2010 SPIE Annual Report

University of Wisconsin – Madison SPIE
Student Chapter

1. Student Officers

President – Gunnsteinn Hall
Vice President – Visar Ajeti
Secretary – Karissa Thoma
Treasurer – Carolyn Pehlke

2. Chapter Members

Signed up (according to the SPIE website):
Visar Ajeti
Somenath Bakshi
Heejun Choi
Trillian Gregg
Gunnsteinn Hall
Pascal Theriault Lauzier
Joseph Szulczewski

We believe many of the chapter members neglected to renew their membership, but we are working on reminding them to do so.

3. Chapter Activities

In February, we hosted our first Khet game night where we used the four Khet boards we purchased last year through the SPIE. About 8 members showed up and enjoyed a night of competitive laser alignment and comparison of stratetic skills. Ironically, the winner of the night was our advisor's 12 year old son, who outsmarted us all.

In addition we had an introductory meeting, where we met over lunch and introduced what it means to be an SPIE member. We outlined the benefits, conferences, journals and pretty much everything that is related to the society.

On May 18th, Professor Scott Sanders from the Mechanical Engineering Department gave a talk to our group, over lunch. The talk was titled «Infrared Absorption Spectroscopy in Extreme Environments», and Prof. Sanders outlined his group’s work on
using optics for characterization of engines and mechanical components. The talk was quite well attended with over 15 people in the audience.

On July 27th, we had a student speaker, Colin Inghram gave a talk titled «Probing the Cytoplasm of E. Coli with Time-Dependent Fluorescence Anisotropy». This was our first talk given by a student, and it was quite well received by about 10-12 students that attended. Also, this talk was also given over lunch. This showed that a lunch meetings is a good way to bring people together. Everyone has to eat lunch and people usually do not reserve that time for other things. Our lunch meeting had much greater attendance than previous gatherings. We will take that into account in the future, as we continue to grow as a chapter. Furthermore, we thought our first student-speaker did very well and are interested in increasing the amount of student-led seminars in the upcoming year.

In August 2010, the president of our SPIE student chapter, Gunnsteinn Hall, was awarded the Officer Travel grant to attend the SPIE Optics + Photonics Student Leadership Conference. The major purpose of the trip was to interact with other student chapters, and learn what they are doing that works well for attracting more members and growing a successful chapter. The conference was very beneficial, and we learnt a lot from the other chapters and got ideas that we hope we can incorporate in the future. Furthermore, many of the student chapters are doing a really good job with outreach events; something we will have to work more towards in the future as a chapter.

In December 2010, we welcomed our first external speaker from the SPIE Traveling Lecturer series. Professor Alex Vitkin from University of Toronto was speaker of choice, which had been elected by our members in a meeting earlier during the year. Communications dating back to April led to Vitkin's visit in December. To guarantee maximum exposure for the event, we organized the event with the «Biomedical Engineering Seminar Series». The talk was very well attended with a full room of students and professors. Alex gave an overview of his work, and highlighted the use of biophotonics in the clinic. In addition to the talk, Vitkin met with students earlier during the day in small meetings to discuss research and career development. Vitkin's attitude towards students was extremely positive. We think our first external speaker event was a great success, and hope to have more of those in the future.

Last year, we set some pretty ambitious goals, some of which we reached, such as receiving our first external speaker and sending members to the SPIE leadership conference. However, our ambitious goals for increasing our numbers were not met. We have attempted to attract more students to join by having an introductory meeting and explaining all the benefits of becoming an SPIE member to some of the students who attend the seminar series. However, we realize that it is a necessity to reinforce and perhaps reiterate those benefits more frequently so as to attract more members. In addition, a greater effort is required from the chapter body to recruit more members in the future. This we hope to accomplish by involving more professors across our campus,
whose research is related to the field of optics, in our seminar series to reach a wider audience and have those professors be more involved in our chapter events.

4. Chapter Plans for 2011

The following goals are mainly based on the experience we gained from the previous year. We feel we need to build a stronger foundation for the chapter so that it can move forward.

Goals for 2011:

- Establish a stronger foundation
  Monthly or at least bimonthly meetings.
- Reach out to professors through our advisors team and have them more involved in our SPIE student chapter.
- Send chapter representatives to the Optics + Photonics meeting in San Diego, to network and exchange ideas with other chapters.

We have planned the first meeting to be held in September 2011. The chapter has been dormant in the earlier half of 2011 but we plan to revive it with a strong introductory meeting. Then we plan to have monthly or at least bimonthly meetings to follow up. If we cannot get professors to speak, we will invite students to give talks, which will add to their resume and also be a good practice for giving talks in bigger meetings.

To establish a stronger foundation, we need to work with professors to encourage students working in optics related fields to join SPIE.

Finally, we are keen on sending 1-2 members of the student chapter (officers) to the Optics + Photonics meeting in San Diego in August. Not only is it a great opportunity for our officers to present their research, but also to network with other chapters and learn more about what we could do to improve our chapter, and also share our experiences with them.

5. Expenses

Starting balance for the year: $631.77

Snacks purchased for our introductory meeting (03/2010): $37.52
Pizza and drinks for our student-led seminar (05/2010): $188.50
Pizza and drinks for our student-led seminar (07/2010): $118.35
Snacks purchased for upcoming events (10/2010): $52.74

End balance for 2010: $234.66