

I Am a Volunteer and I Do...

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What activities have you undertaken as part of your volunteering

As the interim Chair of the Early Careers Forum (ECF) over the last 6 months, I have had the pleasure of helping to define what the forum is and what it hopes to achieve.

As it is still in its infancy there has been a lot of work done to try to get it started. I have participated in INCOSE UK and UKAB joint meetings, as well as INCOSE UK Council meetings, where the views of the forum have been expressed and recommendations have been given to INCOSE UK on how they can support people in their early careers. I was also able to draft the Terms of Reference for the forum, which gave me and others involved a chance to shape the future of the ECF and have a real influence on its direction and purpose.

Following this we launched the forum at ASEC in November 2017, which was a fantastic experience and a great place to meet a lot of very enthusiastic systems engineers. My responsibilities now as the Chair of the ECF, are to ensure that the forum meets its terms of reference, aims and objectives. I will be preparing for meetings and events and liaising with early careers individuals to help promote the forum.

What Originally inspired you to volunteer for INCOSE UK?

I first became involved with INCOSE UK in April of 2017, when I attended an early careers event held jointly with the UK Advisory Board (UKAB). The event brought together people with different expertise in different domains from all over the country, and a variety of different backgrounds.

As the day drew to a close I ended up presenting all the feedback from the event to the audience, and I was very keen and enthused about taking the early careers forum 'idea' further.

Getting to speak to those people and being engaged with a community of systems engineers outside of my job was captivating. I wanted to do it again and become more involved with more people from more places! It was then that I first felt like I wanted to be a part of the SE community at large, and volunteering felt like the right way to make that happen. I'm also very passionate about supporting and developing people in their early careers and providing a voice for those who will inevitably become the future systems engineering leadership. I was invited to pass on the feedback and recommendations at the next INCOSE UK council meeting. At this point, I agreed to take on the interim role of ECF Chair to help make the ECF a reality.

What do you feel you get out of your volunteering?

First and foremost, it is enjoyable and keeps things interesting. There is more to a career or profession than just your job, and volunteering has helped me to realise that and explore the vast amounts of other experiences to be had.

I've gained know-how in creating and launching something new from the bottom up, whilst developing an understanding of how INCOSE UK functions. I've been a part of spreading the message that SE is an important part of engineering and met a whole load of people that are far more intelligent than me in the process! You get a different perspective on things from the different viewpoints of various people, and thus more insight to the way in which SE is practised in other domains and companies. Ultimately, it can give you a much more holistic view of the world and the discipline of Systems Engineering and its practitioners. At a personal level it can be an invaluable experience to take with you wherever you go, whether changing employer or even profession.

Specifically, being able to set the course for the future of the ECF and its members has been both fun and exciting.

Do you have any advice or feedback to offer anyone who is considering volunteering?

I'm sure almost everyone who has volunteered for something at least once will have said the same thing; just give it a go, try it out, and do it! There is little to lose and you are normally able to contribute as much or as little as you are able to, on your own terms with no obligations.

Don't be afraid of what you think you can or can't achieve and just look at it as an opportunity. It can be an opportunity for personal development, meeting new people, getting to know yourself better and what excites you or most importantly, an opportunity to make a difference and help others.

All in all, it will almost always be both stimulating and rewarding, and will certainly expand your horizons. Just give it a go, try it out, and do it!

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