# 8.14 Conclusions

The Student Leadership Council, as an entity, generally becomes more active over the life of its center and plays an increasingly important role in representing students and solving their problems. Its focus on establishing itself as a student representative body evolves over time to operate more effectively and to live up to students' expectations. The number of students in a center can substantially increase over the years, usually from a handful at inception to over 100 at maturity; therefore, the importance of the SLC grows accordingly. In many cases, the SLC meetings that were once a month later become a weekly event. In the process, the SLC emerges as more dynamic and more actively involved in the student body.

Although the primary responsibility of an SLC is to attend to the basic needs of the students, a successful SLC does not restrict itself just to this. An active SLC coordinates a variety of activities, including outreach and social events. These activities not only entertain the ERC's students, but also improve student cohesion while generating interest and involvement in the SLC, the ERC, and engineering in general on the part of students at the partner institutions and elsewhere, including pre-college students. Social activities such as Students' Day, barbeques, potlucks, etc., along with outreach activities such as peer review, mentoring Research Experiences for Undergraduates students, organizing middle-school LEGO competitions, etc., have become part of the tradition of many SLCs. Various committees are established periodically by or within the SLC to address specific interests. For example, the industry committee at one center organizes LIFE (Learn Industry From the Experts) courses for students and has individual student liaisons assigned to each industry partner. Similarly, the poster committees at many centers assist students in displaying their accomplishments in poster format, while public relations or social committees are responsible for planning social events and maintaining external communications.

SLCs have been generally successful in fulfilling their responsibilities, although along the way some initiatives are not as successful as hoped. However, following best practices such as holding an annual SWOT survey, having student representation from all partner universities, and developing clear role and responsibility assigments aids SLCs in identifying and resolving issues quickly. Further, these and other best practices make it easier to develop and evaluate successful SLC programs.

Throughout this chapter-updating project, we have attempted to ascertain the "best practices" of SLCs from as many centers as possible. Overall, nine SLCs from a diverse set of centers (in terms of ERC age and subject matter) came together for this project, leading to a truly collaborative effort. We believe we have put together a comprehensive document that summarizes the important activities of SLCs and identifies best practices in several key areas.

We hope that this chapter will benefit not only new centers, as a kind of "how-to" guide for nascent SLCs and an orientation guide for new members of all SLCs, but also will give mature SLCs an opportunity to borrow ideas that have been tried and successfully tested elsewhere. We hope that this will be an ongoing process, with new findings being periodically added to update what will be a living document.

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