

Centennial Campaign

Membership Objectives

by Troy M. Miller

This is the second in a series of articles highlighting the goals of the ECS Centennial Campaign as displayed in the ECS Case for Support. The first article highlighted the education objectives of the Case for Support. If you wish to view the Case in its entirety, or want more information about the Centennial Campaign, visit the ECS website at www.electrochem.org.

Members have been, and continue to be, the lifeblood of the Society. Therefore, making improvement in the overall member satisfaction is a significant goal of the ECS Centennial Campaign.

The Electrochemical Society's Case for Support includes three quantifiable objectives to better allow ECS to improve member satisfaction. These three objectives include increasing marketing efforts and improving customer service; increasing the availability of travel funding; and boosting student membership.

Marketing and Customer Service

During a recent survey, members consistently stated that one of the most dramatic ways to improve The Electrochemical Society is to consistently market the benefits of being a member. For many years, ECS has not had to invest heavily in marketing to continue a steady rate of growth; however, maintaining its stature—as budgets for travel, personal development, and research and development are lessened in response to economic pressures—will be a tremendous challenge. In addition, increasing competition will make this even more difficult, especially as the current economy and budget cuts make individuals more selective. ECS must compete with other societies in attracting and maintaining members. This obligates the Society to increase its marketing and public relations efforts.

Traditionally, ECS marketing efforts have been limited as the Society maintains a balance between its “higher calling” of presenting technical content and presenting information about the availability of this scientific data. Though financial necessity makes marketing a requirement, technical content will not be sacrificed. Still, providing a forum that allows for a delivery of benefits is crucial. The Centennial Campaign will raise \$50,000 for a Society-wide marketing plan that concentrates on highlighting programs that, with proper marketing, will produce additional income, which in turn, will improve services members depend on.

While this marketing campaign concentrates on individuals and companies that may not be aware of the benefits ECS provides, the Centennial Campaign will also raise \$7,000 annually to promote the value of membership to a large non-member constituency. For example, every year thousands of individuals, who are not members of the Society, attend ECS meetings, or publish in or subscribe to ECS technical journals. The Society would benefit from the involvement of these individuals, and these individuals would derive important benefits from membership.

In addition, the Centennial Campaign raises \$21,000 annually for developing new member welcome packages, and renewing member information packets to keep members informed of the many benefits that come with membership, and the many improved benefits that ECS is constantly rolling out. Demonstrating the power of membership to individuals will improve Society retention, and will acclimate new members to the Society.

Similarly, improving the lines of communication among members is an important objective of the Centennial Campaign. Of all the benefits of membership, members ranked networking as the most important. By raising \$24,000 for new computer servers, ECS will be able to build an online community for its members that promotes networking. In addition, ECS is a volunteer-driven organization. All decisions are made by volunteers (the Case for Support was developed solely through the membership), and without volunteers the Society would not exist. As travel monies and time available for travel continue to decline, this “virtual ECS community” provides a low-cost alternative to these valued volunteers.

During The Electrochemical Society's fall 2002 meeting in Salt Lake City, the Board of Directors approved a new award entitled the Charles W. Tobias Young Investigator's Award. The purpose of the award is to recognize outstanding scientific and/or engineering work in fundamental or applied electrochemistry or solid-state science and technology by a young scientist or engineer. The ECS Centennial Campaign will raise \$100,000 to endow this award. Obviously, the award not only honors the memory of Charles Tobias—a seminal figure in ECS, and in electrochemical science as a whole—but also involves younger ECS members in an exciting new program that can only have far-reaching benefits as the Society continues to involve members in its structure and administration.

Lastly, ECS is investing in improving its customer service abilities. Already, The Electrochemical Society has purchased a new computer system that allows members to register, make changes in their membership information, and order products online. Later this year, ECS employees will begin attending customer service training to improve every experience a member has with the office staff whether it be on the phone, by e-mail, or at a biannual meeting.

The goal of the ECS Centennial Campaign is to reach more of the electrochemical and solid-state constituency through marketing and improved customer service. This can best be represented with an increased retention rate of 88% and a 15% increase in membership by 2007.

Travel Funding

ECS Divisions depend on travel grants to grow and maintain symposia. By offering travel grants Divisions can attract the best minds in a particular field, or they can allow an individual to attend a symposium who would normally not be able to afford the travel costs. Traditionally, Divisions have depended on the revenue generated by the sale of proceedings volumes (PVs) to provide travel grants. However, PVs are meeting with increased competition as well, as authors seek multiple publication channels, and libraries are faced with ever-diminishing book budgets. While increasing revenues from other areas such as meeting technical exhibits may help slightly, they currently do not have the ability to cover all of this valuable revenue. Some symposium organizers raise money from corporate sources, but this is a time-consuming task and calls for important pre-existing contacts in an industrial field that is being hit hard by the poor economy.

Relying solely on PV revenue for travel grants also creates other issues. For example, smaller or newer symposia are hampered because they are not generating PVs and then cannot generate travel funds. As has already been stated, these same travel funds are instrumental in growing the symposium in the first place.

The ECS Centennial Campaign will raise \$100,000 annually for Divisions to disperse travel grants. This will replace the current revenue being used to fund travel grants, and will allow the Publication Committee and Board of Directors the opportunity to look at alternatives for the current PV program that concentrate on technical content and access. While an equitable Division distribution plan would need to be created, it is imperative that Divisions are provided this valuable funding in order to maintain and expand symposia.

Student Participation

We must have a strong voice and presence in the student community, making students aware of the viable and attrac-

tive alternatives in our fields and of the value of membership in ECS. The main concern current members had with the future success of ECS was engaging students and younger members. Maintaining a strong membership base is vitally important to the continued success of ECS. One goal of the Centennial Campaign is to increase student membership in the Society by 15% by 2007.

Currently, ECS distributes informative posters designed for students to professors and other academia that are members. In addition, ECS promotes student mentoring by our academic members. Of course, ECS continues to offer students ECS membership that includes access to the *Journal of The Electrochemical Society* and *Electrochemical and Solid-State Letters* at only \$10 annually. The Centennial Campaign will raise \$15,000 annually to augment the current marketing efforts at universities and colleges worldwide, and will support new student chapters with a \$1,000 stipend upon creation to help organizers with the difficult job of organizing a student group.

Conclusion

When ECS surveyed members and friends last year, we asked what are the Society's weaknesses. One of the most consistent answers, from all of the diverse groups within ECS, was outreach. Based on this, increased competition, and a declining economy, the Society is renewing its dedication to member satisfaction and customer service.

With your support, ECS will raise \$328,000 during the Centennial Campaign to improve the experience you have with your Society. Upgrading member satisfaction and customer service, increasing the funding available for travel, and promoting student participation are important objectives of The

steps in maintaining the Electrochemical Society.

“Members have been, and continue to be, the lifeblood of the Society. Therefore, making improvement in the overall member satisfaction is a significant goal of the ECS Centennial Campaign.”

Troy Miller is the ECS Director of Development.