8.2 Introduction and Overview

8.2.1 Overview

The Student Leadership Council (SLC) Chapter of the ERC Best Practices Manual contains best practices and recommendations that should be useful for all SLCs that operate in an Engineering Research Center. The original chapter was written in 2002 and was updated in 2014 to produce this edition. All sections were revised and in some cases rewritten. In certain sections, survey data incorporated in the original chapter was kept where appropriate and still applicable.

8.2.2 Methodology for Writing the Chapter

8.2.2.1 Original 2002 Edition

The Student Leadership Council of the NSF Engineering Research Center for Reconfigurable Manufacturing Systems (ERC/RMS) at the University of Michigan volunteered to conduct a study of the role played by SLCs at various centers across the country with the goal of identifying "best practices." Toward this end, a comprehensive survey was sent to SLCs. The survey addressed issues in key areas generally relevant to all SLCs, such as organizational structure, communication with students, faculty, and industry, social and outreach activities, site visit preparations, and facilities management. Specific questions were also included to address the special features of ERCs that span multiple universities. The respondents were also given a chance to share their ideas on issues that were not addressed in the survey, and also given an opportunity to evaluate their performance in various areas

Responses to the survey were analyzed to produce a set of recommendations and best practices for SLCs. These were organized into the 2002 edition of the SLC Chapter of the Best Practices Manual.

8.2.2.2 Current 2014 Edition

The 2014 edition of the SLC Best Practices chapter started with a student retreat at the 2012 ERC Program's Annual Meeting, in which students from all 17 of the active ERCs at the time formed into teams to discuss best practices about a particular function of the SLC. These teams then generated a set of recommended best practices and designated writers to be responsible for chapter sections. Further work was delayed until 2014 due to web developer turnover, as the erc-assoc.org website was undergoing a complete redesign at the time. Once a new plan for updating the chapter was devised, additional writers were selected from among active SLCs to augment the writing teams and they then built on the 2012 work to produce the new chapter.

8.2.3 Organization of Chapter

The chapter is organized as follows:

Sections 8.2 and 8.3 provide an introduction and overview, outline the objectives of the chapter, describe the 2002 survey methodology and the methodology of the 2014 update, and discuss the reasons for forming a Student Leadership Council.

Section 8.4 discusses SLC planning, administration, and development strategies, along with the onboarding of new students so that ERC information and related policies and procedures can be passed on to the next generation of students.

Sections 8.5 through 8.13 cover the various SLC functional areas addressed in the survey - namely, organizational structure, communication, outreach efforts, site visits, industry meetings, social activities, and facilities management. Each of these sections addresses the importance of the functional area, summarizes the survey findings, discusses any special aspects relevant to multi-university centers (which all current ERCs are), and identifies the best practices. In Section 8.14 we present conclusions and possible future directions.

8.2.4 Contributors

A list of contributors for this chapter from the 2014 update and after can be found at http://erc-assoc.org/content/subsequent-contributors-new-chapters-and-updates. The chapter is set up for easy updating online by authorized SLC members as circumstances and best practices for SLCs change over time. Contact the webmaster (see bottom of screen) to obtain authorization.

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