Midwest Symposium on Circuits and Systems Steering Committee
MWSCAS Steering Committee
Minutes of meeting held in San Juan, Puerto Rico, Monday, August 7, 2006

Steering Committee members present:
Hoda S. Abdel-Aty-Zohdy, M. Omair Ahmad, G. Rick Branner, Kwong S. Chao, Mohamad Farooq, Igor Filanovsky, Nadder Hamdy, Takao Hinamoto, Ken Jenkins, Manuel Jimenez, Sherif Michael, Wasfy B. Mikhael, Rogelio Palomera-Garcia, Hector Perez-Meana, Carla Purdy, Mohamad Sawan, Mona Zaghloul
Guests present:
Edwin G. Delgado Delgado, Jose G. Delgado-Frias, Ricardo Mediavilla, Nader Rafla, Gabriel A. Rincon-Mora, Edgar Sanchez-Sinencio, Ramon E. Vasquez

The meeting was called to order at 8:15 p.m. by Prof. Mikhael, Steering Committee Chair. Prof. Mikhael thanked Prof. Palomera for the well-organized folders which had been prepared for all the Steering Committee members. He noted that the student support discussed last year is being provided this year by the conference organizers, with free registration for all Student Paper Contest finalists. Prof. Zaghloul moved that the minutes be approved. Prof. Michael seconded the motion, and the motion was passed.

The treasurer's report, which had been submitted by Prof. Wierzba, showed a balance of $21,110.62 as of July 1, 2006. This included $2010 from the 2004 conference in Hiroshima. A check for $920, from the 2005 conference in Cincinnati has also been forwarded to Prof. Wierzba. This will bring the total to $22,030.62. Prof. Mikhael reminded the Committee that the organizers of each year's Symposium should send $5 per full registration to the Committee.

Old business:
Prof. Purdy presented the final report for the 2005 Symposium in Cincinnati. There were 670 submissions (120 of which were from students), from 37 countries, with 565 (84.3%) accepted for 79 lecture and 4 poster sessions. There were 481 complete papers submitted for the Proceedings CD and for uploading into IEEE Xplore. A total of 447 participants registered for the Symposium, from 30 countries, classified as IEEE member (153), nonmember (31), life (3), and student (260). Most participants were from the United States (259), followed by Canada (46). Attendance was far above the 300 participants originally expected and included a higher percentage of students than originally planned for. The organizers have sent $920 ($5 per full registration) to the Steering Committee and repaid the loans from IEEE CAS and from the IEEE-Cincinnati Section. The final budget report will show a larger profit than projected. Prof. Mikhael thanked Prof. Purdy for the report and led the Committee in a round of applause for the organizing committee for the 2005 Symposium.

Prof. Palomera presented the preliminary report for 2006. There were 398 submissions with 302 recommended for publication, 201 to be presented as lectures and 101 as posters, for an acceptance rate of 76%. He noted that requiring full papers seemed to have lowered the number of submissions considerably. As of July 21, the Committee had

$113,537.50 in income and $75,224.36 in expenses, so a surplus is expected. Sunday registration was 254, with 116 students and 138 nonstudents. This does not include on site registrations. Prof. Palomera thanked his two technical chairs, the two student contest chairs, and the rest of his committee for all they have done so far. Prof. Mikhael and the rest of the Steering Committee thanked Prof. Palomera and his committee for their organization of the Symposium. They also thanked Dean Ramon Vasquez, UPR-Mayaguez Dean of Engineering, for his strong support for the Symposium.

With regards to attendance this year, there were especially long delays for some visas, including for Mexico, where the process was taking up to 6 months. This is undoubtedly contributing to a high number of no-shows from some countries, especially China, India, Egypt, and Mexico. Similar visa difficulties have been observed with other recent conferences in Puerto Rico. This will probably be the case from now on, even if there is just a transit through the U.S. Prof. Palomera recommended sending information about visas and a supporting letter with the acceptance letter in future. Prof. Sawan noted that NEWCAS sends a supporting letter with the acceptance letter and that with this method there have not been visa problems so far. It was noted that as of January 1, 2006, even those driving to Canada may need passports.

Prof. Mikhael noted that the Symposium can be very flexible on what authors are required to submit. Prof. Sawan suggested that going back to requiring an abstract only should be considered. Prof. Jimenez noted that one good result of requiring full papers was that only 5% of those accepted failed to submit a final draft. Prof. Branner asked how it was documented that requiring full papers reduced the submission rate. Prof. Palomera answered that some authors submitted only a draft and that those were not accepted. Prof. Branner noted that requiring full papers makes the Symposium more prestigious in the eyes of the research community. Prof. Abdel-Aty-Zohdy supported requiring full papers and noted that having the Proceedings ready at the time of the conference is a big plus. Prof. Farooq noted that timely acceptance is very important to help with visa issues. The Canadian government is changing and becoming more like the U.S. government with regard to these issues.

Prof. Sawan provided a Powerpoint presentation and handout on plans for next year's 50th symposium August 5-8 in Montreal, joint with NEWCAS. Epapers will be used for submission, and hotel rooms will probably be about $189 (CAN). Prof. Sherif suggested a committee of 2-3 with long experience with MWSCAS to help plan 50th anniversary events. Prof. Sawan noted that he is working with Prof. Swamy and Prof. Ahmad on this and that they welcome any ideas and information. Several suggestions were made, including contacting Prof. Aronhime, who knows a good deal of the history, looking in *Circuits and Systems* for reports, contacting previous organizers, and looking at what was done for the 40th Symposium.

A brief report on plans for the 2008 symposium in Knoxville, Tennessee, prepared by Prof. Don Bouldin, who was not able to attend the meeting, was read by Prof. Palomera.

New business:

Prof. Abdel-Aty-Zohdy, chair for future symposia, listed proposals the Committee has received. The 2009 symposium will be in Cancun, as approved last year. Prof. Perez-Means discussed plans for 2009. The symposium will be the first week in August and will follow the traditional format. Hotel rooms will probably be about $165 per night. There will be less expensive hotels nearby also.

Prof. Farooq noted that a proposal was put forward in 2005 by Prof. Fatih Kocan from SMU, Dallas, but that this had been left out of the 2005 minutes. Prof. Zohdy noted that there had been no follow-up on this proposal so far.

Prof. Delgado-Frias presented a proposal for hosting the 2010 symposium in Seattle, Washington, in late July or early August. He has identified 3 potential hotels, in downtown Seattle. There are also inexpensive youth hostels. There are many high-tech companies near by, and it should be possible to get support and to get representatives to come talk to student attendees. There are many convenient flights to Seattle from all parts of the U.S., as well as from Asia, Europe, and Latin America. ISCAS will be in Seattle in 2008. The ISCAS chair, Prof. David Allstot, will also help with MWSCAS 2010. Prof. Mikhael suggested the proposal be approved now, since it is difficult to get space in Seattle. Prof. Palomera moved that the proposal be approved and Prof. Jenkins seconded the motion. The proposal was approved. Prof. Zohdy noted that a more formal version of the proposal should be prepared for next year's Steering Committee meeting.

Prof. Zohdy will contact Prof. Kocan about submitting a formal proposal. Proposals for 2011 and later should be encouraged, following the guidelines on the memo which she has provided. She suggested that having the Symposium in the Midwest in 2011 would be a good idea. She also noted that we need a permanent web page for MWSCAS, to include future symposia.

Prof. Mikhael urged everyone to make sure their information is correct on the Steering Committee membership list, so that one current correct list can be made available. He noted that there are quite a few inactive members on the Committee. He suggested that members should be removed if they have not been active for 2-3 years (they can always be added back). Members need to be involved to keep alive the traditions of the Symposium.

Nominations to the Steering Committee this year include Prof. Sanchez-Sinencio, Texas A&M, who is reactivating, Prof. Gabriel A. Rincon-Mora, Georgia Tech, who is Technical Co-Chair for 2006 and 2007, Prof. Jose G. Delgado-Frias, Washington State, who will chair the 2010 Symposium, and Prof. Nader Rafla, Boise State, who has been involved in the Symposium for several years and is investigating organizing a future Symposium. Prof. Michael moved to accept the nominations and Prof. Jenkins seconded the motion. The motion was approved.

Several suggestions for future symposia were made:

Prof. Filanovsky suggested this year's keynote speaker, Greg Lowe from TI, might be invited to MWSCAS 2007 also. He will follow up on this with Prof. Sawan.

Prof. Farooq noted the low attendance at this year's tutorials and suggested that they might be made a part of the conference (with possible a small amount such as $5-10 added to the registration fee) so that more people would be encouraged to attend. Prof. Palomera noted that tutorials can be very good for students, and Prof. Filanovsky noted that presenters should be sure they are accessible to students. Prof. Ahmad described a method used by NEWCAS to encourage student attendance, involving refunding part of the fee if students attend. He noted this works well for NEWCAS.

There was also a brief discussion about getting seed money from the Steering Committee's funds. Prof. Mikhael noted there was over $20,000, if it is needed. He suggested organizers might ask for a seed money loan. IEEE will also loan seed money.

Prof. Branner spoke on how we might elevate the Student Paper Contest, which he and Dr. Soderstrand started originally, to a higher level. He had difficulty getting judges this year, for example. Prof. Mikhael noted that the Contest is a very important part of the conference and that this conference has always served as a training ground for students. He noted that if each Steering Committee helps out a little, the effort will add up. The Contest reflects well on the conference but it should not be a burden on the organizers. Prof Mediavilla noted that there is a lot of information submitted with the student papers and that this could be made available to the reviewers. Prof. Mikhael noted that track chairs and reviewers could note strong student papers during the regular review process. Prof. Palomera said that Tom Wehner of epapers could probably put a feature supporting such nominations into his paper management system.

Prof. Farooq mentioned that there were problems with reviewing for the special sessions. Prof. Mikhael noted that this is not new but it often happens because organizers do not have the benefit of past experience with this issue. It is often difficult to reject a special session paper since these papers have been solicited. Prof. Mikhael noted that it is a good idea to put recent organizers on the Symposium Committee to provide advice on such issues based on their experience. Prof. Rincon-Mora volunteered to add some guidelines for special session reviewers.

As there was no more new business, Prof. Mikhael called for a motion to adjourn. Prof. Zohdy moved to adjourn and Prof. Sanchez-Sinencio seconded the motion. The meeting was adjourned at 10:50 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,
Carla Purdy