

Minutes of USUCGER Board of Directors meeting
1:00 – 2:30 pm, February 14, 2016
Phoenix Convention Center North 122A
Geotechnical and Structural Engineering Congress

In attendance: E. Kavazanjian, E. Rathje, S. Olson, T. Qui (online), C. Meehan (online), B. Leschinsky (online)

1. 1:10pm Ed (chair) calls meeting to order
2. Announcements
 - a. Dr. Deborah Gooding (NSF) will lead the session “The lowdown on National Science Foundation funding for structural and geotechnical engineers” on Monday, February 15, 2016, from 10:00 – 11:30am in Room North 120AB.
 - b. Dr. Ellen Rathje will moderate the session “NHERI: Shared-use infrastructure for research in natural hazards engineering” on Tuesday, February 16, 2016, from 10:00 – 11:30am in Room North 124B.
3. USUCGER Treasurer’s Report
 - a. The organization has a balance of \$55,834 (as of 2/12/16) combined in the checking and PayPal accounts. This leaves USUCGER with significant reserve that can be used for various initiatives. The checking account is located in California. Treasurer Meehan has investigated moving the checking account to another bank, but paperwork could be difficult. Board agreed that there is no benefit to moving account.
 - b. Current membership numbers, including institutional, individual institutional, and associate members, has remained essentially static since 2013.
 - c. Income from most recent dues cycle (2014-2015) totaled \$19,252.58 (including interest income). Dues collection ended in late 2015 for the 2014-2015 dues cycle.
 - d. 2014-2015 expenses totaled \$16,594.54. This included one funded special project in 2014 (\$5,000) and two student travel grants in 2015 (\$3,138.89), resulting in a net revenue of \$2,658.04.
 - e. Based on suggestions from Meehan and Kavazanjian, Rathje moved to change dues collection to a 3-year cycle. Motion was seconded by Olson. After brief discussion, motion was passed unanimously. The new 3-year dues cycle will start immediately, for the 2016-2018 cycle. Meehan and webmaster will reconfigure processes on PayPal and website for 3-year cycle of dues collection. This will roll-out in 1 to 2 months.
 - f. Rathje also suggested that the Board consider to move to a 3-year budget rather than an annual reporting of the budget.
4. Webmaster’s Report
 - a. Kavazanjian relayed Webmaster’s report from M. Evans, including 2015 activities and 2016 upcoming activities.
 - b. Kavazanjian also reported that Evans was stepping down from the Webmaster post and proposed B. Leschinsky as a replacement. Olson moved to appoint Leschinsky as new Webmaster. The motion was seconded by Rathje. After brief

discussion, the motion was passed unanimously. Leschinsky stated that he would like to give the website a “facelift,” and proposed polling the membership for things that the membership would like to see in an updated website. The Board supported this initiative.

- c. Based on Board discussion, Rathje moved to recognize Evans with a USUCGER Service Award for his 8 years of service as webmaster. The motion was seconded by Olson and was passed unanimously by the Board.
5. Student Travel Grants
 - a. Kavazanjian reported that 17 qualifying entries were received in December 2015, and of these, 2 travel grants were awarded in January 2016 to J. Kim (Illinois) and S. Xiao (Lehigh).
 - b. Each recipient will be reimbursed up to \$1400.
 - c. Some discussion followed regarding how the \$1400 limit was selected, but the Board agreed that \$1400 was a reasonable limit for reimbursement.
 6. 2016 Election cycle
 - a. Kavazanjian reported that the Board was still two members short of its full complement of 8 members, despite having just elected Directors Rathje and Olson in 2015.
 - b. During a discussion, Kavazanjian noted that this occurred because USUCGER inadvertently missed an election cycle. Kavazanjian reported that this membership shortfall could be rectified if he and Qui had their terms extended by 1 year. However, the Board could not vote on this extension because with Kavazanjian and Qui abstaining from the vote, the Board did not have a quorum. As a result, this item was tabled for a later meeting.
 - c. Regarding the new elections, Leschinsky (the new Webmaster) would send out a call for nominations to the Board later in 2016. It was also discussed that the call should be for one senior and one junior faculty member.
 7. Special Project Small Grant Initiative
 - a. Kavazanjian provided details for the Special Project Initiative as well as example projects.
 - b. The first Grant was awarded in 2014 to Prof. J. Kaklamanos to develop a geotechnical engineering software package in the environment *R. Kaklamanos* would be finishing his report in the upcoming weeks, would be providing a summary during the USUCGER annual meeting, and also presenting his work during a Congress session.
 - c. No grants were awarded in 2015.
 - d. The RFP for Special Project Grants would be posted after the Congress (tentatively by February 19), and would include a reporting requirement.
 - e. The Board discussed how many grants should be awarded in light of our current budget surplus, however, the Board agreed that the number of awards should be based on the quality of the proposals.
 8. Early Career Workshop

- a. Kavazanjian reported that other commitments prevented him from making this event happen at the 2016 Congress.
 - b. NSF is still clearly interested in supporting a workshop like this, and that it may benefit more than just early career faculty.
 - c. Need a champion to lead the effort for the 2017 Congress.
 - d. The Board discussed that this effort fit under the purview of both the Research and Education subcommittees of the Board, but Kavazanjian would reach out to the membership during the annual meeting to determine whether there was interest in leading the effort.
9. Geotechnical and Structures Congress Student Program
- a. Kavazanjian reported the disappointment of many in that the Congress had significantly increased costs for students while also decreasing their benefits (no lunch on Tuesday, no access to Monday night reception, no access to Congress closing luncheon, etc.)
 - b. Board discussed this issue and agreed that they would suggest to the membership during the annual meeting that USUCGER should write a letter to the G-I expressing our disappointment in the treatment of the student participants at the Congress.
10. PDCA-USUCGER Joint Council
- a. At the initiative of PDCA, the two organizations formed a joint council to coordinate an industry cooperative program as well as a new Student Competition (paper competition, pile prediction?) at the annual PDCA conference.
 - b. The USUCGER members on the council are: Kavazanjian, Armin Stuedlein (OSU), and Muhannad Suleiman (Lehigh)
 - c. Identified 18 schools with co-op programs at the request of PDCA, who is considering initiating a formal co-op program.
 - d. Decisions on details of the PDCA student programs were still being finalized, with Armin Stuedlein taking the lead for USUCGER.
11. Other Business
- a. An election subcommittee will need to be identified later in Spring 2016 to prepare a call for nominations and run the election.
 - b. Y. Hashash will provide a report on G-I initiatives during the annual meeting.
 - c. Kavazanjian reminded the Board members to be aware that some colleges and universities (including institutional members of USUCGER) were pressuring prospective graduate students to commit to graduate school offers prior to April 15. However, this behavior is not acceptable. There is a Memorandum of Understanding signed by nearly all institutional members of USUCGER that says the signatories will not require prospective graduate students to commit to offers before April 15.
12. The meeting was adjourned at 2:05 pm.