

July 28, 2009

Joint Task Force Recommends Conference Collocation

A task force composed of both ASME and SME members has released the results of a study on collocating the lead manufacturing conferences of both organizations - the ASME Manufacturing Science and Engineering Conference (MSEC) and the NAMRI/SME North American Manufacturing Research Conference (NAMRC). The study consisted of: detailing previous efforts to combine these conferences, a background investigation on other major Manufacturing conferences and collocation of other aligned conferences, evaluating potential benefits and drawbacks of the collocation, and analyzing attendance information of both conferences.

The study involved a survey in June with about 500 total respondents from both organizations, including strong participation from industry. Though there was some concern for scheduling and organization issues, results of the survey showed overwhelming support for conference collocation. The top reasons for backing this effort were: likelihood to draw more leaders, higher international participation, improved networking, reduced travel costs for participants, and improved conference reputation for both organizations.

As a result of the study, the task force has recommended collocation of MSEC and NAMRC, and the Executive Committee of the ASME Manufacturing Engineering Division (MED) and the Board of Directors of the North American Manufacturing Research Institution of SME (NAMRI/SME) have approved the recommendation in principle. Efforts will now move forward with ASME-MED and NAMRI/SME to formalize an agreement and to collocate these conferences, perhaps as soon as 2011. A detailed migration plan will be outlined by a Coordinating Committee drawn from both organizations, and recommendations of survey participants will be incorporated. Special attention will be paid to combining best practices from both conference organizations, and establishing provisions that periodically reexamine the structure and procedures of the collocated event. Perhaps the greatest benefit of collocation is the creation of a larger, higher-impact conference to better serve the needs of the manufacturing research community.

The task force consisted of: Y. Lawrence Yao of Columbia University, John Roth of Penn State-Erie, and Dan Walczyk of Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute representing ASME; and John Sutherland of Purdue University (formerly of Michigan Technological University), Steve Hayashi of General Electric Research, and Laine Mears of Clemson University representing SME. For additional information, please contact Larry Yao at yly1@columbia.edu.