



In terms of the SAIMM Charter and in order to fulfill its obligations to the various communities making up the broader SAIMM membership, the Institute has established, over a long period of time, a series of portfolios and sub-committees. One of these portfolios is Career Guidance, executed through the very successful Career Guidance and Education Committee. Starting some six years ago, various initiatives were taken to develop this portfolio to focus more closely on how to encourage the younger SAIMM members to become more involved in SAIMM activities. The Young Professionals Conference held in March of this year provided an excellent example of some of our younger members in the Technical Programme Committees taking ownership of the event.

More recently, in the annual strategy review session, office bearers and Council members of the Institute have been considering issues relating to demographics and the longer term development of capacity and succession within the SAIMM – especially within the context of southern Africa. In this regard it was decided that the concept of a 'Youth Council' should be explored, with a clear objective of proposing structures within the SAIMM that would establish a more formal representation and role of young professional people within the Institute.

On 3 October 2014 I was invited to attend the second workshop of the Youth Council, held at the Ditsong Military Museum in Johannesburg. I ended up staying much longer than anticipated, as I was drawn in to the enthusiastic discussion and was caught up in the spirit and excitement of the process. There was a real sense that something new was being created, and this was summed up in the consensus statement that: 'they want to be considered as young professionals, not youth'.

The Young Professionals Council (YPC) of the SAIMM is made up of energetic and immensely enthusiastic young professionals willing and looking forward to participate in this initiative to provide active leadership and bring about positive influence in the mining industry – not only in South Africa, but also in the SADC region.

They want to be involved in creating awareness, influencing key legislation and professional and regulating entities, identifying and nurturing promising and talented individuals, and encouraging the development of coaching and mentoring systems in the mining and metallurgical industry.

In summing up the workshop, Office Bearer Portfolio holder Professor Sehliselo Ndlovu says:

'They see the challenges more clearly than we ever did, and most of them are quite eager and looking forward to coming up with potential solutions; they clearly have quite a few ideas on what can be done better.'

It is envisaged that the YPC will be fundamental in the development of new leadership in terms of succession planning. There will be mirror roles in the YPC of the portfolios held in the SAIMM Council such as Treasurer, Interest of Members, etc. Some members of the YPC have already identified the portfolios that they want to be involved in, showing their eagerness to be involved. They do not want this to be considered as an elitist initiative, but a council that will represent the needs of everyone involved in the mining and metallurgical industry, from school through university up to the young professional level.

To date there has been overwhelming support for this initiative from most of the host companies/employers of these young Council members. I would personally like to thank those companies that allowed their young professionals to attend the workshops. This initiative is developing capacity and potential not only for the SAIMM, but also for the employer companies. Involvement in voluntary organizations is an important part of building leadership skills.

The interim YPC members are currently developing the necessary documentation to be tabled to the SAIMM Council for approval. Thereafter, the members of the YPC will be elected through a process administered by the SAIMM office.

It has been a great privilege to see this initiative develop. It is embryonic and will still require mentorship from key members of Council – how important it is going to be for our future that this bright new flame is kept burning.

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