

Tips for Planning and Organizing a CEEA-ACEG Annual Conference

The goal of this document is to assist campus representatives who may be considering hosting a CEEA-ACÉG annual conference. The information provided here should serve as guidelines for organizing the conference, with adjustments or new ideas certainly being possible, in consultation with the CEEA-ACÉG Board.

Introduction

CEEA-ACEG holds conferences to enhance the competence and relevance of graduates from Canadian Engineering schools through continuous improvement in engineering education and design education.

Conference Rotation

CEEA membership is divided into three regions: Atlantic, Central (Ontario and Quebec), and West (BC, Alberta, Saskatchewan and Manitoba). Each region takes turns hosting an annual meeting which brings together all Members focusing on a central theme. When possible, the location of the Annual Conference shall be alternated within the rotation as follows: Central - East - Central - West – Central, with changes possible by special request or circumstances, with appropriate justification.

2020	Cancelled	2026	East
2021	East (UPEI – online)	2027	Central
2022	Central (York)	2028	West
2023	West (UBCO)	2029	Central
2024	West (U of A)	2030	East
2025	Central (Polytechnique)	2031	Central

Typically, a CEEA annual conference is a 3 day event plus a full pre-conference workshop day. Please find a draft schedule on our website.

Preliminary Planning

Selection of sites for hosting an annual conference varies among CEEA regions according to the schedule.

We recommend that preparation for a conference begin at two (2) years in advance of the proposed conference dates. There are several important steps to be taken prior to hosting a CEEA Annual Conference. Before agreeing to host a conference, first and foremost a campus representative should obtain the commitment of the sponsoring school. Typically this support includes the dean of engineering. It is important to develop a proposal plan that realistically presents all requirements including staff support. Hosting a conference requires coordination and cooperation of all involved and places additional workload on existing faculty and staff.

The task of organizing an annual meeting may be divided into a number of major efforts including: selection and management of meeting facilities (university versus hotel, meeting rooms, audio-visual equipment), selection of theme and topics, sponsorships and exhibitors, paper review, selection of

session chairs, invitation of speakers, public relations, and printing and production (call for papers, program, proceedings). There will need to be a minimum of 4 committee members, plus the CEEA liaison who will also sit on the conference organizing committee. Their role is to reflect back to the Board updates and questions as well as reflect back to the organizing committee Board decisions and input.

Faculty Recruitment

Getting the support of your faculty will be key. As is often the case, not all faculty are members of CEEA. It will therefore be necessary to broaden participation and involvement to include non-members within your division/department, as well as those in related disciplines. The tasks to be accomplished require as many volunteers as you can recruit for committee work.

In most instances, your initial planning meetings should begin 14 months before your scheduled conference. This will allow sufficient time to carefully identify your resources and to take advantage of attendance at the conference the year prior to your own. It is important to have as many faculty members as possible actively participate in the conference meeting prior to hosting. This allows you to identify potential problem areas, as well as incorporate innovative concepts into your own conference plans.

Examples of Committee roles

Conference Chair: The role of conference chair is often listed as the Dean or Head of the hosting faculty or department at your University. The role of this individual is to appoint the organizing chairs who make up the conference committee. **[NB: In cases where the conference chair is not running the organizing committee the role of *Conference Co-chair* is an additional individual that should be clearly identified.]**

Finance Chair/Treasurer: The role of treasurer will keep the budget, track all expenses, keep all documentation and original receipts and regularly coordinate with the CEEA Board regarding expenses like deposits or invoices and ensure all financial, tax, and audit requirements are met. Some of these requirements include establishing conference accounts internally at your institution, expenses, regular financial reporting to the committee and CEEA liaison, and conference closing. This role is also responsible for the final audit, if required.

Technical/Program Chair: Ensures that a well-balanced, high-quality program is organized and presented at the conference. Handles the Call for Papers through the selection and review of every paper. Assists in the scheduling of session rooms and helping with local arrangements for the program. Responsible for the coordination of production of conference content (e.g., papers, workshops, keynote sessions, special panel sessions, summaries of conference papers, programs, proceedings, etc.) and is able to assist with inquiries before and after the conference. In many cases the Conference Chair will enroll a workshop chair to assist in that area.

Logistics Chair: This role is responsible for the logistics of the conference. Booking venues, contacting local hotels for conference rates, establishing a relationship with potential exhibitors and sponsors, and

assisting where needed with above roles. The person in this role works closely with the conference co-chair and treasurer on the venues to assure budget constraints are met.

Optional:

Publicity & Public Relations Chair: Gathers, maintains, and utilizes lists of media contacts and past and potential attendees for targeted outreach; promotes the conference through local advertisements as well as proper national and international channels and news media.

Table 1: A Typical Program Format for the CEEA Annual Conference

Pre-Conference	*Usually a Sunday
8:00	Workshop Only Registration and Coffee
9:00 – 12:00	Workshops
12:00	LUNCH
13:00 – 17:30	Workshops
17:30 – 19:00	Welcome Reception “Ice Breaker”
Conference	*3 full days
Day 1	Usually a Monday to Wednesday
8:00 – 15:30	Conference Registration
8:30 – 9:00	Coffee (some locations may choose a breakfast)
9:00 – 9:30	Opening / Introductory Remarks
9:30 – 10:30	Keynote
10:30 – 12:00	Paper Sessions
12:00 – 13:00	LUNCH
13:00 – 15:30	Paper Sessions
15:15 – 15:45	Coffee Break
15:45 – 17:45	Paper Sessions
17:45 – 18:45	OPTIONAL: Sponsors Reception and Presentations
	FREE EVENING
Day 2	
8:00 – 15:30	Conference Registration
9:00 – 10:00	Keynote Speaker
10:00 – 10:30	Coffee Break
10:30 – 12:00	Paper Sessions
12:00 – 13:00	LUNCH and CEEA Board Meeting in a separate room with catering for 12
13:00 – 15:30	Paper Sessions
15:30 – 16:00	Coffee Break
16:00 – 17:00	Paper Sessions
17:30	Buses to Evening Event
18:30 – 22:00	Evening Event: Includes a Dinner and some form of entertainment. Meant to be a more social evening.
22:00	Buses return to Hotels and University
Day 3	
8:00 – 15:00	Conference Registration
9:00	Some conferences have had another Keynote here, the CEEA AGM, and others straight into Paper Sessions
9:00 – 12:00	Paper Sessions
12:00 – 13:00	LUNCH – some conferences have held the AGM here, if so allow 90 minutes
13:00 – 15:00	Paper Sessions or some have done Break-out sessions
15:00 – 15:30	Coffee Break
15:30	Conference Ends, more sessions, etc. Can vary
* Overall: The CEEA Board is somewhat flexible in the schedule and always welcomes new ideas!	

Faculty should be encouraged to submit papers for presentation at the CEEA conference before yours. In addition, to becoming familiar with the style and topics of local section papers, it also allows them an opportunity to personally invite their peers to attend the upcoming conference. Networking opportunities such as this should not be overlooked. Conference planning can only benefit from such valuable firsthand experience.

Sponsorship and Exhibitors

You should lay your groundwork early and be aware of fiscal years and deadlines for requests. Your fundraising will directly impact the quality of the conference and mitigate financial risk for the host organization. It is important to have a fundraising chair who is well-connected and visible in the external community.

A fund raising/sponsorship strategy is based on a realistic budget with various levels of contributors identified – the levels of sponsors can be found in previous conferences on the CEEA website. No matter what the contribution, it is important that each and every sponsor receive recognition and must be assured that their contributions will be acknowledged in the program, signage, mailings, etc., so that there is a return benefit.

If advertising is to be included in your program, arrangements should be made for preparing and proofreading ad copies. All donors will be recognized in the program – the size of their sponsorship determines the visibility of their logo. Will there be an extra cost if they want a full page ad? Who is responsible for the signs or banners indicating sponsorship of a lunch or dinner?

Determine the cost of hosting a breakfast, lunch, dinner, or special event. Identify potential sponsors from among your larger local industry representatives. You may contact repeat sponsors as they have an ongoing relationship with CEEA and their attendees and are familiar with our mandate. In some instances you may seek co-sponsorship. Most people will probably find more success with larger companies. However, fund raising can also be successful at the "grass roots" level. Small companies may be willing to sponsor smaller amounts which will contribute toward a financially successful conference. While donations of pens, notepads, key chains, caps, bags, and notebooks should be considered, you will want to make sure there is a proper level of sponsorships to keep the costs lower for the attendees. All can be included in the materials given to each registrant. Don't overlook in-kind contributions.

Logistics

Early in your planning you will want to decide whether your meeting will be held on your local campus or in a host hotel. There are pros and cons to both. Use of campus facilities would likely be determined by the availability of meeting rooms, as well as proximity to hotels and restaurants. There may be additional transportation costs which impact your decision. CEEA has had successful conferences both on campus and off, however you should note that a hotel will always be higher in costs to your overall budget. Notwithstanding the cost, in the past a hotel has proven to be a great opportunity for networking and collaboration between CEEA members.

Whatever the decision, campus and/or hotel arrangements must be made well in advance. Below is information that is helpful in meeting with your campus conferencing staff and/or dealing directly with hotel sales staff. Hotel blocks with conference rates should be confirmed early. There should be a minimum of two hotels plus a campus residence for those that choose a more economical route.

- Possible conference dates
- Number of rooms for hotel block(s)
- Number of presentation rooms and room capacity – typically 3 or 4 streams of sessions
- Number of conference rooms and room capacity – Opening Remarks, Keynotes and AGM
- Audio-Visual requirements for all rooms
- Social events, Banquet/Dinner and possible entertainment
- Meals and Break refreshments
- Transportation – to and from events, if required

Editorial Board (Program Committee)

This seems to be a very popular committee and one for which several faculty members typically volunteer. Their work begins early and is the "meat" of the conference. One of the first tasks that this group faces is selection of the meeting "theme" and a list of possible paper topics. These are usually announced in the AGM the year prior and included in the Call for Papers. It is important that those serving on this committee be innovative and creative in their thinking. They should be aware of educational trends as well as industry needs and concerns.

Suggested submission and publication deadlines are summarized in **Table 3**. These are typical deadlines and they might vary depending on requirements for proceeding publications or other constraints. It is important that the Call for Papers announcement include an author's guide: instructions for the format, font size, margins and other information to ensure a professional production of the proceedings. Reviewing of the abstracts and papers will be subject to guidelines set out by CEEA for consistency of the conference from year to year, as well as the professionalism of the organization.

Table 3. Suggested submission and publication deadlines

Activity	Deadlines
Initial call for papers	1 year before meeting
Second call for papers	8-9 months before meeting
Third call for papers	6-7 months before meeting
Abstracts due	5 months before meeting
Accept/reject abstracts	4 months before meeting
Draft papers due	2.5 months before meeting
Accept/reject draft papers	1.5 months before meeting
Distribute draft of the meeting program	5 weeks before the meeting
Final papers due	3 weeks before the meeting
Produce CDs of the proceedings	10 days before the meeting
Distribute final program	10 days before the meeting

Once abstracts have been accepted, this committee divides presentations into appropriate topic sessions. This allows the logistics committee to more accurately determine the conference session space requirements. It also allows the program and production committee to prepare a rough draft of the program. Along with the responsibilities discussed above, the editorial board will begin to identify session chairs from various universities.

Abstracts are usually collected through a paper management system. Oxford Abstracts has been used over the last few years, and therefore should be the default option, but alternatives can be considered with appropriate justification. This account is normally set up once confirmation is received that your request to host was successful. The CEEA Board should always be included in this set up as a co-chair or alternate chair. E-mail messages and web-pages have become the main modes of communication for the announcement of Call for Papers. The notification of acceptance or rejection of abstracts or papers is done electronically.

Peer Review Process

CEEA has adopted a peer-review policy for the publication of papers in the proceedings. This has required a two-step process for the submission of draft and the final papers. Only those authors in attendance at the conference and presenting will have their papers published in the conference proceedings. Reviews of papers are typically conducted by both the technical committee as well as CEEA members. We recommend that reviewers be recruited from outside of the host institution as it greatly reduces the work-load imposed on the faculty of the host institution, which can be done by allowing authors to indicate their willingness to help when submitting their own papers.

Keynote Speakers

This committee will be responsible for identifying speakers. It is important that key faculty officials be invited to welcome conference attendees and to introduce the keynote speaker on the first day. Typically this would be the university president or the Dean / Head of the Engineering Faculty or School. The CEEA President usually would say a short welcome as well. For the remainder of the days, the

introduction of the keynote is done by the conference chair. It is important to confirm dates and times with these key university personnel early. Their schedules are often committed months in advance.

Typically industry leaders are invited to present topics of concern. Since engineering education is service-oriented, it is vital that faculty understand concerns of the end user (industry/society). Speakers from industry can point out challenges that they face and well-known public figures can encourage broad participation in the conference and attract news coverage.

Workshops

Pre-conference workshops are an important component of the CEEA Conference. These are typically 1-3 hour workshops over a full day prior to the conference presentations. These offer a perfect opportunity for faculty professional development. Workshops offer excellent opportunities to discuss key issues in a small group format. Some topics which typically generate broad interest are CEAB accreditation and new technologies (Internet and distance education). Participants should be encouraged to arrive early to take advantage of these workshops. As they are not a part of the actual meeting, there is an extra charge involved. A call for proposals for workshops has been common and allows CEEA members to present in a classroom setting on topics of interest to other attendees. With this process there has not been a shortage of workshops (10-15) and they have been greatly attended with the average attendance numbers being in the 60-80 range.

Program Committee

Deadlines will play an important role in the tasks assigned to this committee, as will coordination with other committees. In keeping with privacy laws, all contact with the CEEA will be done through the CEEA Board (through their online system) and no mailing list will be distributed; however, contact can be made to those who submit an abstract through the Oxford Abstracts account directly. Contact can no longer be made with those from past conferences unless they have a current membership with CEEA. All information that is available is on the CEEA website and will continue to remain on the website as a way of showing our history. Mailings to the NCDEAS listing can be made but only through the Dean or Head of your institution. A letter of invitation from your Dean or Head is recommended asking for the Call for Papers to be distributed amongst their academic colleagues.

Advance copies of the programme are made available to the public on our website. This may also be sent by email to all conference attendees in the week leading up to the conference. It is always noted on the programme that it is subject to changes prior to the start of the conference. At a minimum, there should be two calls for papers announcements. The first, one year in advance of your meeting, distributed to those attending the conference as well as posted to the website and a mass distribution electronically to alert those unable to attend that meeting. Prior to the notification being released the notice should be sent to the CEEA Board for review by the Board in the meeting leading up to the conference. This notice will also need to be translated to French, please allow sufficient time for this.

It is also important to ask campus representatives to circulate the call for papers to your local faculty staff and students. A major goal should be to expand participation in both the annual conference as well as the CEEA general membership.

In order to get a head start on the program layout, a draft should be prepared following acceptance of the abstracts. With this information it is possible to identify the section presentations and authors. Modifications can be made to delete those who do not submit papers by the required deadline. Production of the Proceedings for registration is key. There are always some last minute "problems" that might arise; you should alert your Information Technology person immediately of any changes in your schedule. Surprises can be very costly and you're likely to be on a tight budget. It's important that you stick to your deadlines. Official proceedings will need to be finalized after the conference, removing all papers of those who did not present and submitted to CEEA Board for publishing with an ISBN. There will be no printing of the final proceedings as this is retained in digital form.

Student Program

Students represent an important subset of our members and provide a valuable perspective to our organization through their conference contributions. Although student members participate in the regular conference, it is expected that student-focused events will also be organized. In particular, a student mixer event should be planned (typically on the first full day of the conference), but there are opportunities for other special sessions, including some focused on professional mentorship or networking. It is recommended to involve the Student Director from the CEEA Board to help organize these events.

Registration

Registration amounts are as follows and registration normally opens April 1.

- a. Any deviation from the amounts listed will need to be explained within your budget:

Early Bird Regular Attendee Registration - \$ 525.00

Non-Early Bird Regular Attendee Registration - \$ 625.00

Student Early Bird Registration - \$ 200.00

Student Non-Early Bird Registration - \$ 225.00

The deadline for Early Bird is set one month prior to the conference and the registration closes 5 days prior to the conference start date to allow for most accurate numbers.

- b. Guest tickets should be realistic to the cost of the event and not an inflated price.
- c. All lists of non-registered attendees (all volunteers, support staff, keynote speakers) should be submitted to CEEA Board by email within 2 weeks of the start of the conference. Keynote Speakers are not required to pay registration fees and are to be considered complimentary. This is for full inclusion on the registration listing and that proper name tags are printed. The deadline to send in information for all non-paying registration attendees is 2 weeks prior to the start of the conference.

Workshop fees are charged for all who attend.

Commented [PG1]: Numbers must be updated for 2026 onwards

The Final workshop schedule must be in place by March 15.

Fees are as follows: \$ 50.00 fee for the first and then each one after at a lesser amount (e.g. \$ 5.00/per)
A Workshop one day rate may be available to those wanting to attend only the workshops – this should be in place when the registration costs are set up. * Please confirm with your CEEA liaison on this as the association is currently developing a policy to cover this.

Commented [PG2]: Update

Registration information should be ready for distribution by January – well in advance of your meeting. Coordination of information to be included will be important. Proofread the registration information being sent out very carefully. It is best to have someone from "outside" proof your copy as well. They may have questions or make suggestions for clarification. The registration information should be posted on the web-site. A message should be sent to members via e-mail to inform them about the registration information.

You'll want to ensure that you give your host hotel sufficient lead time in providing reservation information to be included in your packet. Read their deadlines carefully and make sure that this is what was agreed to. The conference rate will need to be in effect from the day BEFORE the conference starts to the day FOLLOWING the end of the conference. What is the final deadline for attendees to reserve their rooms? What are rates for those who want to arrive a few days early or stay a few extra days? Can they reserve rooms for those extra days? Be sure to include information on transportation and cost from the airport to the hotel. What time is check in and check out?

This committee will need to identify staff support to handle the on-site registration. Remember that this is a full time job for the first two days and less busy the remaining two but still needing staff. The CEEA Executive Administrator is on site to assist with payments and in depth questions, however there will need to be volunteers or staff in place to assist with the actual check-in, name tags, Wi-Fi assistance and passwords, as well as conference item distribution. You'll need someone who can answer questions and make decisions. There will be a computer being used and therefore a printer will be required as well as an internet connection. Do you have sufficient staff to allow one person to remain at the registration table and another to serve as a runner? The CEEA staff member is in addition to this and you must have at least one person there at all times.

The CEEA Executive Administrator is there to allow for collection of any monies owing to the conference and guest meal tickets, as well as providing receipts. This is for the general registration only. If you choose to collect money for anything extra i.e. parking passes or transit passes, this is to be done by your volunteers/staff person(s). The appropriate person must be notified of changes in food counts so that hotel catering has the correct counts – in case of last minute onsite guest ticket purchases. Please ensure that this person checks in with the registration table regularly.

A few recommendations for additional information made available at the registration desk:

1. Taxis:

There will need to be phone numbers on display for taxi cabs as attendees will be using their services over the days of the conference. It is also good to inform the taxi companies of the conference – advising them of the dates, start and end times, where the conference is being held (which building) so that it will be easier for the attendees to be picked up and dropped off.

2. Campus Maps:

It is great if you can have campus maps available for attendees as they will be venturing outside of the conference building, and some will also be using the parking lots.

3. Parking:

You will need to contact your parking services to advise them of the conference and the possibility that people will be using their services. Some conferences have offered designated parking lots at special rates for those driving to the campus.

4. Campus Services:

- a. Confirming where the campus bookstore is and what their hours of operation are the week of the conference should be available at the registration desk.
- b. Even though the conference includes breaks and lunches, there are times when attendees will need a few minutes away to themselves or would like to break away with other attendees to collaborate. With the summer break, not all restaurants and cafes on campus will be open. A listing of what is open, the hours and where they are located is beneficial to have available at the registration desk.

5. Tourism Information:

Contacting your local tourism office and having maps available as well as brochures to places of interest for those attendees that would like to see a bit of the area is a benefit. This can be made available by either having a stand near the registration area or adding them to the conference package that they receive. Information should be included in the registration packet identifying places of interest, hours and admission fees. A map of the city provided before check in is extremely helpful.

6. Restaurants:

There are a few nights that nothing is planned as far as the conference is concerned. Attendees often will ask for suggestions on restaurants to visit. Having a listing available of recommended restaurants that are reasonably priced and can accommodate both larger groups as well as smaller is a nice gesture.

Audio-Visual/ Computer Equipment/Wi-Fi access

It may be helpful for site committees to get the word out to speakers prior to the conference as to whether they will need to bring a laptop (or will have connections available if they want to bring one), whether laptops or desktop computers will be provided at the conference site, what type storage devices will be supported (e.g., USB, online, etc.).

Attendees will require access to Wi-Fi with a user id and password (if needed). There are some that do not use edu roam – therefore it is best to prepare ahead of time. It is best to set up access for the attendees so they can receive a user id and password at registration with no delay.

Special Events /Tours

Information on special tours and planned group activities should be included on the website prior to registration opening. Guests are welcome to attend at an additional fee and often there are last minute purchases for tickets at registration. If there is to be entertainment, arrangements would fall to this committee. It's always good to advise attendees of the recommended dress code (casual, work attire) for the special events. Anything more than conference attire should not be considered, however if there is a more casual event, or outdoor event it is respectful to let the attendees know so they can dress appropriately.

As mentioned above under registration, Information should be included in the registration packet identifying places of interest, hours and admission fees. A map of the city provided before check in is extremely helpful.

Budget

There are also budget considerations to be taken into account. You must have the ability to generate the necessary financial support. It is in the hosting school's best interest to secure sponsorships and exhibitors, starting well ahead of the conference, with commitments available online through the CEEA website. The MOU discusses the financial side in more detail. Before you make your bid to host an annual meeting, you will want to meet with your local conference services to verify that they are able to support you during your conference.

Each committee should submit anticipated costs; a compilation of committee expenses should define the budget. The fund raising committee should be familiar with the budget and CEEA procedures of collecting sponsors and exhibitors prior to soliciting. The CEEA Board will review and approve this budget. Further details to this affect can be found in the MOU. A method to monitor budget expenditures should be put in place early. Who has authorization to approve expenditures? It should be known to all dealing with finances that the collection of all fees and payment of expenses are to be run through the CEEA Board directly. There may be sometimes that items are run through the host university and later billed to CEEA, these should be discussed IN ADVANCE and approval is needed based on the situation and the item(s).

It is important that the budget be closely monitored and that those who have committed to sponsor follow through. Sample budgets are available on the CEEA website.

Summary

Holding a CEEA Conference is a rewarding, but challenging experience. Attention to the major areas of sponsorships, logistics, editorial board, speakers/workshops, program, registration, and special events and tours, will contribute to a successful conference. Communication is central to the planning stages of the conference. Communication with CEEA, calls for papers, author kits, registration packages, and others, must be prepared to further marketing efforts and to keep authors informed.

Adherence to a strict timetable will ensure that sufficient lead time is allowed for each major planning activity. Active participation of a large, committed group of faculty at the host institution will also promote success.