

## WSC General Session Minutes: December 2006

1. 0815 Intro and opening
2. 0825: WSC 06 overview (Dave Nicols)

Looks like a great contract (still), have already met the room requirements program: preregistered numbers have met the revenue. 66 papers have no authors/co-authors registered yet – will have to see whether this is really good or really bad news. Barry: were there any e-mails? Dave: yes, some reminders but no “heavy stick”

Exhibits: burst that came in at the end – came in almost at budget

BC report: (TJ): net gain is \$45945. About \$25K in hotel rebate, \$15K in savings on proceedings (“do not reflow”). A few other things. Still feels exhibits is a problem. Terry: Sandy (INFORMS) worked with Wendy (from committee) and followed up other leads. Late but strong effort. There is consolidation in the field so there’s less control over things. TJ: we have been a lot lower than this. Joe: when did the sponsors lock in? What is profit vs. revenue neutral? TJ: Early – esp. for the bags, a few for at the end (for the reception). 6 sponsors together, a couple new ones.

Expenses: handout is through mid-Nov, only a few of the items are “tapped out” (know what it’ll cost). Actual spent through 11/24 \$157,500.

### Lessons learned:

- revenue up
- INFORMS great – many thanks!
- registration & demogs close to projected. recommend future conferences budget break-even with conservative numbers
- cancellation insurance \$400 more (earthquakes)
- exhibits revenue slightly less than expected
  - Barry: right approach: use a conservative projection on attendance, make a break-even budget that meets that.
- Omnipress contract is very hard to keep to reconcile with budget. Understand how it breaks out up front.
- Several things were approved but never validated as “OK” vs. the plan of record budget. (Ex: exhibitor prospectus & mailing costs). Susan: what about contingency fund? Barry: 15% since no conference can perfectly control cost. Barry: BoD open to suggestions to how to make things work better. Peter: Walpole Software will (for one) start formalizing things with conference. Dave G: when does 15% line item disappear?

### Program: (Richard Fujimoto)

- Intl outreach (8/22 track chairs outside US)
- Several special features
  - Computational biology (full, 2 keynotes)

- data driven applications systems; telecom (mini); continued case studies track (full), Sim 101 workshop, one Titan talk, SimSummit presentation (Tues lunch)
  - Barry: was Computational Biol all invited? Richard: yes. BoD should consider how to do this – need longer ramp up for new initiatives.
- best student paper award
- submissions: record number (252), papers reviewed (at least 2 per paper), acceptance rate ~70%
- Track chair list passed out

Barry: asked Christos how Case Studies track is going. Christos: didn't have problems getting papers, but did have trouble with some authors that would pull out at the very last minute. Richard: was definitely a good tool for marketing. Christos: not concerned with Washington conference, but others (Monterey an "off beat" place) may be a problem.

How many tracks should be allocated?

- More on intl participation. Many countries, biggest non-US are Germany & US

Lessons learned:

- One track coordinator MIA – thanks to Dave Goldsman (retrospect: cut off earlier). Also thanks to Christos for putting in
- Paper reviews: variance in strictness across tracks. One extreme: 4-5 reviews on all papers (Transportation & Logistics). Some grumpy authors disagreed with reviewers.
- Authors failing to register. 6-10 right now. Most are international. A few (from Singapore) sent a CD with voice over powerpoint. What to do about these? Barry: BoD doesn't want to encourage these. Dave N: what about leaving them out of the website? What's possible with INFORMS vs. ACM/IEEE digital libraries? More discussion. Perhaps see about automating this. It does take effort. Q: can this be tracked for this conference so we can inform session chairs whether they may have no shows?
- Invited papers: mixed success at earlier deadlines
- Posters (56): one thing he would change
  - two flavors: submission accepted as poster (type A), record on website, abstract in conf proceedings & posters, several authors viewed as reject, didn't tell us, didn't show up
  - 2<sup>nd</sup> flavor: abstract not in proceedings, but in program – went fine
  - needed to be segregated into two tracks on the online system
  - recommendations: (1) no "accept as poster" – instead, ask them to resubmit abstract as poster for further consideration. (2) treat all posters equivalently.
  - Computational Systems biology – if continue with this track, they're very used to posters.
- Lining up track cords early worked well
- Defining tentative space allocation (#papers) for different track work well so coordinators knew how many invited sessions were appropriate
- Recommend keeping early deadline & review for invited papers
  - not much substantive feedback to authors

- helps ensure a paper gets generated
- need to make this practice standard

Doug M: what about invited paper deadline back to April? Richard: need to see contributed before you really know what to invite. Barry: would mean you have to invite in January. R: good reason to line up track coords in time to ask people at WSC. Susan: is this a concern more for “new” tracks or in general? Barry: issue is that a few invited people start very late. Christos: particularly for new areas, need to look at them ahead of time since they won’t know anything about the WSC format/quality/guidelines. Russell: if you need to find someone new, is this someone completely new or could it be a “marginal” paper? Perhaps hold off on rejecting papers until see what the invited ones look like.

Ernie: how are we doing on session chairs? Any surprises? Richard: all track chairs gave list of session chairs, Richard heard of a few cancellations, asked track chairs to find replacements. Reminder that track chairs should be responsible for their track – ideally, attend. They will be at the general reception tonight.

Russell: questions on budget – was support for colloq included? TJ: yes. Russell: q on cross-fertilization track – what expenses did you incur for invited attendees? Richard F: in comp bio, standard is that invited speakers will get registration & travel covered (06 committee chose to do comp registrations for keynote talks).

Barry (in his role as Deb) history of conference. “I’m talking a lot, because I’m trying to take Deb’s place.” Conferences may invest in ways that enhance the conference, it is not “complementary registrations” it is in there as a budget item. Must be transparent.

0930 Proceedings co-chair reports. Surge in LaTeX submissions. Concentrated LaTeX papers with two of the 4 proceedings editors (vs. a separate LaTeX committee). Worked well. Found INFORMS-Sim = Jim Wilson re: 2 CDs always delivered.

Abstracts: not all were 150 words or less. Some abstracts included references, other things that pushed the size. Ended up getting one page per poster (not full paper).

Lessons learned.

- 4 editors: equal shares of edit work, 1 handled admin work.
- No LaTeX committee.
- Moved away from Y&Y TeX to Mac OSX. Small problem with fonts. Ended up using math ptms fonts that looks close to Times-New Roman. Barry is writing a report with a set of instructions. Christos: thinks conversion from dvi to pdf on the new Mac will be fixed if you work with Acrobat might help. Will work with system to accept files. Susan: perhaps different templates – pdf files work well with LaTeX – perhaps two templates. Felipe: cut down on instructions to the authors – not 6

separate pages. Shane: hoping to move to 1 document for each (1 in LaTeX, one in Word). Barry: in some cases you need to go through dvips then to postscript. Issues about embedding all fonts in graphics. Issue about submitting binary files: shorter & better graphics using pdflatex (if a zipfile can include separate pdf pictures) than converting to ps & putting in the filecontents\*. Need to make sure that authors include everything.

- Started using IEEE service for copyright transfer. Some startup issues, but should be easy for next year. IEEE is using WSC's copyright form, just handling the storage.

#### Suggestions:

- Start flagging authors who don't use template **at refereeing stage** if recommendation is to accept paper.
- Invited papers trickle in up until the last minute. **Enforce deadlines.**
- Revise/discuss author kit immediately. **Consider using templates from IEEE or ACM.** "Every year it gets a little easier, it would be nice if it got a lot easier." Perhaps rethink whether it pays off to have such strict lists in terms of formatting. Reference list is the main complaint. Didn't have grammar really spelled out in the author kit. PEs ended up changing a lot of things manually. Dave G: Jim W might not agree, but as long as things are
- WSC paper management system – great
  - Jeff an amazing help
  - Integrates copyright effort with some effort (could be improved). IEEE is in unix / need to change carriage returns, strip quotes – would be nice to automate
  - list of referees sorted by first, not last name. why? came out of system that way, w/ variable # names no automatic way to separate this.
  - need a flag so no changes in database can occur (one change came in literally 1 hour before print runs)

Ricki: is Jeff compensated for his work? Dave: compensated most years a modest amount, though not when he was chair. TJ: in budget for this year. Shane: in interests of risk management, can anyone run the system other than Jeff? Susan: there's supposed to be a manual. Felipe: Jeff has said something like "System has grown like Frankenstein over the years". At some point it will need to be rethought. Barry: at some point when we've outgrown Jeff's system, will probably have to bite the bullet and go with a commercial system. Terry: this is linked to the Omnipress agreement. May need to consider both at the same time.

Dave G: many thanks to the 06 committee – it looks like it'll be a great program!

1005 break

**1015 WSC 07 (Jeff Tew)**

Summary info on hotel, theme “Life Begins at 40.” Rate is great, stayed at the hotel. Very pleased with our rate (169) vs. best corporate rate he had during his stay (\$400). Nice layout / interactions between exhibitors & conf traffic.

Great contract: rate, low room block requirement, no F&B min

Joe. Registration numbers have changed. Joe rebalanced estimates. Overall budget for 552 people and \$242,410. This uses a big estimate for proceedings estimate, which may be backed down. Bottom line: the proceedings cost depends the most on the meeting, not on how the editors seem to work. Terry: must put a line item in the budget for conference bags, even though it has been a wash. Do people expect to get a bag? Several: worried about the environmental waste. Spirited discussion. Will need a bag (at least a plastic one) for materials. The sponsored “give-away” could be something else – cooler bag last year was nice – portfolio, “I registered early” t-shirt.

Russell: 21 tracks plus posters

Have revised track coordinators & session chairs handbooks

New Track Coordinators spreadsheet – supplements web database, particularly for invited papers. Question: implement into Web. Felipe: they used Wiki (not to full extent) and it worked well. Richard F: made a single spreadsheet with a separate page for each spreadsheet. The spreadsheet became the master list, used to check what was going on with the website (although expectation had been the other way around). Willing to pass it along. Russell: will talk about this during the hand-off meeting, then meet with track coordinators tonight. Doug: is Jeff aware of this? Coordinate what’s on (or will be on) the web vs. separate systems.

18 rooms, 18 tracks. Ann: do you plan all of these to be full? Russell: more flexible, wait and see. Expect at least 10 of these full for the full time. Chuck: homeland security track dropped? Russell: yes. Track coordinators a mix of old-time & newcomers. Will rethink having a single person responsible for all posters – now thinking that he will separate out the PhD posters. Keynote speaker is Larry Burns, VP, GM R&D. Barry: any chance he’ll stay around for at least one day? Jeff: depends on his schedule, but he’s open to this.

Program highlights: new

- Clinic sessions: if have one good one for Monday, on for Tuesday he’d be happy. John Carson will be coordinating this.
- 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary landmark papers session: influential WSC papers from first 40 years. Would like some info set up in a larger size poster (from each winner) set up in a public area.
- Cross-fertilization tracks: may result in some budget expense

Trouble shooting

- Track coordinators handout mentions some things, like “session chairs not speakers.” Clarify that session organizer is not a speaker. Barry: remember that the rationale for session chair (speaker can’t be in the session) is not so strong

since the conference is larger. Session organizer will probably pick the session chair. Richard: make sure you communicate that with the session organizer – one case where the organizer expected to be the chair.

Russell: thought about reinstating the historical idea that next year's Program Chair is this year's Associate Program Chair. John Fowler will do this for 07, Ricki has already agreed for 08.

Budget (Ann): looks easy to meet / exceed the budget.

Joe: q: anything this year with a survey? Terry: yes – but are handing it out, not including it in the bag (afraid it got lost).

Jeff: more on hotel/location. Two major theaters are in the same block, nice restaurants on block & nearby, new shopping mall being opened.

Shane: one thing about proceedings. Terrific hand-off from the editors this year. Had a trial period for attachments for the tutorials. Only one author took this up, so not a very big trial. Next year will be another trial still limited to Tutorials track.

Felipe: will need to see how they are visible in the proceedings. Not comfortable with the current solution. Doug: any feedback on why things weren't taken up? Shane: was disconnected from this. Barry: q: you have been working on streamlining the docs to a single one for word, single for latex. Is this geared toward streamlined instructions to arrive at the same place, or are you also rethinking the format? Shane: some difference of opinion (he and Russell at opposite ends of spectrum) but they'll meet in the middle, send a draft proposal to Susan in mid January.

### **1055: WSC 08 (Tom Jefferson)**

Reminder of dates, theme (Global gateway to discovery), location (Miami). Continue international theme from 06. Have much of committee together, will look for "at least 17 more" proceedings editors. Publicity may be a set of chairs, not a single one. Noted that Ernie (Board Liaison) was also Board Liaison for 2001 but there's not a chance they'll lose money. Contract looks good.

Ann: if registration model holds, 08 looks pretty good. Monterey will be the best comparison. Note that for 05 the onsite registrations were low because Jeff hammered to get authors registered early. May end up w/ about 170 pickups in last two weeks: e.g., if the 66 authors show up as onsite registrations.

Exhibits: slight downward trend. Terry: suggest increasing the rate – may increase the revenue. See what other comparable conferences do. Ricki: if we don't count on this for revenue, why not lower the cost & get more exhibitors? Ann: the question is how much you can raise the cost w/o losing exhibitors. Making it cheaper won't bring in more. TJ: we do count on the revenue. This year we're getting less b/c paying for exhibit space.

Ann: registration estimate: ongoing battle: do we want people to register early (more comfort) or register late (more \$)

Budget break-even: 658 attendees / 26 exhibitors. Doesn't look very good right now. For June will get into numbers in more detail, would consider bumping up fees. Barry: June would be a good time to see about raising fees. Barry: when were they last raised? Don't remember, maybe 2000.

Ann: next steps:  
need better handle on understanding expenses  
would like plan at 600  
reduce expenses or increase fees or both

John F: (program)

Tracks planned: many traditional, consider repeat of Sim 101 workshop

Features of past conferences that may be discontinued

- case studies – will poke head in to see how its going
- vendor track – is it really viewed as a good thing (may only have 3 people)

Terry: even if 3 people in the room, a vendor may be happy because it will lead to more people. Ann: still doing track counts for each session? (yes). Space is an issue. Shows the importance of continuity.

New features: MASM conference, track on “Simulation around the world” (Martha Centeno) with focus on S America. Will finalize keynote speaker by June.

Shane: Dave Krawl (?) contacted Steve Chick about something that might help vendors. Like the clinics, different vendors can try addressing the issues. Joe H: tried this for the Michigan Simulation Conference and chaos ensued. Takes a lot of time, a lot depends on a clear statement of work (much debate over inputs). Quality of the people vendors send ends up being high. Shane: don't want to make things hard for vendors, so will put this paper at the bottom.

John: have started filling out the track coordinators with intl

MASM: avg attendance 150 (not all sim), about 25 overlap w/ WSC. Registering for WSC will be same as registering for MASM. May get a few more exhibitors (semi-conductors might mean \$\$).

- Publicity: running through WSC, 2 full tracks plus a MASM plenary speaker (subsuming semiconductor manufacturing mini-track). Include a MASM program at a glance page in site booklet.
- Proceedings: MASM have same deadlines/ reqs as rest of WSC

Shane: seems like big issue is marketing. Might bring more to WSC. Joe: do you see this as a thing for every year, or every third year (balance for west coast conferences vs. military in DC conferences). John: expect more intl attendees, see reverting to “normal” after this year. Ricki: is this a template for including future other orgs? Barry: already have one template – the construction engineers. This is a different template. One big difference is that this is not just simulation. Ricki: is this good or bad? Dave: will pollute the minds of the SM non-sim folks – all to the good.

1125 WSC 09 (Ann)

Enough years out that the same talk can be given. Next year will have something new. Starting to fill out the program committee, will fill in rest in 07. Ernie pointed out that the year was wrong on the slide – inspires great confidence in the committee. Hotel contract looks good (very low risk). Due to combination of good negotiations, hotel also wanted INFORMS in 2010, one week later date.

Budget: assuming a \$30 more for members, more for non-members, modest increase for exhibits. Would need to either work on growing exhibits or else deciding that's what it's going to be. Numbers not final, but ~\$29K surplus for 569 attendees.

Ricki: too early for program, but have plenty of space. Thinking about training sessions (1/2 day or longer) that run Sun-Wed, new tracks explicitly aimed at non-academics (including publication requirements) – this is like the case studies track but might be bigger. Don't know what that does to intro/advanced tutorials.

Training session: require an additional fee, see if can offer professional development credits. Would also tie the sponsoring societies closer to WSC. Barry: would you have to pay those doing the training? Ricki: not decided, but if we expand this may not be able to keep all volunteers.

Thoughts: a separate publication (e.g., "Case studies from the 2009 WSC") Would keep the proceedings at a high quality level, and yet have something separate for the non-academics. Tom: should take with Omnipress. Russell: think about putting a front end on the database proceedings (customize program). Barry: question about whether or not the CD adds value. May need a volunteer. Richard F: do the case study people even want to do this? Ricki: use paper "loosely" – could be powerpoint slides, ???. Susan: perhaps think about giving option for slides vs. videotape of presentation. Joe: copyright issues come into play.

Ann: went over milestones for upcoming years.

Barry: comment to Board. With proceedings contract coming up, need to think about a way to publish proceedings without requiring four sacrificial lambs. Ann: conferences have been making money, think about spending money instead of having proceedings editors do all this. Dave: now that our working capital is sufficient, need to add value to the conference by other ways. Susan: see about hiring a technical editor. Felipe: put proceedings on USB stick instead of CD instead of going to a bag. Joe: have talked about this. Barry: explained Board policy on retaining working capital for future commitments, returning the rest to the societies.

WSC 10: (Joe Hogan)

Enver is the chair, will nominate a business chair in June. Went over dates, location, hotel (Marriot Inner Harbor). Went over milestones. Interest in remote conference

attendance. John F: if you record things, do a “replay” 6 months later would be an option. John F. would be very concerned about it impacting attendance at WSC. Barry: could do things with pricing, so if you’re going to see much of the conference you might as well have come to all, but it could be cost-effective to see one session.

Back to the USB key idea. Could do this for 07 if there was an interest. Shane: what about contract with Omnipress? Susan: flexibility, not even locked into the third year if refund the multiyear discount. Omnipress has been very willing to work with us in past and we could see about switching from CD to USB key. Discussion: sponsorship could be logo on USB key or lanyard.

### **1200: WSC ’11 (Gerry Mackulak)**

Banter about coming on before lunch instead of after. Looking at some options for location. Hawaii – nice, though may be hard to get approval. Hotels are more expensive and all have escalation clauses. Contracts would require a mix of the low and hi amount rooms. Also looked at Mexico: some nice places, but more expensive. Arizona: several options. San Diego: only one response. Long Beach: city completely booked. Gerry: right now, would go with Phoenix but recommends BoD think about what is the upper bound on the rate WSC participants would pay. Jeff T: how about Irvine? Tom J: assume different look at Las Vegas? Gerry: no, have been very expensive. Terry: hard to get good meeting space with our constraints with size of conference. Terry: could look at Las Vegas but would recommend narrowing down to a single city. Jeff Tew: flights to Los Cabos very inexpensive that time of year. Ann: just know that if it’s in Hawaii or Mexico you will lose all industry participants.

Richard: plug for international: can’t expect the current group will all go, but there will be a cadre of international folks. Request the Board consider getting an international GC.

Gerry: went over milestones – this summer would like hotel contract to Board & PC nomination.

Terry: when is decision on city taken? Barry: discuss in open session after lunch.

1025 lunch

1315 Dave: suggest Phoenix/Scottsdale is a good choice for WSC11. Barry: moved. Susan: second. Pres: how about Tucson? John F: OK? Unan + Shane. Gerry: does this include flexibility on the week? (yes)

1325 Dave: let’s have a short discussion on alternative cities. Q: what about going out of the country? TJ: pick the chair first, or pick the host country first? (good question). TJ: can INFORMS support an overseas conference? Terry: yes. Dave: what’s the sense of people here? Doug: if we go, take the least risky option (Germany or UK). Terry: only issue is that most hotels don’t have meeting space. You will have to rent (like doing for Monterey). Chuck: be sure there’s not conflict with other (smaller) conferences, like EuroSim. ?? echoes that don’t want cannibalization. May be better possibility in Japan

than Europe – better attendance from US. Russell: suggestion to the board: GC has been involved in the conference in the past, should be someone active in WSC. TJ: will lose much of the exhibitor base, industry participants, though think it's a wonderful idea. Dave: small group get together later today, decide on survey (etc) whether people would attend? Ernie: has there been a 500 person conference in, e.g., Munich? How was this set up? Terry: hold off on getting info until have some more details on where/when we'd be going. Richard: consider a town hall meeting. John F: too late for this meeting. Ernie: comments on bottom of form? Susan: ask subdivision officers to talk at their business meetings this conference? Barry: wouldn't get much from this: won't get a good idea for projecting attendance. Dave: will discuss more in executive session, perhaps discussing a few potential candidates.

1440: Dave: discussion of on-site sales by exhibitors. Terry: rules are currently in the exhibitors handbook. WSC has to be responsible for informing the rules. Shane: does the WSC board/program committee have to be involved? Pres: think it's a non-issue, people can log onto the web site for purchase. Barry: we're thinking about exhibitors as software, what about others? Books / consulting?

Barry: move that we not forbid vendors from onsite sales and modify the vendor contract appropriately.

Ernie: not not second it. approved unan.

1345: Dave: conference management system may be entering middle age, but everyone still agrees it's still useful. But at some point we're going to need a next generation of this system. Perhaps some commercial product. For now, will continue renewing on a year-to-year basis. Ricki: if Jeff is saying it needs to be rewritten from scratch, it's a warning sign. TJ: If we freeze it now, it works and it won't stop working. Richard: every year there's been customization and bandaids. The bandaids had fixed one problem but may create another. Barry: get an assessment from Jeff about real status of system and also the time frame. Question on timing: Joe: how about when we go to Europe? Russell: at the same time thinking about post-paper management system, also think about a sister system for the other stuff (handbooks, etc.). Shane: some came up when looking at the last publishing contract, like the IEEE conference management system. Decision: will set up a committee to look into things, report back by June meeting. Should include Jeff Joines but also at least one past / several upcoming Proceedings chairs.

Adjourned at 1357. ***DAVE GOT US DONE 3 MINUTES EARLY!!***