),  
may be used as guidance for AIChE Volunteer Leaders. The content has not been  
officially addressed by the AIChE Board of Directors.

## **Volunteerism Best Practices – Recruitment, Retention, Recognition & Opportunity Awareness**

### **General**

1. The leaders of any volunteer organization must take primary responsibility to attract, reward, and retain volunteers. They should consider it a part of their job, and a key measure of their success.
2. Collaborate with other professional societies. This not only greatly leverages the individual efforts, building a critical mass of resources and enthusiasm; it also enables one group to learn from the experiences of the other. The same applies for collaboration with individual employers, alumni departments, and vendors.
3. Take advantage of meeting methods other than face-to-face to make the most effective use of volunteers. Consider email, teleconferences and web-based NetMeeting or WebX. For example, the Professional Development Committee has very successfully used teleconferencing to conduct its business. Consider using shared servers or web pages to store / transfer / collaborate on documents. Consider breakfast rather than lunch or dinner meetings that cut into the work day or family time.
4. Encourage volunteers to bring forward ideas to improve existing work processes to reduce the time and effort required to achieve routine tasks.

### **Recruitment & Retention**

1. Provide clear, specific goals and definition of success. Ask for a specific commitment (“3 hours of phone calls”, “take minutes at 4 Board Meetings per year”, “Our objective is go have 3 corporate sponsors”). It is a lot easier to ask for help on several small tasks than one big one.
2. Whenever possible, provide volunteers with an official title and position within the enterprise (“General Arrangements Chair for Annual Symposium”). This makes it much easier for them to obtain their employer’s support, particularly if travel is involved. The title may also be a valuable addition on their resume. Of course, an official title can also be a motivator for the individual. Career Services used this approach with the Career Ambassador Program. We gave them the title of career ambassador or placed their names in the technical program to help them convince their employers to let them attend national meetings.
3. Include Volunteers on the program as speakers to facilitate getting employer support.
4. Set up an informal mentoring program for new volunteers. Make sure they are working with, or at least have access to, an experienced volunteer who recognizes it is in *everybody’s* best interest if the new volunteer has a successful experience. In this day and age, it is not necessary that mentor and new volunteer always meet face to face.
5. Make sure there is a specific, focused transition plan in place. Part of every leader’s duties is to make sure the resources and plan for transition are in place *before* a change in leadership. Resources might include an evergreen list of duties, manageable files, bank signature cards, contact lists, email lists, passwords, income tax forms, USPS account information. Of course, an effective transition also

requires providing up-to-date status information and guidance to the new leader at the time of transition. Each leader should ask them self “what did I wish I knew or had when I first took over?”

6. Where entities have co-chairs, staggered transition of each chair helps to ensure continuity in leadership and provides a resource for ‘on the job training’ for the new chair.
7. Volunteerism has to be marketed and sold as much if not more than a commercial product. A persuasive message of what’s in it for the employer and the volunteer is essential. To some extent, this message and the task itself should be customized to meet the needs of the “customer”. Included in the Appendix are some useful hints on tailoring the message to the personality/ needs of the volunteer. Before requesting help from a potential volunteer, spend a few moments thinking about what will motivate them, and draft your request accordingly. Also, provide all the help you can in selling the idea to his/her boss, particularly when a large time commitment is involved (e.g. officers of committees).
8. Where appropriate, top AIChE officers can send a formal “recruitment letter” to top management of the volunteer’s employer, explaining why the project is important and the volunteer’s role is so vital.
9. Build a unique training / development opportunity specifically for volunteers into large events. For example, set aside time during the set-up phase of a 3 day conference for a program of special interest exclusively for volunteers, such as media (public relations) training or an informal session with top National AIChE brass.
10. Publicize that committee meetings are open to anyone interested. Invite potential volunteers to attend for specific agenda items.

### **Recognition**

1. Local Section Chair or National Committee Chair should send a letter of appreciation to all volunteers and their employers.
2. Section / Committee Chair offers anyone who has made a significant contribution a letter to their boss recognizing the contributions of the volunteer and the employer
3. Recognize volunteers (and their employer) in newsletter, website, announcements at meetings, etc.
4. Recognize any special contributions, monetary or non-monetary, of *employers* in newsletter, website, announcements at meeting, etc.
5. Sections / committees establish special (Shining Star?) awards for outstanding volunteers. Publicize heavily with photo, etc. AIChE President sends special thank you letter congratulating them on the award with optional copy to employer. Company and alumni newsletters, local newspapers are provided with press releases of the award announcement.
6. A volunteer recognition page is set up on local websites and aiche.org and CEP to publicize outstanding volunteers.
7. Specific ideas for local sections
  - a. “Shining Star” award winners and Local Section Chairs are recognized at a special event at a National AIChE meeting. By receiving a special invitation to the recognition ceremony, they receive greater recognition in the

- workplace, and are more likely to get permission to attend. Recognition would include a special ribbon on their registration badge. A listing in the program would also give them and their employer more recognition.
- b. Local Section provides small award for Shining Star winner, such as free dinner meeting, or gift certificate for dinner for two for winner and spouse, or tickets for the family to attend a local sporting event.
  - c. Local Sections might have a special luncheon just for managers of employees that have supported the Section. The luncheon would allow the Section to recognize these people / companies, enable a two way dialog between employers and Section Officers, and enable managers to network with each other. Have a National AIChE officer attend the event where possible.
  - d. Local Sections Committee elects one "Volunteer of the Year", with special write-up in CEP, same treatment as Shining Star award, plus National offers to pay transportation cost for spouse to attend National Meeting and award ceremony.
    - i. Name after someone like Bill Hencke and seek support from companies.

### **Opportunity Awareness**

1. Communicate /post AIChE volunteer opportunities among the entities using 'job descriptions' and estimated time commitment. This also promotes visibility of activities across entities. Options might include a bulletin board at national meetings, or tables at the student conferences and reception.
2. Build a webpage on the national or local AIChE website for volunteer postings (e.g. Craig's list for volunteers)
3. Host a roundtable at each national meeting for entities to share best practices, identify continued challenges, and network with each other. CEOC will host at least the first one.

### **Other Potential Activities**

1. If practical, record volunteer participation in a database. This can be used to spread the workload and better match volunteers to tasks.
2. CEOC develop a project proposal at the AIChE National level to implement an institute-wide database of volunteers. Implement when budget allows.

## Appendix A

### Ten Concepts for Improving Volunteer Participation

*The following document was prepared for the 2002 Leadership Development Conference (formerly known as Local Section Officer's Conference). It was presented to meeting participants but was not otherwise widely distributed. These general concepts were the inspiration for CEOC's Best Practices, so it is included here for better understanding of the motivation for the Practices.*

1. **A volunteer program that recognizes volunteers and their employers, provides clear goals, and provides a record of volunteer activity**

- **A recognition program for volunteer participation**  
Some volunteers are recognized often within the Institute. Others are not. The need exists for continuous recognition of all volunteers. This can be done in a variety of formal and informal ways. Letters of appreciation can be written to employers and the accomplishments of volunteers can be detailed in AIChE publications. More tangible rewards might also be offered. For example, every volunteer effort has a point value attached. Once a specified number of points are earned, the volunteer can cash them in for discounts, products, or services, analogous to "Frequent Traveler" programs.
- **Recognize employers and supervisors of volunteers**  
By recognizing and thanking supervisor and employers, AIChE members may actually be encouraged to volunteer more. This recognition can be handled in publications, letters, and mementos.
- **Provide clear goals and criteria for success**  
All volunteers, but especially engineers, appreciate knowing exactly what is expected. It is not enough to ask for "volunteers for a fundraiser." Instead, consider asking for a 3-hour commitment for setting up the space, a 6-hour commitment for soliciting area businesses, or a commitment to call 11 local section members. More people are likely to volunteer if time commitments are clearly stated (and kept to a minimum), and guidelines are given to measure success.
- **Record volunteer participation in a database**  
By keeping track of who volunteered when, and for what task, AIChE will be able to recognize Institute volunteers. Such a database will also eliminate individuals from being "burned out" by being asked to volunteer over and over. It can additionally be used to match the right volunteer to the right task. (Note that an AIChE database was discussed by the CEOC in 2004 and does not appear as a near term recommendation due to budgetary constraints)

2. **Collaborate with employers, alumni departments, vendors, and other professional organizations.**

There are many organizations that share goals similar to those of AIChE. The Institute and its many groups can take advantage of this synergy by partnering with other organizations. Such partnerships can extend to hosting

receptions, participating in “career day” efforts, science fairs, community emergency response committees, and fundraising ventures. This will heighten awareness of AIChE among these groups, while expanding networking opportunities for AIChE members.

**3. Provide support for and foster volunteer attendance at national meetings**  
AIChE meetings have a great deal to offer and are ideal settings for committees and divisions to meet. They also demand a good commitment of time. AIChE can offer letters of support to employers, encouraging attendance of volunteers. Volunteers have been invited guests at special receptions during AIChE meetings. These can be expanded and made even more inclusive. The Institute might also consider providing greatly reduced meeting registration for volunteers who attend meetings only to do volunteer work for the Institute. An important consideration in deciding to volunteer is how much time it will take away from family. By providing childcare during AIChE meetings, more people may be willing to contribute their energies to the Institute.

**4. Establish a comprehensive mentoring program**  
AIChE presently offers mentoring programs for students and young engineers who are seeking employment. Mentoring here is different. It would focus on guiding members and connecting their interest to AIChE volunteer activities. AIChE can help to identify and make introductions between members in Local Sections, Divisions, and Committees. Mentors with experience would offer personal advice to those who want to get involved in an activity.

**5. Cultivate and integrate local section volunteerism**  
The Institute can play a key role in supporting volunteer efforts at the local level. There could be incentives for volunteering locally. These might include special recognition, invitation-only events, discounts on conferences or seminars, etc. Local sections can help bolster volunteer support by creating manageable tasks for individual volunteers that don't require a great investment of time.

**6. Establish an AIChE Ambassador's program**  
The Institute last year announced the creation of a new volunteer position: International Ambassador. AIChE's Career Services Department has a successful history of using Career Ambassadors to make presentations to chemical engineers seeking employment. The AIChE Ambassador's Program would expand the current positions to include Public Awareness Ambassadors. These funded positions would include trained spokespersons, all members of AIChE, who could serve as resources for local media. They would also be equipped to make presentations to community organizations. These high profile Ambassadors will offer concrete connections between AIChE, local sections, committees, divisions, and the general public. The Ambassadors will be chosen via a competition.

### **7. Market Volunteerism**

**Volunteers do just that—they volunteer. That means that every volunteer has big demands placed on his or her time. How, then, can AIChE attract more members committed to furthering the work and the mission of the Institute. The answer lies in explaining the personal benefits of volunteering with AIChE. These might include expanding communications skills through presentations; broadening of one’s professional and personal network; the ability to mine new ideas on jobs and work-related issues. As important as these benefits are, they must be communicated. AIChE can make public the many areas in which members may volunteer. Institute leaders from all AIChE groups can play a very important role by simply asking people to volunteer for specific tasks or projects. It is important to provide a specified time period, too. This way, potential volunteers will feel more comfortable about committing to a project.**

### **8. Have performance accountability for volunteerism**

**There are hundreds of volunteers throughout AIChE, and potentially thousands more. Who is responsible for keeping track of volunteer efforts, and rewarding AIChE volunteers? A staff person could be made accountable for all volunteer activity within the Institute. This will include maintaining an active database of volunteers, as well as specific tasks or projects. By having a centralized volunteer focus, more members can become involved, and be recognized for their efforts.**

### **9. Provide grants for volunteer proposals**

**A great idea can come from anywhere. In fact, AIChE’s three operating councils were established to foster the work of local sections, committees, and divisions—all great places to develop ideas. To stimulate thinking—and action—of volunteers, the Institute can make available grants for specific projects. These projects would all include highlighted volunteer opportunities. Whether it be public outreach, k-12 discussions, career nights with college students, or retirement investing for seniors, volunteer opportunities abound. The Institute will reward those AIChE groups who develop unique programs to foster volunteerism.**

### **10. Provide alternative ways to have meetings**

**Many groups within AIChE have experienced solid success with teleconferencing. This eliminates travel time and cost, and is less of a time drain. Another alternative for people who work in the same geographic area is to have a meal meeting. While lunch is still a popular working meal, consider breakfast. It can be less rushed and less expensive, without cutting into work or family time. Saturday mornings can be a surprisingly good time for committee or work group telephone meetings. Consider an early start and a commitment to end in an hour or less.**

## **Appendix B**

### **Motivating Volunteers**

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There is no way any volunteer organization can survive without *motivated* volunteers. You need to motivate someone to get them to volunteer; you need to motivate them to do a good job; you need to motivate them to reenlist. You even need to motivate them to recruit other volunteers.

What is presented here are a few simple tools to help motivate the potential volunteer, based on the theories of David McClelland, and a lecture by Bill Hawkins. The underlying assumption is that people are motivated by different things; they should not all be treated alike. People are separated into three types. Of course, people are not exclusively one type or the other. However, each individual is primarily motivated in one way. It is critical that their *primary* needs are addressed; where possible their secondary needs should be addressed also.

To a small extent, you have to match the right person to the right job. But most of the time all that is really required is to match the right management style, sales pitch and rewards to the individual. As you can see from the **Suggested Sales-Pitches** sections below, it is quite possible to pitch the same job to different people in completely different ways. Each style is attracted to a different approach. The **Respond Best To** sections give you some idea of the optimum management style for each.

How can you tell which category the volunteer fits into? If you happen to work with this person, or know someone who does, you probably have a good idea. If not, you can generally learn all you need to know from asking them one question like “what about your past volunteer experiences or job that gives you the most pride and satisfaction?” Typical answers to this question as well as some comments you might hear them make are included in the **Indicators** sections.

*Appendix B by  
A Zagoria, May 2004*



## People are Motivated By Different Things

### Achievement

#### **Motivation**

People who are motivated by achievement want to work in a situation where challenging goals are clear, they can demonstrate their skills, and learn new ones.

#### **Respond Best To**

Challenging work; opportunity to learn, opportunity to use their skills; concrete specific goals; unambiguous feedback. The worst thing you can do is pull this person off a project before it is completed.

#### **Indicators**

“I am bored.” “My talents are being wasted.” “It’s not clear what is expected of me.” What I am most proud of is the results I achieved.” “What I like best about this job is that it gives me the chance to learn something new.”

#### **Sales Pitch**

“This will be a great chance for you to learn how to ...” “Let’s see if we can even beat the amount of money we raised last year.”

### Power

#### **Motivation**

People who are motivated by power want to work in a situation where they have autonomy, can impact their working environment, demonstrate their uniqueness, and earn the respect of others.

#### **Respond Best To**

Opportunity to persuade / influence others; autonomy; recognition for their success; opportunity to be recognized by and persuade those higher up in the chain.

#### **Indicators**

“Don’t micro-manage me.” “It would be nice if I got some positive recognition around here.” “What I am most proud of is overcoming all those obstacles to get the project done on budget.” “What I like best about the job is that I can do things without having to follow a lot of rules and detailed instructions.” “I want to capitalize on my unique strengths.”

#### **Sales Pitch**

“I picked you because I know you can get this done. Go ahead and do it as you think best.”

### Affiliation

#### **Motivation**

People who are motivated by affiliation want to work with others, gain their approval, and feel that they are making a significant contribution.

#### **Respond Best To**

Opportunity to work as part of a team of great people; feel that they are contributing; feel that the mission of the team is important; situation where team building is valued, personal interaction and cooperation is encouraged.

#### **Indicators**

“Not everybody on their team is pulling their weight.” “Some of the people on the team are not team players.” “What’s the vision for the team?”

#### **Sales Pitch**

“Would you assemble (hand pick) a group of people to take on this task? It’s really important, and your success will really help the Institute”