

Southeast Student Conference Feedback Summary 1-16-18

Email Communication sent in November (Deadline to respond – December 20)

*The purpose of this email is to ask for your feedback regarding a plan, proposed by the ASCE Committee on Student Members (CSM), to form a new **Mid-South Student Conference**. This plan, if approved, would affect the members of the Southeast Student Conference. The Committee on Student Members values your input, and will not be taking any steps to implement this plan until after responses and feedback are received from all Student Chapters impacted and CSM is able to conduct an analysis of your responses. Please reply to Ryan Kobbe, CSM Chair and Leslie Payne, Director of Student and Younger Member Programs **by December 20, 2017**.*

Background and problem:

The number of ASCE chapters has increased dramatically in the past five years. This is largely due to the number of international student chapters forming outside the US in addition to continued domestic growth. Currently we have 363 student chapters, and with the number expected to exceed 400 by 2019, the current Student Conference structure will not be able to sustain this growth.

Response:

Managing this growth is the responsibility of the Committee on Student Members. The size and makeup of the overall Conference structure needs careful evaluation to ensure its smooth function and success into the future. CSM has already moved to establish ASCE's first International Student Conference in India and supports the establishment of others in the Mid-East and China when Student Chapters and corresponding International Sections in these locations are ready. International Chapters not able to form a Conference will continue to have the option of traveling to the US to compete. We have indication that this activity, too, will grow and are preparing for this eventuality. Meanwhile, feedback we are getting from our domestic Conferences suggests that the size of some of our conferences is becoming a liability. The average size of US Conferences is 16 schools. The Southeast Conference is the largest with 28 schools. CSM is proposing that the conference be divided into two separate conferences, Mid-South and Southeast.

Rationale for change:

- 1. Risk – Managing large numbers of students has inherent risks and these risks increase with larger numbers of students. The many aspects of transporting large numbers of students and their concrete canoes create the potential for harm. Students will have to travel shorter distances with fewer schools in the conference.*
- 2. Cost – Already many smaller schools find it impossible to host the Southeast Conference, due to the venue size requirements and expense of hosting so many schools. Fundraising efforts are increasing along with cost, and often now exceed the funds received through registration. In the future, universities may be pressured to ask students to pay higher conference fees if fundraising cannot keep up with the expense of hosting. In addition, the expenses for individual schools increase with an increase in the travel distance to the host school.*
- 3. Engagement – Pressures created by travel, hosting limitations, and increasing costs combine to limit the number of individual students involved, and dilute the value experienced by our*

students and student chapters. ASCE's conference structure should support more, rather than less engagement.

Proposed change:

The (new) Southeast Conference would include all schools in Florida, Puerto Rico, and the University of South Alabama. The Mid-South Conference would include all other schools currently in the Southeast Conference. If no additional chapters establish within those boundaries, each Conference would have 14 schools:

This change could happen as soon as the 2019 Student Conferences – if a host from the (new) Southeast Student Conference would volunteer to host for that year. If that isn't possible, the change could be postponed until 2020.

Action required:

CSM would like to know if you support this plan and if you would vote for it given the opportunity at the upcoming business meeting at the University of Florida. Ultimately a Conference vote would be required to release members of the Southeast Conference, and a new Constitution would be created for Mid-South as a first order of business for the new Conference. Additionally, feedback regarding the rationale and the plan is welcome.

If your Student Chapter would be willing and able to host the (new) Southeast Student Conference in 2019 if the change did happen, please also let us know.

Thank you for your time and feedback regarding this proposal.

Responses:

University of Florida

Redistributing the ASCE Southeast Student Conference

Proposed Redistribution (from CSM):



The following is a discussion of pros and cons for the proposed redistribution of the ASCE Southeast Student Conference.

Based upon the proposed redistribution the estimated conference attendance numbers are summarized below:

University Attendance Based on 2018 ASCE Southeast Student Conference Current Attendance Estimate			
Mid-South		Southeast	
Alabama A&M University	10	Embry Riddle Aeronautical University	15
Auburn University	25	FAMU-FSU	50
Georgia Southern University	40	Florida Atlantic University	35
Kennesaw State University	50	Florida Gulf Coast University	25
Lipscomb University	30	Florida Institute of Technology	25
Savannah State University	10	Florida International University	60
Tennessee Technological University	25	Polytechnic University of Puerto Rico	30
The University of Alabama	40	University of Central Florida	50
The University of Alabama in Huntsville	20	University of Florida	60
University of Alabama at Birmingham	5	University of Miami	15
University of Tennessee at Chattanooga	10	University of North Florida	35
University of Tennessee, Knoxville	30	University of Puerto Rico - Mayagüez (UPRM)	45
Vanderbilt University	25	University of South Florida	60
		University of South Alabama*	30
Total	320	Total	535

PROS

- Splitting into two Conferences could possibly make hosting more manageable (but there is likely a critical number that would need to be reached for this to be effective)
 - Potentially, fewer students to organize and smaller venues required
 - Smaller universities would hopefully be able to host and not skip their turn hosting

- Student chapters' costs for attending conference might decrease (possibly—but, this is not guaranteed as the primary costs for conference are hotels, registration, and travel. The proposed redistribution may not reduce travel enough for all schools to benefit)
 - The split conference could possibly allow universities to travel to closer locations and reduce costs for travel.
 - This might allow schools to bring more students if costs were decreased enough.

CONS

- Florida Section Support to hosting schools
 - The proposed redistribution would require Florida section to provide financial support almost every year as the proposed southeast conference is essentially the “Florida” conference. This could lead to a decreased amount of support to the conference.
- Puerto Rico
 - The proposed southeast conference members would be presented with the opportunity and challenge to travel to Puerto Rico with fewer schools available to pool resources.
- Student Appeal
 - Students enjoy traveling to new places during conference. With the proposed redistribution, many students within Florida would be traveling to their hometowns and interest in participation could drop off.
 - A large conference creates a sense of excitement toward ASCE and competing at the National Level. For the universities who don't compete at Nationals, the larger Regional Conference is the event that expands ASCE beyond their school and state.
- University of Southern Alabama
 - It would be the only Alabama school in the proposed Southeast Region and very distant from its nearest conference school.
 - Travel to south Florida schools and Puerto Rico could be a significant burden.
- Estimated Attendance Numbers for proposed redistribution:
 - The proposed conferences are unevenly split based upon recent attendance numbers. The proposed Southeast “Florida” conference would compete with almost 535 students and 5 large teams (50+ members). The proposed Mid-South would compete with a little over 320 students with only 1 large team (50+ members).
 - If University of South Alabama were moved to the proposed Mid-South, the numbers are still dis-proportionate (South: 505 to Mid-South: 350)
 - If the goal is to reduce the size of the conference, the Southeast would still be a very large and very competitive conference. Hosting 500-600 students is still quite challenging from a logistics and scheduling perspective (venue availability and size is a major issue).
 - Semantically, Southeast doesn't seem to describe Florida and Puerto Rico. We should consider different names.

Estimated Costs and Fundraising Requirements

	Existing Conference	Proposed Mid-South	Proposed Southeast	Existing With Fee Increase Participant: \$70 School:\$700	Existing With Larger Fee Increase Participant: \$70 School: \$1000
Estimated Attendance	855	320	535	855	855
Estimated Expenses	\$125,000	\$90,000	\$103,000	\$125,000	\$125,000
Estimated Individual Registration	\$ 47,000	\$17,600	\$29,000	\$60,000	\$59,000
Estimated School Registration	\$5,400	\$ 2,600	\$2,800	\$18,900	\$27,000
Estimated Fundraising Required	\$ 72,600	\$ 69,800	\$ 71,200	\$46,100	\$38,000

2018 ASCE Southeast Student Conference Proposed Plan of Action

- University Webinar Discussing Split (held prior to conference on 2/16/18)
- Communication about Voting Plan
 - Email to universities with meeting agenda and discussion notes from webinar
 - Faculty advisor and at least one returning student (a chapter officer that will be at next year's conference) must be in attendance.
- Voting at Business Meeting
 - Brief Discussion about each vote
 - Pro / Con session for 10 minutes each
 - Vote first to split or not split
 - Vote second on type of split
 - i.e. what schools are in what region
 - Vote on increasing student registration fees (potentially to \$70)
- If Southeast votes to split
 - Propose 2019 conference consist of two Business Meetings
 - Allow Universities a chance to discuss and vote to create or change conference bylaws
 - Increasing student registration fees
 - Re-ordering hosting list
 - Potential fines for not hosting
 - Developing financial plan for the conference
 - Discussing National competition equipment transitions
 - Signed form of consent
 - Propose 2020 Change Enacted
 - UCF hosts Southeast Conference in 2020
 - Vanderbilt hosts Mid-South Conference in 2020

- University of Tennessee Knoxville has agreed to host the 2019 conference and UCF has temporarily agreed to host 2020. Universities should have two years of planning and enacting the change in 2020 would provide UCF and Vanderbilt two years to plan (next in line according to bylaws if split does not change the order).
- If Southeast votes not to split
 - Propose selected alternative ideas for initial discussion and propose voting on ideas at 2019 conference

Alternative Ideas:

- Increase Student Registration Fees
 - We would like to vote to increase the student registration fee from \$55 to \$70.
 - This accounts for inflation because the fee has not changed since at least 2007.
 - A more accurate price can be calculated to determine set price for student fee to ensure a hosting school only need to fundraise an appropriate amount
- Increase School Registration Fees
 - The school registration fee should be increased
 - A fee increase to \$250 per school would account for inflation
 - A fee increase to \$700-\$1000 would more fairly distribute hosting expenses among the schools. This will increase the number of schools willing to host further distributing hosting needs. Raising an additional \$500-\$800 should not be too difficult, even for the smallest schools, but this overall raises about \$20,000 which would require much more effort for the host school to raise.
- Chapter Skip Fine
 - Student chapters must take responsibility of skipping their turn for hosting conference. If there was a financial obligation for chapters that skip their turn, more schools would take on the burden of hosting and there would be less of a question on who is hosting the following year.
 - If schools are unable to host, they would pay a fine to support the conference for the following year. The fine would be at least \$1,000.
- Re-Order of Universities
 - If the conference is split, chapters may want to take the opportunity to reorder the conference hosting list. They can rotate regions and states so students don't end up in the same area.
 - Florida and Puerto Rico would decide on an appropriate time for the conference to be hosted in Puerto Rico
- Steel Bridge and Concrete Canoe Equipment
 - Concrete Canoe
 - Swamp tank and buoys should be transferred every year. The hosting conference must let the next conference know and prepare to take the equipment home. Buoys require extra set up at each location.
 - The current Southeast Conference Head Judge (Peter Moore) has a set team of judges
 - Steel Bridge

- The current Southeast Conference Head Judge (Tim Davis) is working on securing and organizing equipment to be used at the regional level each year
 - If there is a split, the Mid-South region will likely have to provide their own equipment and judging panel.
 - Most of the current canoe and bridge judges are from Florida. Most of the equipment is personally donated from Florida alumni and it is logistically challenging to transfer to other regions.
- Signed Letter of Consent Form
 - At each business meeting, each university in attendance must bring a letter of consent form stating if called upon, they will host conference in the following two years. This must be signed by a university administrator, student chapter, and advisors.
 - A signed letter of consent form ensures that each business meeting ends with conference hosts for the following two years. Universities think about accepting or decline hosting before the business meeting so they do not back out last minute or are surprised if called upon when they are further down the hosting list
- ASCE Nationals should consider redistributing multiple conferences/regions
 - Georgia Tech and other schools are closer to certain regions but not a part of their closest conference.
 - ASCE Nationals should look at all conferences and organize all universities based on location and student numbers. The proposed “Southeast” conference is still very large and competitive when compared to other conferences around the nation.
 - This seems to be the best course of action to more evenly organize conferences across the nation. This would be led by ASCE Nationals as an overall restructuring program with support from student chapters.
- Establish a Conference Level Entity/Organization
 - This could help provide continuity between conferences.
 - Set up a consistent web presence (Example PSWC)
 - Set up a bank account that can be used to transfer money between hosting schools.
 - Increase school registration fees and implement a financial penalty for “skipping” hosting responsibilities to ensure that all schools contribute fairly to the cost of hosting.
 - Could potentially allow for a way to provide need-based scholarships to increase engagement.
 - These could be student registration scholarships
 - Or they could be for schools based on distance traveled similar to the canoe nationals

Thank you.

Becca Kiriazes, Mary Sullivan, Ryan Casburn /2018 SE ASCE Student Conference Co-Director

Mark Newman / UF ASCE Faculty Advisor

Florida Atlantic University

Good Evening

We had quite a bit of conversation about this last year when FAU hosted the conference (so no FAU can't next year). There are three issues and I am not sure this proposal resolves either of them (biggest being the banquet cost per person, flowed by school economics and Puerto Rico):

1. The real cost issue is the banquet. That was 65% of the cost at FAU. Even higher at UTC and UA. It also gets rowdier each year. If there was no banquet, but maybe a picnic at the canoe site, that would be way better. If we can solve this, the costs drop and the bigger schools would find it easier to host.
2. Small schools do not have the facilities to support this conference. Or really any conference over a couple hundred people. They simply do not have the facilities or the number of students to do this. Hence they pass each year. A problem occurs when one says they would like to, then says no at the following conference. Because it takes two years to plan this type of conference, not locking in schools 2 years out is a problem. Too much can happen at small schools and if they can't go (like Georgia Southern), it creates a huge issue for the next in line (UF this year). We keep having schools not show up because they lack the numbers. Hence a rotation among larger schools makes better sense and would be more secure for planning purposes. Offering to have a large school and small school co-host makes sense and has been done successfully (FIT-UCF or UM-FIU are examples). Only UCF probably can host on their own. Also the proposed split would put most of the small schools into the mid-south region. Only UA, Auburn, Vandy, UTK and UTC can probably host (Note UTK has not confirmed hosting in 2019 yet – an issue for UCF the next in line). (Florida schools would probably prefer the less traveling – FSU, UF, USF, UCF and FAU have all hosted alone).
3. The Puerto Rico schools are a monstrous problem for travel and are the crux of the issue that led to this discussion at least year's conference. The cost to get the canoe, bridge and students to PR is very high (\$30-60K) and student safety cannot be assured, language barrier aside (hence why Mayaquez did not host in 2017). Only big schools would make this trip (UF, AU, Auburn, USF, UCF said they would probably go; maybe FIU and UM due to proximity. FAU, UNF, FGCU would not go, and FIT has said they wouldn't be able to in the past). Half the schools said they could not afford to go to PR - Way too expensive. (Note I have quietly talked to the schools and despite what the students say, probably only 7 schools would definitely travel). Students in PR pay their way here through a variety of means (\$1200/student) that simply does not work going back for most schools. Forcing the conference to go to PR would be highly detrimental to the region and that was a major discussion point last year. Several schools said last year they would actively seek other options if PR schools hosted (USA was vocal, but also others). The problem is they are part of the rotation. It has come up three times in the last 4 years.

If you feel you must split the region Another, better option would be to put the 5 SEC schools, plus the 2 PR schools together – they all have the money to travel. Maybe add UCF to that mix. That would be over half the students that attend and the ones with the most money. Doesn't solve the banquet problem but does fix the PR issue.

Hope that helps – feel free to call me 239-250-2423

Fred

Florida Atlantic University #2

Good morning. Great. Note we like the region and as a region we have tried to put on the best conference for students, so Happy to talk about any of this. 239-250-2423. Been the advisor here for 7 of these now, including one host and know many of the other advisors, incl half the recent hosts. We spent a bunch of time before we accepted on decisionmaking as a school. Faculty here spent a lot of time working with the students on logistics, costs, barriers etc over a two year period to host in 2017. It came off well. We have had further conversations with other schools. I know the gators are scaling back - time and the banquet costs have gotten ridiculous. We spent \$67/ dinner alone which was more than the registration fee of \$55. Alabama had issues with the banquet cost. On campus was more expensive. A lot of schools have contracts for any on campus food so the banquet cost is a major barrier and the rental fee on campus for a large seating area is problematic (if such a place exists). Alabama did heavy snacks vs a dinner. The gators may scale that back. They cut back the contests due to time to 12 (from 20).

Fred

Florida Atlantic University #3

Hi Beth

Thank you for the phone call information.

I am not sure that the proposal to split the region addresses the underlying issues for the regional conference.

1. The cost of a banquet - for FAU the cost exceeded the \$55 fee to students. UF is not having a sit-down dinner. Neither did Alabama. Both are huge schools that can raise money. The cost of the banquet is a problem and the proposal to split does not change this issue.
2. The split will cause schools to host more often. Every 10 or 12 years is ok, but every 7 will not work. I do not see much potential for the small schools in the region to host the conference regardless if there is a penalty for not doing so
3. The Puerto Rico travel issue is not resolved. Smaller schools will not go to PR. Even some bigger schools like FAU will not go to PR. Students at those schools pay an average of \$700 out of their own pockets to travel here. Average costs is \$1200 per student. This wont work for most schools because our students do not have this kind of disposable income. Splitting makes it worse for the Florida schools, half of which may not go.
4. This conference takes two years to plan - offering schools that cannot host an opportunity hurts larger schools when they do not fully commit. UF was impacted by this in 2018.

Some thoughts that might be better:

1. Connect big and small schools as co-hosts and decide how to split the responsibilities up front.
2. Require a commitment two years out to host. Pass if you cannot. No harm done.
3. Create a regional pool to help hosts (fee per year would be larger – like everyone pays \$1000 or \$1500 each year to defray costs for the host). Maybe, as suggested, ASCE regions hold the funds.

4. If not, we need to raise the student fee from \$55 to \$75 or \$100 (not my favorite idea)
5. Alter the banquet requirement to something different. It gets pretty rowdy and control gets lost late. No one listens to the speakers anyway. Kids want to look at photos and get trophies. * years of contests and it is always the same thing. Better minus the banquet. A big BBQ would be better.

Now, how about a really weird idea. Instead of regions like we have, why not set all the schools in tiers like they do in soccer. Schools that finish really well in a region, can move up a tier and compete with like schools. Lesser schools can compete better and have a chance at moving up without being dominated year after year. UF and UPM would move up to a tier from the SE region and would compete with Clemson and the like. Those schools that compete at that level tend to be able to raise more funds, have larger student groups, can spend more time on the contests and travel, whereas other schools do not. If you cannot compete at tier 1, you move back down to the regions. Just like soccer. Can't believe I am using a soccer example, but this would really create useful results and would end domination at the regional contests which discourages kids at the other schools.

Florida International University

Good evening Ms. Wiley,

I am following up on the conference call last Friday (2/16/18) regarding the possible division of the Southeast Conference. I am the advisor for the Florida International University (FIU) student chapter. I spoke with the student leaders of FIU's student chapter to gather their input regarding the proposed split of the Southeast Conference.

The student leaders of the group expressed their opinions against the proposed division. Their hesitations align with those discussed on the call last week and include:

- Having less schools in the conference will require schools to host the conference more frequently. This may be difficult for the smaller schools.
- The students made note that they have enjoyed the diversity of schools that attend the conference each year. They are concerned that reducing the number of schools in the conference will reduce the diversity and energy of the conference.
- The division has the proposed Southeast Conference composed of primarily Florida schools. The students would like to continue having schools from other states at the conference. They really enjoy the friendly, enthusiastic environment with students from various backgrounds.
- With less schools in the conference it could be more important for each school to attend every year. If a school does not attend, it will be more noticeable and have a greater effect on the level of competition.

Please let me know if you have any questions or need additional information. We thank you for the opportunity to weigh-in on this decision.

Best regards,
JoAnna

Lipscomb University

Lipscomb University would be in favor of this proposal.

Chris Gwaltney

University of Miami

Dear Leslie and Ryan,

I don't have any additional feedback and I agree with the proposal. Our school would NOT be able to host in 2019.

Regards, **Diana Arboleda, Ph.D.**

University of Alabama

Leslie:

We just spoke on the phone about this subject, but I did want to send in an official response. In general, I am all in favor of developing more manageable conference sizes with ~400-500 students instead of 850-1000. Having recently hosted the Southeast Student Conference, I am well aware of the massiveness and expensive of the undertaking. It really has been a burden for the host institutions. One that we are happy to have but a challenge none the less. If we could reduce conference costs to the \$50,000-60,000 dollar range instead of the well over \$100,000 that it costs now in the Southeast, that would be great and maybe get a few more institutions involved in hosting. While we have 28 schools, I believe only about 12 have ever hosted.

My only official concern is that ALL the Alabama schools (including University of South Alabama) stay in the same student conference. Our groups have tried to be mutually supportive and the state holds a leadership conference for its chapters every year and we really would like to keep together in the same conference. I fell quite sure you will hear similar comments from at least USA and Auburn.

My guess is some of the opposition feedback will have to do with less teams coming from the regional competitions to nationals if the regional competitions are smaller. That is at a given conference not as many slots for nationals. I personally have no problem with this. In the S.E. we have numerous competitions and many smaller schools put tremendous effort into them, to see year after year of the same schools winning and NEVER sending any of their own members to the podium. While competition is great and I am not a believer in awards for showing up, something that gives a more level playing field ...as this might... would be welcome.

For what its worth these are my thoughts. I personally would really like to see the break up into two smaller conferenecs and believe it will be a net positive.

Derek

University of Alabama #2

Leslie:

Thanks. I try to get a friendly reminder out. After we spoke I talked to two of my student chapter officers (Emily Gouyld –President who just won 2nd place in the National Professional Paper contest), and Rachel Thornton a nontraditional student from a military background who is our conference VP. They brought up a number of interesting points: (1) With smaller less spread out conferences more students could afford to participate, more chapters could afford to host, and travel would not be as expensive and difficult too manage. All items you and I discussed. They also correctly identified another good point we did not discuss: with 28 teams the conference is a perpetual race to get each competition done. There is little time at all for students from different chapters to talk and network (and lkay the foundation for better ASCE retention in the graduation to 35 group). With something like 20 boats in the canoe races, they TAKE all day to run and often cannot be completed if the weather is not perfect. Again given the tremendous time constraints imposed by large and small competitions having over 20 teams, there is little time for comradery and cross team building, and very little time for effective informal and formal networking and mentoring by professional members.

Just wanted to pass these thoughts along.

Derek

Tennessee Tech

Hello,

I greatly appreciate the consideration of splitting the current ASCE Southeast Conference. I have been the Tennessee Tech faculty advisor for 11 years, have attended 9 conferences, and hosted 1 conference in March 2011.

I wholeheartedly concur with the rationale for changes listed below. Cost is the primary factor driving some of our recent concerns. For the past several years, the conference has been held in Florida, averaging a 12-16 hour drive. This also means that we have to spend 1-2 extra days for travel (Wednesday prior to conference and/or Monday after conference), causing students to miss more classes – and subsequently much lower student participation.

Costs simply for transportation and lodging for about 30-40 students typically is \$15,000 - \$20,000 for these conferences. High costs are primarily due to charter bus and the cost of Florida hotels. Conferences in Tennessee or Alabama have been less than \$10,000. Our department has always supported student participation but this cost is not sustainable in the long run. Students must spend more time fundraising, which in turn, means less time spent on actually preparing for the competitions.

Furthermore, schools in Florida have consistently moved up the timing of the conference. Prior to about 2012, the conference was always the last weekend in March. Every year since it has seemed that the conference moves up a week or so. This year, the conference is being held the first weekend in March

(March 1-3). This, to a degree, gives certain schools a “leg up” on preparations and a potentially unfair advantage. It is relatively warm/hot in Florida in March, while in Tennessee, we may still have snow/freezing. This largely prevents us from being able to practice rowing (with or without our actual concrete canoe) due to weather conditions, which leads to safety issues (i.e., hypothermia, etc). As such, I do not expect our students being able to even get in our concrete canoe prior to arrival in Florida this year.

When Tennessee Tech hosted in 2011, we welcomed about 800 or so students/faculty to our campus. For our banquet, we rented an outdoor venue. Now, the conference appears to host over 1000 students/faculty. As was stated in your email, this is not reasonable for many schools, including potentially us in the future due to growth, to have the capabilities to host. The \$55/student registration is far from sufficient to host a conference. In 2011, we fundraised approximately \$70,000 just to break even. Every year it seems the stakes are raised for hosting bigger and better “parties”.

As can be seen, I fully support splitting the conference into two groups. However, I do have some concerns regarding the composition of the proposed Mid-South Conference. It was stated that each conference would have 14 schools. I believe this would put the following schools in the Mid-South:

*UTK

*Auburn

*Vanderbilt

Lipscomb

+TSU

*TTU

*UTC

UAH

UAB

*UA

+Alabama A&M

KSU

GSU

+Savannah State

In reality, only 11 of those schools have actively participated/attended previously (those with “+” have not). Only 6 of those schools (*) have hosted a conference, with the others turning down the opportunity. While splitting the conference may make hosting more feasible for a few of the schools, I would hope to have about 9-10 schools on the rotation for hosting. It may not be practical or feasible for Tennessee Tech to host conference every 6-7 years. Is there any possibility of schools outside of our

conference to consider moving into the Mid-South? I know Georgia Tech left the Southeast many years ago...would they consider moving back? What is the standard rotation in other conferences?

Overall, even without the addition of more schools to the Mid-South conference, I personally still support this move to split the current Southeast Conference and would vote as such at the upcoming business meeting. I believe UTK would be next up on the list to host conference and to the best of my knowledge were in the preliminary stages of planning.

Please don't hesitate to contact me if anything needs clarification or any additional questions arise. Thank you for this opportunity!

Ben Mohr, Ph.D., P.E.

University of N. Florida:

Good Afternoon Leslie and Ryan,

I am in favor of the student conference re-alignment as proposed in the email. Limiting travel distances to the student conference will help a small school like the University of North Florida.

Regards,

Nick

University of N. Florida: #2

Good Afternoon Beth,

The ASCE student leadership from the University of North Florida would like to submit the following statement regarding the discussion on the re-organization of SE regional conference members.

The American Society of Civil Engineers student chapter at the University of North Florida understands the reasoning for the proposed split of the Southeast Regional Conference. However, the student chapter does not support the proposed split resulting in a conference that consists of only Florida and Puerto Rico universities. Such a split would drastically reduce the enthusiasm within our chapter for conference as it would limit the student experiences associated with the conference. The student chapter supports an alternative proposal to re-align the southeastern student conference region to the geographical boundaries of ASCE region 5.

Regards,

Nick

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University of North Florida #4

Hi Beth,

Apologies for the late response. Please allow me to summarize the final consensus of the UNF student chapter.

At the Multi-Regional conference in Buffalo during the Region 5 breakout, the topic of the conference split was discussed. The region's representatives agreed that it would make sense to have all the student conferences align geographically with their regions. With that proposal, that would mean that Tennessee and the other schools who are not in Region 5 would be moved into their own region's conferences. This proposal however, would affect more than just Region 5, which may lead to bigger issues. If all regions were realigned then our conference may still be big, but not as big.

The students do not want the split to happen. We have listened to other alternatives given by the other school's and the region's reps and have concluded that there is not a simple fix to this issue that will make everyone happy.

However it happens, the students do not support the split if it leaves Florida as it's own conference. It would be preferred to either leave the conference as it is now, or possible do a split based on chapter size. The travel is not an issue for us and we prefer to have the opportunity to travel.

We do not have an exact answer for what you all should decide to do, and this is just how our school views it. The logistics of our proposed alternatives are beyond our knowledge.

I wish you and your team the best of luck with this heavy decision. Regardless of what is decided, our university will be present and participating at the future conferences.

Thank you,
Ashley

University of Puerto Rico – Mayaguez

Dear Leslie and Ryan,

After circulating this proposal through our Student Chapter and fellow ASCE Mentor Professors, as well as through our Department's Chairman, for their comments and feedback, we believe **we would support this plan and vote for it given the opportunity at the upcoming business meeting at the University of Florida.**

We understand the rationale for a change and, although the proposed setup would give us less exposure and visibility within the states and schools in the new Mid-South Region, exposure and visibility which we value a lot, accessibility and current financial/cost realities move us to **accept/support the proposed plan.**

Costs are always pretty high for us in Puerto Rico (and for anyone coming to Puerto Rico). For those and other financial realities that I believe are fairly well known to most people in the United States, together with the difficulties created by Hurricane Maria, which ravaged the island, **we are unable to host the (new) Southeast Student Conference in 2019 if the change did happen.**

I hope this answers your questions for now. Do not hesitate to contact me again if you feel you need to.

As always, best regards.

Most cordially,

Hiram Gonzalez, P.E., M.ASCE

University of South Alabama

Dear Mr. Kobbe and Ms. Payne,

Thank you for contacting us and for looking into this very important issue of the size and potential growth of the Southeast ASCE student region. I will start this by saying that we at the University of South Alabama are in favor of splitting this region, as the size has become an issue as you state in your explanation. After some discussion with former student presidents and my department chair, Dr. White, we ask that you reconsider separating the University of South Alabama's student chapter from meeting with the other student chapters in our state. Over the past five years, the six student chapters in the state of Alabama have met in January for a collaborative leadership conference to promote networking, leadership development, and healthy and collaborative competition to future officers in preparation for leading our chapters. This conference has generated a sense of State camaraderie that has created helpful solutions to problems in preparation for the conference as well as created friendships in the careers of alumni.

We realize that from a geographic perspective, having our chapter with Florida is logical. However, we are actually closer in proximity to the Deep South region than the southeast region. Plus, the schools in south Florida (FAU, FIU, Miami, and FGCU) are further from Mobile than any school in both the Deep South or the new Mid-south region.

With all this being said, we at the University of South Alabama are in favor of splitting the region, but we would prefer to be in the same region as the rest of the schools in the State of Alabama. We hope you consider this when the proposal is presented at the business meeting in March. Please contact me if you have any questions or would like to discuss this further.

Thank you

Eric Steward, Ph.D., P.E.

University of South Alabama #2

And as Department Chair, I concur with Dr Steward. The ASCE Student Chapter at the University of South Alabama requests to be included in the region that includes the other Alabama schools .

Kevin D. White, Ph.D, PE

Florida Institute of Technology

Hi Leslie,

We support this proposal and would vote yes for this change. Unfortunately, we will not be able to host the conference at this time due to our commitment to host the National ASCE competition.

Regards,

Nakin Suksawang, PhD, PE

Polytechnic U at Puerto Rico

Greetings.

Hope you had excellent holidays.

Regarding the issue at hand I was only able to discuss this with the department director before the winter recess. We agree that this will be a favorable change for us.

As you know we have large transportation costs shipping our canoe and bridge. Reducing driving costs is a welcomed change.

Reducing the number of schools in a conference will help us greatly specially since we are hoping to bring the conference to Puerto Rico soon. The Polytecnic University of Puerto Rico is a small school.

It is too soon for us to volunteer to host the 2019 conference because of the damages resulting from Hurricanes Irma and Maria. Only about 57% of the island has electric power and power failures are usual on regular basis. Also comuncations and internet are not reliable at this time. We will have a better assessment on our situation by March.

Thank you

Prof. Ginger M. Rossy

University of Tennessee at Chattanooga

Dear Leslie,

I apologize for the tardy reply. When the email first came through I had planned on replying while “on the road”, but I totally forgot about it. I left for China on the 12/06, and only returned on 12/31 – today is my first day back in the office.

With regard to the subject matter, my inclination is to not support the proposal of splitting up the southeast conference. While the arguments for splitting as outlined in your email are very reasonable and persuasive, in reality there are some schools within the conference who are regular no shows no matter the proximity of the host school to their location. And I worry that the burden of maintaining a vibrant conference is going to fall on a limited number of few schools.

Ignatius

Auburn University

Leslie,

I am sorry for not responding sooner. I was trying to get feedback from other colleagues so the response was more than just my personal thoughts. With the holiday, it fell off my radar.

I am in full support of splitting the Southeast region into two different regions. While I think that this is a very strong region it makes it very hard for some of the smaller schools to compete in the larger competitions and earn their way into a national competition. It is also extremely difficult for even some of the larger schools to host the competition. At Auburn, we do not have a facility to host the banquet. When we hosted last, we had to build a temporary tent structure to have enough space and the conference has grown since that time. While we would continue to host when our turn comes, it would be more difficult and costly to do. I think it will also benefit the conference for the smaller competitions as the number of schools made the numerous competitions overlap so it was not possible to support other competitions as they all were running for long periods of time.

As far as the split, the only comment I would make is that I would prefer to see the University of South Alabama with the rest of the Alabama schools in the Mid-South Conference. Led by Dr. Steward, we have been working on bringing the programs together regularly and it would be beneficial to that effort to attend the same annual competition. One of the other faculty here also mentioned that it might be an opportunity to consider bringing Georgia Tech (and UGA if they now have a Civil Dept) into the Mid-South as it would be a more geographically convenient region than them being part of the Carolinas Conference. That may be a separate issue but it was a comment I received and I see the merit.

As far as the 2019 conference, Auburn would not be able to host with one year notice. We did that last time we hosted but I will be on sabbatical this spring so there will be someone else at the conference in my place and it would not be possible with my schedule to work this out. I would rather see the two conferences individually select a 2020 venue at the business meeting and leave the 2019 full conference in Orlando at UCF as is currently slotted (if my memory serves me). They are one of the schools that should have the facilities to accommodate the size of the last full Southeast conference. However if there is a school that will agree to host the conference on 1 year notice I am not opposed.

I am happy to help in whatever way may be needed to facilitate this transition as I am planning to continue as the ASCE adviser for the foreseeable future. If you have any additional questions, please let me know.

Best,

Justin

University of Tennessee at Knoxville

Dear Leslie,

I am copying this message to my department head, Dr. Cox, and the incoming advisor, Dr. Retherford.

After significant discussion in our department, we believe that a vote on such an important decision should await full discussion at the Southeastern Student Conference this March. The arguments in favor of splitting the conference are worthy and the proposed realignment makes sense from a geographical point of view.

However, the Southeast conference has a tradition and reputation of being one of the most competitive student conferences in ASCE. Culturally it is also very diverse with representation from the southeastern US, Puerto Rico, and China, as well as a mix of public and private schools, and programs of various sizes. We perceive that it is likely that the level of competition, sense of tradition, excitement, and enthusiasm could be diminished by splitting the conference. We should carefully evaluate the tradeoffs of splitting the conference.

One of the listed benefits of splitting the conference is that more schools will be able to participate in hosting. At present, we host the Southeastern Student Conference about every 12 years. We understand that not all schools have the resources to host such a large event. We consider it our privilege to be able to serve as host on a periodic basis and carry more than our "fair share" of the load. Do we have assurance from other schools in the proposed Mid-South conference of their intention to host in the future, especially those who have not hosted in the past? It would be less desirable from our perspective to host a smaller event more frequently. Also, can you share data to support the notion that a larger percentage of schools participate in hosting in smaller conferences?

We have already begun planning to host the 2019 Southeastern Conference at the University of Tennessee in 2019. We have secured venues to host all 28 schools, but we can adjust if necessary. We are willing to host either the full Southeastern conference or the new Mid-South conference in 2019. Obviously the fund raising challenge for 28 schools is larger than for 14. At the same time, uncertainty about the fund raising need and the scale of the event prevents us from being able to approach potential corporate supporters until this issues are resolved. Our plan was to begin fund raising this month. We hope that a final decision on the conference format for 2019 can be reached as soon as possible so that we can proceed with planning and fund raising.

In conclusion we see both advantages and disadvantages of splitting the ASCE Southeastern Student Conference. We would like to hear from other schools about their enthusiasm for splitting the

conference and for hosting in the future. We will be supportive of the final decision, whichever way it goes. Regards,

John Ma

Savannah State University

Leslie,

Sorry about the delayed response.

I do support this proposed change, and would vote for it at the upcoming business meeting at the University of Florida. However, I am not sure as to the better conference fit for Savannah State University, as we are right on the proposed border of the new conference boundary. Travel from SSU to the furthest schools in each region is very similar.

Regarding the possibility of hosting a Student Conference in 2019, I am not sure if we have the resources at this time to support hosting a conference. This could be determined after having a conversation with some conference administrators that can discuss the specific resources that are needed to host such an event on our campus, as well as the time and effort commitment that I can expect in the planning and coordination. In a nutshell, I'd like to know more information before agreeing to be a possible choice for the conference.

Please let me know if you have any further questions.

Sincerely,

Bryan Knakiewicz, Ph.D., M.ASCE

Savannah State University #2

Beth,

I just read every document that was attached. I do like the split more than when we first discussed the possibility. Even though it's exciting for my students to be around the larger universities (Florida, FSU, Miami) and Puerto Rico, the competitions may be more balanced now. I also think the pros outweigh the cons, in terms of conference planning and logistics.

I do vote 'yes' on the split.

Bryan Knakiewicz, Ph.D., M.ASCE

Assistant Professor | Civil Engineering Technology

Department of Engineering Technology

SAVANNAH STATE UNIVERSITY

912.358.3283

Florida Gulf Coast University

Hi Leslie, sorry for my delayed response. I will support this plan.

Kind regards

Seneshaw

University of South Florida

Dear All –

In my humble opinion, I believe that this proposal has a major drawback. It isolates students to primarily Florida Institutions (majority) which prohibits the young members from interacting with other institutions in the Southeast. Though I understand the risks, as we have hosted the conference at USF few years ago, I believe that it is worth the scheduling and organizing nightmare. Interacting with other out-of-state students' chapters is extremely valuable experience with tremendous benefits. Therefore, I do not support the proposal.

Kind Regards,

Abla Zayed, Ph.D.

University of Central Florida

Leslie and Ryan,

In preparation for the pre-business meeting on Friday, I guess let me at least register a response for UCF. We are opposed to the proposed split in the conference. But not because we are simply opposed; however, I have not been able to understand the real motivations and challenges experienced by the schools involved in hosting and attending conference. Happy to hear what the thoughts are experiences are of the Committee on Student Members and the other chapters in the region. I definitely understand that current and future growth will not allow it to continue on in exactly the same mold as before. There have been a lot of discussions internally, with officers from other FL schools, and at Florida section, so I think perhaps the timeline for a formal decision is a bit accelerated.

Even with a 50/50 split, there does not appear to be any reason to believe that the size of the conference would be small enough to enable small schools to host, nor does it appear to provide any reductions in travel demands on schools that are already struggling to travel 50 or 100 miles. There is also the obvious concern that Florida is now isolated in the proposed split, and we are losing some key schools, so at a minimum some other division of the conference would need to be proposed and evaluated. Perhaps in tandem with looking at the neighboring sections and the schools participating in those conferences (if it turns out that ability to participate = mileage to conference). We also do not follow the risk and liability concerns without further clarification, the conference(s) being described are still large gatherings of schools/students. I have also not seen any discussion about how an increase in schools attending nationals impact the regional conferences and vice versa.

Anyhows, any information collected on these (and other) issues that could be shared or discussed would be great.

Thanks,

Kevin

Kevin R. Mackie, PhD, PE

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Vanderbilt University

Beth,

I realized on the phone call last week that I have not sent official feedback to you. So, here is my feedback. It has changed some based on the data from Mark at University of Florida:

My vote is "maybe"

Pro- split:

The conference will be easier to organize.

Travel time and costs will be decreased.

More steel bridges and canoes go to nationals?

More likely to win!

Cons:

May have to host more often. There is no guarantee that smaller schools will host. Florida schools will still be hosting large conferences. If would like a commitment from the smaller schools that they will host before I vote yes on the split.

The new mid-South conference is almost too small. It would not have the same feel as the big Southeast conference. Students would not have as many competitions to participate in.

We would miss the diversity of the Florida and Puerto Rico schools. My students always talk about how much they love Puerto Rico and the energy that they bring to conference.

Loss of steel bridge and concrete canoe equipment. The new mid-south would have to purchase these.

Loss of most of the steel bridge and canoe judges as most are in Florida.

Other thoughts:

Increase the school and student fees so that it is not such a hardship to host.

Make the banquet less formal.

If schools choose not to host, they will pay a fee based on how many students they bring/size of their school. Small schools pay an extra \$1,000 and large schools pay an extra \$3,000 each year, or perhaps a sliding scale.

Best,

Lori

Lori Troxel, Ph.D., P.E.

Professor of the Practice

Civil and Environmental Engineering

(615)-322-0055

Kennesaw State University

Beth, Ryan and Leslie,

I've consulted with our chapter's leaders (officers and competition team captains), and informed them of the pros and cons that have been discussed so far. We are currently in favor of the split.

Most common comment was: The competition is so large that it limits the ability to go onto to nationals, especially the concrete canoe. They support having a total of four bridges and two canoes having the possibility of going on to nationals.

Looking forward to your new email and the business meeting at UF.

Nancy

Nancy J. Turner, PE
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