

**Young Members' Presidential Group  
ISSMGE Council Meeting Update 2019**

**1. Introduction**

The Young Members' Presidential Group (YMPG) is a Board Level Committee within ISSMGE working to engage the next generation of geotechnical engineers. This is accomplished through mobilising students and younger members from across the world to share knowledge and ideas and being a nexus of opportunities for younger members in the international geotechnical community. This report details the continuing work of the YMPG from 2017 to 2019.

**2. Membership**

Consisting of a Chair, appointed for a 4-year term by the ISSMGE President, and 3 members from each region, nominated by the Regional Vice Presidents, the YMPG has 19 members total representing a broad global reach. Membership is restricted to ISSMGE members 35 years of age or younger at the time of appointment, and members serve 2-year terms, renewable for an additional 2 years depending on interest, activity level, and age eligibility.

Full membership and biographies of each member can be found on the ISSMGE website. The YPMG is led by the current Chair, Lucy Wu (USA). The Chair is supported by the Vice-chair, Jean Potgieter (South Africa) and the Secretary, Ceres Chung (Hong Kong).

Despite the formalised 2-year terms, due to the voluntary nature of the group and the changing circumstances for young members, membership to the group remains fluid. Thus, in some circumstances, members are added or may exit during the middle of a term. Currently, there are also two members who are joining the group on a transitional basis from May 2019 and intending to fully join the group for the 2019-2021 term. In the past, members have expressed difficulties in being able to quickly come onboard and thus are not being able to fully participate. This is an attempt to shorten the learning process by bringing new members on an audit basis.

**3. Corresponding Membership**

In addition to the committee members of the YMPG, the Corresponding Member (CM) group has grown to 854 members as of May 2019 since its inception in 2013. The CM group signs up to receive emails related to the ISSMGE, conferences, post-doc or entry level positions, etc. This allows the ISSMGE, the Society's other Board Level Committees (BLCs) and Technical Committees (TCs) to reach younger members directly.

As of May 2019, the YMPG LinkedIn page has grown to 470 members and the GeoWorld group has grown to 112 members. Previous terms have driven the membership numbers and achieved a critical mass such that the groups continues to grow with little direct recruiting effort. The focus of this term has switched to providing more opportunities for these corresponding members as well as to respond to their needs and requests.

**4. Initiatives**

At the start of the term, Task Forces similar to previous term was set up, each with many objectives and initiatives. However, due to the difficulties of setting up regular meetings across different time zones and the amount of new initiatives, it was decided that the committee would work on initiatives as a group rather splitting the group into different groups. Larger initiatives also benefited from the entire group's participation rather than a specified task force.

#### **4.1 Bright Spark Lectures**

The Bright Spark Lecture award is an initiative started by the current ISSMGE president, Charles Ng to foster geotechnical talent and accomplishment within the geotechnical community. The purpose of the Bright Spark Lecture award is to promote young and promising geotechnical engineers/academics by giving them a platform to deliver keynote and invited lectures at these conferences.

With the support of Regional Vice Presidents and Conference Organising Committees, the YMPG advertised and vetted applications for three of the 2019 Regional Conferences: Europe, Africa, and Pan-America. The evaluation was based mainly in three criterias: Relevance of the subject, Quality of the application, and Personal background (CV and recommendation letters). The applications were impressive and the winners are all very accomplished, Winners have a combination of interesting and relevant subjects, good experience, and have reputable journal publications, even at a young age.

The committee began its efforts with the PanAmerican Conference. Announcements and applications were sent out to all of the North and South American societies. The societies were asked to forward their best applications. A total of 10 applications were received. A sub-committee consisting of YMPG, ISSMGE Vice Presidents, and representatives from the conference organiser evaluated the applications. A discussion session was held to discuss the applicants. The selected winners were presented to the President, who approved the selection. A similar process was followed for the African and European conferences. A total of 6 applications were received for Africa and 8 for Europe.

The committee feels that this initiative has proven to be successful and well received. Due to the fact that the Regional Conferences are only held every four years and the large size of the pool of potential applicants, there is some inherent luck with the applicants. Thus the Regional Conference and the ICSMGE Bright Spark awards should be utilised as platforms to encourage Member Societies and Technical Committees to host Bright Spark Lectures at their own conferences. The frequency of these conferences and the pool of applicants provides a much more sustainable platform to develop young engineers while providing value for conference organisers.

The YMPG is currently collaborating with the organising committee of the ICSMGE 2021 to host a Bright Spark lecture. An initial call was conducted between the YMPG Chair and Professor Mark Jaksa, the Technical Committee Chair.

#### **4.2 Joint Workshops with CAPG**

The Corporate Associates Presidential Group (CAPG) invited the YMPG to jointly host workshops and plenary sessions at the 2019 Regional Conferences. The collaboration has taken many different forms, from conference call discussions, panelist selection, to organising pre-conference workshops.

A series of pre-conference workshops supporting the theme of Collaboration have been held in preparation for the Australasia conference. The workshop in Auckland with support from the New Zealand Geotechnical Society was largely organised and executed by the YMPG. The evening session consisted of invited panelists with an audience of 40 to 50 people, of which around 10 to 15 were younger members. An instant polling tool was used to get quick feedback from the audience. The session generated excellent discussion and debate.

For the Asia conference, the group has helped the CAPG with choosing and inviting speakers and moderators for the conference session. Work is underway to plan the logistics for the day of the conference. The committee is also helping to disseminate a design survey to collect data points on the overall theme of Are We Overdesigning.

In the upcoming months, the group plans to continue working with CAPG to prepare for the conference sessions by co-hosting local workshops, disseminating the design survey, and preparing material for the conference sessions.

#### **4.3 Other Initiatives**

Several other initiatives and ongoing efforts were also areas of focus for the committee. Particularly, the YMPG supported the Innovation and Development Committee (IDC) in their initial efforts to establish the ISSMGE University by doing a review of current massive online open courses (MOOC). The group reviewed the functionality of popular websites and summarised findings for the IDC. The YMPG was contacted by TC304 to help advertise their student competition. This has evolved into an ongoing relationship with TC304 taking up the Bright Spark Lectures for their committee's conference. Other ongoing work includes maintaining the relevant ISSMGE webpages, posting news through various channels, and continuing to solicit articles for the YM Arena portion of the ISSMGE Bulletin.

#### **5. Meetings**

The YMPG typically meets via Skype conference call once every month. At the beginning of the term, a series of three rotating times were selected to give everyone the chance to call in two out of every three months. However this was too complicated so the strategy switched to having two meetings at 12 hours apart. This gave everyone a reasonable chance to join every meeting. The downside is that the same group of people always join each of the meetings and could never talk to the other half of the team. It is very difficult to operate a volunteer group across international and cultural boundaries and having remote meetings makes it even harder. Therefore the group began discussing the possibility of having an in-person meeting to foster better teamwork and collaboration.

With the generous support of the ISSMGE, the YMPG held its first ever in-person meeting in Singapore on 9-10 March 2019. During these two days, YMPG representatives met to discuss current and upcoming initiatives, foster networks, plan future initiatives, and propose a strategy for the future of the YMPG. Meeting in person, sharing meals, and connecting face to face allowed the group to connect more deeply, discuss topics in depth, and foster new ideas to successfully advance the YPMG.

Since it was held at the same time as the Board Meeting, the members who attended were able to meet the Board Members and present at the Board Meeting. The ISSMGE board is in agreement with the value of the YMPG meeting in-person. It was agreed that representatives of the YPMG should aim to meet every two years in the beginning of each term and that the ISSMGE will assist financially.

During the Singapore visit, the YMPG was also invited by the Student and Young Wing of Geotechnical Society of Singapore (SYGeoSS) to co-host a networking event for young members in Singapore. The event was held with generous support from the local professional community.. It was well attended with over 40 SYGeoSS members. Lucy Wu presented opportunities and initiatives of the ISSMGE and YMPG.

One of the most important conclusions of the meeting is the recognition that the YMPG's core strength is to serve as a connector of groups worldwide. The structure and longevity of the YMPG team is not the best setup to create initiatives. However, given its place within the ISSMGE BLC, international connections of the members, and the group's increasing reach, the committee is a natural place for other young member groups to look to for assistance, resources, and leadership. Since establishing the [ympg.issmge@gmail.com](mailto:ympg.issmge@gmail.com) email account, the group has received emails from several young member groups looking to find out more about the international community, wanting to connect.

## **6. Transition to Next Term**

As part of the outcome of the extensive discussions at the March meeting, the group will concentrate efforts on a few new initiatives. The remaining few months of this term will focus on establishing the way forward and transitioning the majority of the effort to the next term.

1. Bright Spark Lectures. Encouraging member societies and technical committees to host Bright Spark Lectures for their conferences, using the Regional Conferences as demonstration cases.
2. Member Society Liaisons. Establishing a network of young member representatives from each of the member society. This network will allow the YMPG to find out about young member activities around the world and offer societies a way to connect with each other.
3. YGEC Network. Establish a platform for YGEC organisers past and present to share ideas, know-how, and lessons learned.
4. Alumni Group. Establish a YMPG alumni network. Former YMPG members are in a unique position through their understanding of the society and committee to help with future initiatives.

## **7. Acknowledgements**

The group would like to thank the efforts of other Board Level Committees, Board Members, and Technical Committees to collaborate and support our initiatives. Special thanks goes to the CAPG, IDC, and TC304 for their enthusiasm and unwavering support.

The group would also like to applaud the individual efforts of the YMPG members, who operate on a voluntary basis in hope to advance the field of geotechnical engineering for younger members around the world.