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Dear VACETS members,

Thank you for asking many important questions regarding the future of VACETS. We need to find answers to them with vigilant thoughts. My philosophy is that we need to solve problems related to the organization at the fundamental level, rather than dealing with them one at a time. In other words, you can think of the organization as a balloon, if we try to solve one particular problem by pushing the balloon on one side, we may create a new and undesirable problem on the other side.

In my view, VACETS should pursue two short term objectives. The first objective is to restructure the organization in order to make it more modular, self-sustained, efficient, and useful to its members. The second objective, which is somewhat related to the first, is to establish a strong, united network of active members, while re-energizing the spirit of volunteerism among existing members in order to demonstrate that VACETS is a prestigious and valuable organization, and its members will benefit from being a part of it.

A. Organization restructuring

I would suggest that VACETS is restructured into two levels: the National (or International) and local chapter levels. At the National (or International) level, VACETS consists of a president, the board of directors, and an executive committee just as what VACETS is currently organized. The role of the National (or International) level organization is to oversee the whole organization, set policy, coordinate local chapters and establish new ones, organize annual conference/retreat, raise fund, and communicate with both American and Vietnamese public. In addition, I would suggest that VACETS should also establish the so-called the "advisory council" or whatever name one may wish to call, consisting of experts in a broad field of science and technology, who play a key role in both academic and industrial worlds (e.g. professors, managers, directors, advisors, bankers, etc.). The role of this council is to provide members of VACETS with useful advises and/or social/economical/political connections that can help advance their careers such as admission to graduate/professional schools, job finding, and fellowships, etc.

The local chapter level can be a college chapter, or an industrial chapter. Each local

chapter is headed by the "chapter president", who is locally elected and is responsible for organizing the election of the next "chapter president". This way of organizational structure will help encourage young people to participate in the process of running VACETS, develop leadership skills, and while at the same time strengthen their resume.

Furthermore, I believe that accountability for the leadership is also critically important for the viability of the organization. We therefore should develop and put in place the policy for evaluating the leadership. Such policy should include, but not limited to, the number of new members the president and each chapter president can bring to the organization during his/her tenure, and the level of organization's or chapter's activity s/he helps organize. For those chapter presidents, who lead their local chapter with distinction, the board of directors and the president of VACETS will recognize them with an appropriate letter of reference so that they can use it for purposes such as admission to professional/graduate schools, employments, etc. To initiate the establishment of local chapters, let's begin with schools and companies with large number of Vietnamese people (e.g. San Jose State University).

B. Establishing a strong, united network of active members

We must start out with what we currently have in order to establish local chapters and the "advisory council" as mentioned above. From my observation of the VTIC'05, I believe that we have enough able people with good heart to serve on the advisory council and to help establish new local chapters across universities (e.g. SJSU) and companies (e.g. CISCO). The most important objective of VACETS in the near term, in my view, is to demonstrate and convince existing as well as prospective members that, via the work of the advisory council, VACETS is so beneficial to them, and only members of VACETS can have access to the organization. We will have to establish an impression and a culture that being a part of VACETS is honorable, or perhaps better it is an honorable contribution to the organization if one member can help other members. To achieve this, we will have to have the mechanism in place to recognize honorable contributions from members appropriately. Lastly, we should make VACETS a little bit exclusive to begin with in order to make it prestigious, although this point can be debatable.

So, what can the VACETS advisory council do in order to be beneficial to VACETS members? As I mentioned above, the VACETS advisory council consists of professors, advisors, managers, and supervisors, etc. who play a significant role in their respective institutions. To this end, they can help members of VACETS with many issues related to their career advancement such as job finding, admission, fellowships, etc. by making potential opportunities known to members or providing them with advises or social/economical/political connections.

To form an even stronger interconnected network of members, we should also have a unique VACETS' email address for each active member (i.e. MrOrMrs.abcd@vacets.org) in order to make members feel that they belong to a real organization, rather than a virtual internet one. This is also to promote communications between the organization and its members. Note that we do not need significant resources such as an email server to do this, but rather the above email service can be a forwarding email account. In other words, each member will need a real email address so that

whatever emails sent to their VACETS' email will be forwarded to their real email address. This can only be a good thing, since people may change their jobs or institution they associated with, but their email address is permanent, and therefore they are more likely to be a part of the VACETS.

Finally, we must make our organization's activities and objectives known to Vietnamese community via both electronic (e.g. emails, web) and paper (e.g. publications) means and to promote scholarly achievements accomplished by Vietnamese scientists, engineers, and professionals. I realize that this can be costly, but we can have bi-monthly or quarterly VACETS publication (e.g. Vietnamese Scientists, Engineers, and Professionals), whose cost can be defrayed by advertising, just like the journals of Nature or Science.

How can this organization structure help VACETS?

The key to my above suggestions is that: VACETS is an active and a very useful organization for you, my fellow Vietnamese scientists, engineers, and professionals, and technical workers, if and only if you are a part of the organization. Your contribution to VACETS to any considerable extent will be recognized by the president and the board of directors; and such recognition will definitely help your career advancement significantly. In this way, we encourage participation of and contribution from existing members. To this end, we can potentially attract a fresh influx of new memberships.

Once we have an executive plan for the future of VACETS in place, we are executing it with all energy and enthusiasm, and VACETS grows to a reasonable size, money in forms of donation will come. People often donate their money (1) for noble causes and (2) to only viable organizations that will recognize their contribution publicly. Therefore, in order to solve the financial problem, we must make VACETS a viable and active organization, whose name will be known to most Vietnamese people, by pursuing steps outlined above. With respect to membership dues, I do think that mandatory fee at this stage of the organization will serve no purpose, but will send VACETS back to its infancy (or possibly beyond that), simply because why people have to pay for something in order to get nothing back from VACETS at this stage. We can certainly institute voluntary membership dues, and to campaign to have people/business to sponsor for new memberships; and of course their sponsorship will be recognized appropriately by the organization. We can also campaign to have people/business to sponsor for the establishment of new local chapters.

These are my thoughts for making VACETS a better, self-sustained, and useful organization to you, the members of the organization. Please do let me know if you have any more questions regarding the future of VACETS.

Sincerely yours

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