SIGCHI
MEET THE CANDIDATES: AT-LARGE
APRIL 19, 2024

>> HELENA MENTIS: Hello, everyone. This is our third Meet-the-Candidate Open Forum. We're meeting the four candidates that are running for VP At-Large.

We usually have two At-Larges voted in every term, and that is why we have four candidates to choose from.

So this is going to be a really full session.

I'm just going to go around and let them all introduce themselves, tell you a little bit about where they're from. Since we are a global community, that's of interest to folks and where you're currently working, if that's different, as well as what area of HCI you're in and, also, why you're interested in running for VP At-Large.

Susan Dray, you're first in my line.

>> SUSAN DRAY: I'm Susan Dray. I've had the honor and privilege to be part of SIGCHI since the very beginning. As a result, I have had a lot of opportunities to see a huge variety of things SIGCHI has done and things we have not done.

I'm in Minneapolis. I'm currently retired -- well, you know, "retired," which means I'm not working for money, basically. That's basically it.

Because I joined SIGCHI -- well, because I was there at the beginning, I don't have a degree in computer science, unlike probably most of you. My degree is in psychology.

Let's see. What were the other questions you asked. I can't remember what you asked.

>> HELENA MENTIS: What did you do while you were working?

>> SUSAN DRAY: Thank you. Thank you. Thank you very much. This comes from partly being the senior member here. I worked in industry for about 10 years before going out on my own as a consultant, as one of the first consultants. We had lots and lots of fun. My husband and I worked together for part of that time. We worked in 28 countries doing research for clients that were mostly American-based but some international. The product they had was not very good. So we killed some bad products, let's say.

Much of what we did was ethnographic. So we spent lots and lots of time in people's homes and spaces throughout the world, including slums in India and places in rural China and on and on.

I'm interested in this position -- I've had this position once before. Actually, it may be more than once before. I've basically worked with almost every SIGCHI function and every SIGCHI EC in some capacity.

I'm very interested in kind of leveraging that history, leveraging that experience, leveraging those connections with people around the world to help SIGCHI continue to grow in the kind of ways we've been focusing on, especially in the most recent EC, towards a more global, a more inclusive and diverse organization and community and also to help bring people in who are not necessarily part of that community right now, either from geographically increasing the number of people in, say, Africa or Latin America or Asia, places where we traditionally have not been as strong but also bringing in more practitioners. We're in an applied field, and we need our practitioner brothers and sisters as well as academics. I've straddled those two. I think that's an important piece.

So that's sort of me for you.

>> HELENA MENTIS: Sounds great, Susan. Thanks for kicking us off here.

Pejman, you're next.

>> PEJMAN MIRZA-BABAEI: Thank you for this opportunity. My name is Pejman Mirza-Babaei. I'm a professor at Ontario Tech University, near Toronto, Canada.

I was raised in Tehran, Iran. I did my master's and Ph.D. in Sussex University, in Brighton, and then I got a job in Canada and immigrated to Canada 10 years ago. I've been working here since.

My research is in games, so HCI in games, and most of my work is in collaboration with game companies. I work with mostly commercial games, using HCI to help improve their product.

In terms of this role, I had the privilege to be on the EC, on the current EC, and I also did an interim role in the previous EC.

So what I learned through that is that almost all roles on the EC have specific duties that those who hold the position needs to address. VP At-Large is a very unique role that the candidates can propose their own initiatives or agenda. That can iterate in discussion with other EC members, president, EVP. But it's an opportunity for candidates to propose their own initiatives.

Given my experience within the community and as a researcher and somewhat practitioner, I see an opportunity for mentoring within the SIGCHI community. So that's what I'm hoping, if I'm elected in this role, to establish a framework for mentoring. What I mean by mentoring is kind of a more inclusive version of that. So whether if you have volunteers organizing a conference, we should better support them and mentor them, whether it's newcomers to the field, students that need support, but, also, I would say senior members of our community, whether as mentors or as mentees, in the last few

weeks, I spent time in the UK talking to some of my mentors at this stage in my career. I was actually wondering how do I plan for retirement. That may sound silly, but I needed support. What I mean by mentoring is we can learn from each other. It doesn't matter if you're a professor or just started, you can probably benefit from that mentor/mentee experience. That's what I'm hoping to establish within SIGCHI. I know there's different communities, but I'm hoping there can be a program for support.

>> HELENA MENTIS: Thank you, Pejman.

Ignacio, you're next in my line.

>> IGNACIO AVELLINO: Hi, everyone. I agree with Pejman. What I have to say would be very similar.

I will introduce myself first, I'm Ignacio Avellino. I'm originally from Uruguay, South America where I did an engineering degree, then moved to Germany and Italy for my masters, and finally to France for my PhD. Today I am a permanent researcher at French national center for scientific research, or CNRS.

My work is at the intersection of HCI, CSCW, and health as an application domain, specifically surgery. I love doing ethnographic work to later build technology that supports surgeons in their work, specifically communication and collaboration in collocated and remote settings.

My motivation to be a VP at large comes from my personal experiences growing up as a researcher. I've been a member of SIGCHI since my master studies. I've always taken advantage of this community. So I think it's always good to give back, as a reviewer, being involved in committees. This is why I'm interested in being a VP At-Large. Through these different roles, I've been constantly exposed to experiences that are valuable as a researcher.

In the same line as Pejman, I think mentorship is important. It's helped me personally understand the career and it's helped me remain motivated. From these experiences, I've come to understand the value of mentorship, and I think today I believe in equitable access to mentorship because I see community members who don't have access to mentorship like I had.

At this point, I would like to work with the EC to strengthen mentorship towards early-career researchers, responding to a growing need for support when navigating the complex world of academia.

This can involve creating infrastructure for those keen on investing time in mentoring, to increasing awareness on mentoring opportunities for those in demand. I believe that mentorship can have many ripple effects. If we take reviewing, for example, today, we're facing a crisis when it comes to

reviewing. We have more and more submission across the conferences, but the number of reviewers does not go up with those growing submissions. So I think mentorship can be part of a bigger plan to tackle some of this by training more people to be good reviewers and increasing the pool of reviewers.

If you take for example service work, many early-career researchers are frightened by what they think are roles which they could never perform, yet with strong mentorship they would certainly understand that they are up to the challenge, and that they can take these roles and one day be leaders in the community.

All in all, by tackling mentorship, there can be vast positive impacts in different areas.

I think that's all.

>> HELENA MENTIS: Sounds great. Thank you.

Dilrukshi, you are the fourth candidate.

>> DILRUKSHI GAMAGE: Thank you. I may be the least experienced candidate. I joined SIGCHI during my Ph.D. That was 2018. I'm based in Sri Lanka. I did my Ph.D. in Sri Lanka and Postdoc Tokyo. Now I'm back. I'm a senior lecturer attached to the University of Colombo. So I'm based in Sri Lanka, which is a tiny island in the southern part of India. For anyone who doesn't know where that is, that is the tiny island under India.

Where do I begin? SIGCHI, this part of the continent did not know much about HCI. Luckily, I got attracted to a project done by Michael Bernstein. It was my first CHI writing experience about how these top tier conferences are taking place. It was interesting, the perspective that computer science brought to design. I grew up with a computer science background, and this is kind of new to me.

I did remind myself that I see a lot of people who are doing HCI in the product world, so let's bring something here too. While I was a Ph.D. student, I established the SIGCHI chapter for the first time in Sri Lanka.

We have an alliance for South Asia that's been bringing the continent together. We have people from Bangladesh, India. We work together most of the time. We submit workshops to CHI. In a way, what we try to do is establish a strong community in the world.

I secured about 7,000 USD to organize a winter school. We ran a workshop and had about 40 to 50 students coming from the region, actually India, Bangladesh. It was eye opening for the students and the graduates who want to go to that area. VP At Large, it sounds big, but the motivation for me, for what I can do for this region, it's enormous when I see the small events we have done.

I think the more we collaborate with the people who have

never heard of SIGCHI before, from that perspective, there's a
huge impact I think I can make while living and working here for
the next couple of years.

Thank you.

>> HELENA MENTIS: Thank you.

A few of you talked about this interesting role of
At-Large. That's one of the first questions I wanted to ask you.
If you look in the bylaws, it says the VP At-Large, the duty of
this role will be decided by the executive committee. I think
oftentimes, it's very unclear what is the point of the VP
At-Large, but, specifically, there are always new things that
SIGCHI faces, new issues, as opposed to the standing jobs that
need to be done. Sometimes that has to be figured out, in terms
of what are those issues that we need VP eyes on

So my question is: How do you imagine working with
whomever is in the executive committee? We don't know who the
new president, for instance, could be until the election is
over. How do you imagine working with that person to determine
what needs to be addressed, and how will you work with the
executive committee to flush that out and do that job for three
years?

Pejman, can you please go first?

>> PEJMAN MIRZA-BABAEI: Sure. I was just writing down some
notes. You caught me off guard, but that's okay.

One thing I should mention, there are usually two aspects
to any EC roles. One is contributing to all the decisions that
the EC is making collectively, so, as VP At-Large, you are one
of the elected members, and you have a voice. It may be slightly
outside, what are the core issues you're working on, but,
nevertheless, it's the decision the EC is making.

I feel, given my background, I could contribute to those
discussions, those decisions effectively. And the other aspect,
as I mentioned, and according to the bylaws, there's usually a
bit of flexibility in terms of what the VP At-Large will do.

I tried to highlight that in my opening as well, that if
I'm elected, then there would be a discussion, obviously, with
the president, with the EVP, with the other EC members to
identify areas that the EC wants to focus on. Usually each EC
has some priorities they want to focus on. However, I still feel
mentorship, in some form, is going to be our priority,
regardless of who is elected.

I think Ignacio highlighted that nicely. Whether if you're
a conference organizer or a student, I still feel that
mentorship is going to be an important aspect of the EC's
responsibility. Having said that, I don't want to create a
misunderstanding that the previous ECs didn't focus on

mentorship. A lot of activities that all the ECs have done in the past is around community development and mentorship.

However, this role I'm imagining would be a central point that works with other EC members. Let's say if you're looking at the local event, that would be VP chapters. Most of our chapters currently work on a local level. If we're looking at establishing maybe a framework for conferences, that would be working with the VP for conferences. We can work with our community development, the way we are funding is distributed -- so I'm hoping that this VP At-Large focus on mentorship would have oversight of all the activities happening in the EC and be involved in those discussions.

Ideally, I usually like setting up the committee so the committee would advise and create framework for mentorship to happen at a more strategic and I would say systematic level across SIGCHI.

So, to summarize, I would imagine working closely with all EC members. I think mentorship is going to be a priority, whether I'm going to be elected or not. All ECs have been working toward this. My hope is to have it more centralized and focused.

Thank you.

>> HELENA MENTIS: Thank you, Pejman. That's great.

Ignacio, can you go next? How do you imagine defining the At-Large role with whoever is on the EC?

>> IGNACIO AVELLINO: Well, right now, I like how there's been open sessions. So what are the priorities, I think it's working with the community and going back to them and keep doing all of these ways of figuring out with the community but also being guided by facts and numbers, I think, is very important.

Being open to learning, sometimes you have to work in something you don't think is the number-one priority, but you end up learning why that's important and it's a valuable lesson. So being open to something that might not be my little baby that I want to put forward, but, you know, you have to work with the committee.

Also, one of the things that I told myself, if I get elected, there has to be something concrete that comes out at the end. I think that's the hardest. If we go back to the example of reviewing mentorship, what does it look like? There's discussions at the Milan summit, there was a discussion in the CHI steering committee. There was a lot of discussions, but you cannot make everyone happy. So there's a lot of discussion that has to be done, perhaps leading a committee, like Pejman said, and trying things out. I think this is the hardest. So working with the executive committee to get something done at the end.

>> HELENA MENTIS: Thank you. I appreciate it.

Dilrukshi, the tiles are all turned around. So you're next.

How do you imagine working with the new EC to determine what will be part of the role of the At-Large VP?

>> DILRUKSHI GAMAGE: Yeah. So, at the beginning, I said the VP At Large doesn't have a very well defined role. That's one reason that I really like this position. That's why I applied for this one because I'm kind of thinking   of course, I'm looking forward to talking to the elected members. There are several things in my mind, actually. One thing I have experienced with SIGCHI, whenever I see a representation, content representation, diverse representation, I feel I'm included, and I feel safe to ask questions and say something.

One thing I really focus on will be to be representing people who have never been able to represent a voice. So how do we tackle their unheard requirements and then if we can articulate a way of bringing those voices to the EC committee, then that would be my first ambition. That's what I'm really looking forward to.

I think one way of doing that is to bring all community activities. Mentorship would be one that I see, but that's a broad level that we could do to make more inclusiveness to bring a central role to the SIGCHI community.

So I look forward to get more ideas from the members, not just the members who have been vocal everywhere but the members who have been shy to talk before and never thought, okay, there's a committee and my idea is valued too.

I'm interested in bringing people from all the corners and bringing them to the table and seeing what's happened with the larger group.

Yeah. That's the summary.

>> HELENA MENTIS: That's great. Thank you so much.

 Susan, you're the last one. How do you imagine working with the new EC to think about the scope of the At-Large position?

>> SUSAN DRAY: Well, good question. Good answers, all of you. I guess the thing is I've worked with many, many of the people who are currently up for election, not everybody, but I think there are several pieces. There's the kind of what you bring as your passion. There's what the EC brings as its passion. And then there are all the personal relationships and working together to find ways that are going to tick all of those boxes, as they say in some places.

So it's a process of negotiation. It's a process of discernment and understanding. As several of you have mentioned, it's understanding what the community wants and needs, and that's at all levels, not just the senior loud people but everyone and in all regions. So I think it's an interesting and

complex role, actually. It brings a lot of opportunity to bring about good in the community.

It's basically a process of negotiation, more than anything.

>> HELENA MENTIS: Well, Susan, since we're on you, we have some questions in the chat. The first one is from Chat.

Do you want to voice this yourself?

>> CHAT: Yes. There are already many from SIGCHI to promote globally. You have been here many years and pushed these various efforts. From your perspective, what do you see as the primary barrier that keeps us still needing to do these things, and how do you plan to address this barrier?

>> SUSAN DRAY: Fabulous question. You're right. There have been efforts to try to build awareness both at HCI and SIGCHI to bring together people who are focusing on both of these areas. Most recently, for example, we had a summit in Africa this past year that brought together a whole bunch of people who we didn't know about before, which is amazing and wonderful.

I think that brings -- that's kind of why we need to continue doing this. There needs to be increasing momentum. We focused on different areas and different ECs. We started out, well, in the very beginning, just getting people from Europe involved was a big issue because SIGCHI was primarily North American in the very beginning, but we focused on Europe and brought more people in.

More recently, we focused in Asia and had the conference in Korea, and we focused on both South America and Africa during this current EC. It requires ongoing working collaboratively with people in the region. It also requires us to put some money behind our effort so it's not all just networking and mentoring. One of the things I've focused on my whole career is trying to mentor people primarily in these areas of the so-called Global South, which is a horrible term for it, but, anyway, there it is.

And that's just awesome and wonderful. It helps to build them up and then help them go on and mentor other folks. That's one of the areas. I think tying in some of the things you guys have been saying about mentorship ties directly into how do we build and continue to build and increase the awareness of HCI globally.

So I think it's complicated, but I think a lot of it has to do with time and relationships and money and focus and not just allowing the things that people in the so-called Global North think are important but also including the priorities from people around the whole world.

I hope that answers your question.

>> CHAT: Thank you.

>> HELENA MENTIS: Chat, how about you ask your next set of questions.

>> CHAT: For Pejman and Ignacio, so you mentioned that you want to establish some sort of framework for SIGCHI mentorship that is inclusive, equitable, and sustainable. Are you aware of any of the efforts that SIGCHI or part of SIGCHI or people in SIGCHI has already done? If you are, could you give your analysis on what aspect that you think needs to be improved among these efforts?

If you don't have any, maybe that's fine.

>> PEJMAN MIRZA-BABAEI: I'm happy to go first. Ignacio, if you want to go first, I'm okay to go second.

>> IGNACIO AVELLINO: As you wish, can I go first.

I think that you will have more things to say. I know SIGCHI has been aware of this issue. There's been blog posts from the executive committee or publications in interactions magazine. In terms of concrete actions, I know Michael Muller did some symposiums of early career research development, and here is something more concrete that I wanted to loop back with him, but I have not done so yet. I'm not aware of many more than these actions.

Pejman, I think you know more of what the EC has been doing more completely than me.

>> PEJMAN MIRZA-BABAEI: As I said earlier, mentorship is an important topic. The EC has initiatives to support mentorship, but the reason you maybe don't know about them is because they're scattered around. One thing I'm hoping to do is to bring them under one umbrella so we can better promote them and make sure our community is aware of them.

In terms of specific examples, not from the EC but, for example, in the CHI PLAY conference that I usually attend, in the last couple of years, there were initiatives to run a mentorship program within the conference, and I participated in those initiatives.

One thing I realized was that it added extra volunteer workload to conference organizers that were already very busy organizing the conference, which meant that they had to figure out a way to have people sign up to be mentors, figure out a way, a system to figure out, okay, how can people who are interested sign up as mentees. Then, again, there's no system to connect mentors to mentees. Where would these people meet? In the conference? Outside the conference? Are we going to set up a Zoom call? While the initiative was exciting and many people wanted to participate, the organization of it meant overhead for already busy volunteers

So one area that I'm really hoping to be able to address is to create a SIGCHI system, whether it might be through PCS or

other systems we have for people to sign up for mentors or mentees and it could reduce the load on the conference organizer.

One thing I wanted to do is set up a committee so maybe the people on the committee could support the matching of mentors and mentees and document this. We did something similar outside SIGCHI for the game developer association where we have a very clear framework. It's like an agreement of what mentors can expect and what mentees can expect, what that relationship would look like.

So having those more formalized and more structured within SIGCHI, I think, could be very, very useful.

There are more examples, but for the interest of time, I try not to take too much time, but that's basically what I'm hoping for. And the CHI PLAY example is just one of them.

>> IGNACIO AVELLINO: Let me bounce on what Pejman said. I agree. Setting up something formal on PCS is something I've given thought to. But when discussing it with people, they say it's more effort and why would I do it. But you have to change the views. Today, I assign reviews to my students, although that's not very much encouraged because I'm their advisor. I could give the same review to another student. I end up coaching them anyway, so it doesn't cost them more, but someone has to take care of my students. It's what you said. This is more of I give and you give. It's a zero-sum game. And finding a way to make less effort. I don't know how this can be implemented, but I believe there can be ways of reducing the effort in the end; right?

So there's a bit of how we change people's views on this topic as well.

>> CHAT: Thank you.

Shall I continue, Helena?

>> HELENA MENTIS: Please do.

>> CHAT: From what I understand from your summary of what you wish to do, as the VP At-Large, you want to promote awareness of HCI in your region. I mean your region as Sri Lanka and the Global South and such. It's a different region.

SIGCHI's chapter level at each local region, there will also be a new SIGCHI chapter. So if you want to push on this effort, how do you envision that your position as VP At-Large will put you in a place to do this. How would you focus on VP chapters, for example?

>> DILRUKSHI GAMAGE: That's a really, really good question.

If we sit back and look at what we've done through chapters, you know, we have done summer schools, Meetups, virtual calls. All of these things have been carried out,

isolated mostly, chapter wise. We know in the region, in the community, we try to bring things together. Looking from the bird's eye point of view, I think about what I want to see, to establish the framework that we can bring these together. Chapter chairs have been trying hard, from what I've seen. If we can bring a guideline that we can bring all of these, not just from the region but at the SIGCHI level. One thing I've seen is different levels. One way of looking at this, CHI can be one of the places that can recommend or can be a place where everybody can come and look at here are the recommended curriculum from each and every region so that if you want to establish because ACM has computer science curriculum, but when we hear from the others, there are regions that never heard of HCI before. If they want to establish a course or they want to do something, then there should be a place in the SIGCHI that they could go and get that information. Chapters would not be able to directly do that, in my personal opinion. Maybe. I don't know. So far, I have not come across that. I could be the bridging catalyst who could work with the chapters chairs who can bring all of these events, say, for example, curriculums together and be the centralized place that everybody can reach.

>> CHAT: Thank you.

>> HELENA MENTIS: Excellent questions.

Anyone else on the call want to ask our candidates, one or all of them, a question?

I looked at the Slido. There's nothing there for our candidates. So we're good.

Years of teaching have made me comfortable with quiet. (Laughter).

Chat, do you have a question you want to voice?

>> CHAT: If nobody has questions, I would like to slip in one more question for everyone.

How do you envision -- imagine you're a president of VP At-Large and this is your last year on duty. How do you ensure that any initiative you've done will continue? How do you invasion handing off your knowledge and experience to the next generation of VP At-Large?

>> HELENA MENTIS: Your choice.

>> CHAT: Susan?

>> SUSAN DRAY: Oh, thank you. Great question because continuity of programs and even just ideas across ECs is never guaranteed, but it's very important, I think, to involve as large a part of the community as possible so it's not just a VP At-Large program, but it's something that the whole community is engaged in and supported by the VP At-Large and the others on the EC as well. Clearly, we're talking about shared values here.

I think those shared values exist within the community at

large.

So I think the handoff also has to include specific things, like, for instance, making sure stuff is documented. I'm currently associate chair for partnerships, along with Keith. One of the things that we're trying to do right now is document all the stuff that we've done, the things we've learned. Not everything has been successful at all, but some of the things have. We've learned an awful lot about how to partner with different organizations. I think what we've learned there and all the things I've learned over the past are the ways that we continue things forward, by both documenting it and making sure that it's a community effort.

>> CHAT: Thank you.

>> HELENA MENTIS: That's a big one.

Who do you want to throw that to next, Chat?

>> CHAT: Maybe Dilrukshi?

>> DILRUKSHI GAMAGE: Yeah, sure. I see this slightly differently. So particularly, I'm not talking about any other position, which could be doing the same thing. Here, VP At Large, sometimes because is very open minded for their newly elected members who think that they can drive. So people come to this position with maybe a slight reason to say that I'm keen to drive this, and I would be able to convince and bring a valuable position to the EC. "Hey, this is what I was thinking. What is your perspective? And then getting that feedback". That will run a unique or something we stopped or couldn't run earlier. It could be an initiative that's running for the very first time or it could run more effectively than the earlier times. In that perspective, it's not continuing from the previous people. So we are coming as fresh people to think differently and bring something different or with the line of how SIGCHI goes.

A next person may have different agendas in the sense of how they feel strong about leading in that position. You have to be comfortable in leading something that you are passionate about; right?

So it's not a duty that you're assigned to do, but something that you propose. I think I can do a better job in that sense. I see a unique perspective so that you don't need to think about it in terms of what you want to give to the next person to continue what you have done. Maybe the next person will come with a new perspective. In my opinion, I would like to keep that open in the committee going on. So it's about maybe you can share with the next person what worked well, what did not work, and that perspective. But, in terms of not on the ideas in the sense of you have to continue what has been built. It's not exactly like that. That's my personal opinion.

Thanks.

>> CHAT: Thank you.
Maybe Ignacio next?
>> IGNACIO AVELLINO: Sure. How to ensure the continuity -- well, you do a good job first. You create systems that are working in place, not just ideas. You go beyond the good idea and try to leave something that is already working and making the value explicit. So understanding what is the value you brought to the community and explaining to the community why this has worked -- it could be metrics, leaving data. If we become a more global community, it means we expanded to new frontiers. This is something that can be shown with numbers. But, at the same time, like this EC has been doing, talking to the community to explain why these things have worked through open sessions and Ask Me Anything sessions.

Leaving a potential roadmap in place so people can pick up where your left off and bend it according to their vision and then make time and stay in touch with the new people.

That's it.
>> CHAT: Thank you.
Pejman?
>> PEJMAN MIRZA-BABAEI: Great question. I agree with everything everyone else has said. One thing I want to highlight, in addition, is that, as I mentioned earlier, I'm a big believer in committee work, not only because it helps the VP to have more support and more brain in decisions but also create a group of people who are aware of things that are happening. I've been doing that with my university role. For example, I was associate dean and after my term was over, one of the committee members is now leading that effort. I did the same when I was an interim VP for communication. We had the committee, but I added new members, and it's super cool to see members of that committee hold a VP role within the EC. I'm hoping the same happening with my current role as VP of Publications because we have excellent people. I hope they would be serving as VP Pubs in the future. That would not only help the EC in their responsibilities but they already know well how things are done and have a good starting point. That doesn't mean that the next VP should be selected from that group. It just means that there are more people who are aware of what was done and are willing to support the next VP.

I would be doing the same, whether the next VP At-Large is going to continue with the mentorship initiative or whether people are moving the initiative forward in the EC role or other roles, that would be amazing.
>> CHAT: Thank you, everyone. Good food for thought.
>> HELENA MENTIS: I think we have time for one more question.

I see Neha Kumar's hand up. Would you like to ask a question?

>> NEHA KUMAR: Yes. Thank you.

I loved your questions and the answers.

The last question about continuity, I think, is exactly -- like, what Pejman said is exactly how this role played out, in some sense. I was VP At-Large before I was president as well, and the people in the committee are holding related roles.

I have a slightly different question which is around the special thing, the unique thing about the VP At-Large is, A, you can really have a responsive role in the community so you can respond to what's going on in the community, and you also have some room to change what you're doing instead of conferences where you're not. You're stuck to a particular charge.

What happens often enough in our community is there are moments where we call them crises -- we could call them something nicer and gentler, but let's call them crises for now. But we have the situations emerge, and they're not linked to particular roles, so VPs At-Large could come in to help out and address what's going on.

And I also see the argument that they might have a different charge, and you don't want them to mettle, but the fact is that not all the roles that we actually need in our community are covered. Often people might be away or working on other things or just spent.

So how would you in, say, like the situation that came up, how would you respond to that? What do you think in your role as VP At-Large, what do you think you could do to help the EC respond to the community?

Ignacio, let's go with you first.

>> IGNACIO AVELLINO: Sure. With Hawaii, I would do as in the CHI town hall and address the situation straight on. You know, be frank. These were the options, we could only do so many things. We had to do something. So being honest, addressing the issue. To respond to the question of how would I do the things, communicate a lot. Keep the community well informed of how these processes happened. I wouldn't respond to CHI Meta and twitter because it generates more fire, but I would rather address it formally -- you read all of these comments on Twitter, and you take them in and you write something in the name of the executive committee that looks at what everyone has said but in a more formal medium.

>> NEHA KUMAR: Thank you.

Pejman.

>> PEJMAN MIRZA-BABAEI: You picked an interesting example to talk about, but that's fine. You mentioned crisis or for lack of a better word that comes up. As an EC member and,

particularly, as an elected EC member, your focus is not only on the issues you're working on but in supporting the EC in making those difficult decisions.

So I would say, like in any situation, when the need arises, to make yourself available to participate openly and honestly in discussion, to provide -- to be the voice of people, of the community but also not forgetting that we are still officers of ACM. So we're also bound to policies and regulation. How I would approach cases, whether it's that or something else, I first try to understand what are the policies, what are the regulations around that case. So I make a decision that's within the policies. Make sure I understand those clearly. That may mean reading the policies and talking to people who are informed on those. In the example, it meant meeting with director of publication and reading the issues that are subject to discussion.

The next step for me was to make sure the people who are making the decision are aware of these policies. So my role was impacted there. That meant talking to everyone on the EC and making sure we all have the same understanding of the policy.

Then, also, as Ignacio highlighted, listening to the community and try to find a solution that works well in addressing the concerns as much as possible while making sure that we are staying within our policy and in our role.

One term I like that I use is what is our circle of influence, like who are the people we can influence, and then work from there.

I hope I've answered the question.

>> NEHA KUMAR: Yeah. I tried to pick a question that people would be familiar with.

Susan, do you want to go next?

>> SUSAN DRAY: First and foremost, I think the VP At-Large, because of the flexible role, needs to play a role in helping the whole EC understand the issues from all perspectives, and the VP At-Large has the added benefit of being able to go out and listen across communities in a way that someone like -- sorry -- isn't really able to do quite as easily. Although, clearly, all of us on the EC have a role in supporting and figuring out what the right stance is and listening and supporting whatever the decisions are that are made either at a president or executive vice president level, et cetera.

Often, bringing those divergent perspectives and deeply understanding as much as possible what can be done to incorporate all of the perspectives.

I think, actually, Hawaii is a very good example of a way that between all of the different ways of communication, I

think, as Ignacio said, there was an openness, a directness of addressing the issue and a solidarity within the community, I think, that arose because of that. So I think the VP At-Large can help facilitate that and supporting the people who are communicating that and have to make the hard decisions, et cetera.

>> NEHA KUMAR: Thank you, Susan.

Dilrukshi?

>> DILRUKSHI GAMAGE: I reiterate the same things. From my personal view, they handled it really nicely because one thing that I would highlight is the communication which was expected. At some point, people might think, oh, why are they silent and not responding.

I think when we see a crisis, what is the issue? It's important to listen and to identify who and what are the groups which are making these voices and to understand and to address directly plus, also, kind of inform the rest of the group as well that there's a crisis like, this and we want everyone to contribute and bringing not isolated decisions but collective decisions, very transparent with the alignment of policies.

So I think so far it's happening. I think if I were to do more, VP At Large, as Susan said, would be a voice that could be listening to the direct communities plus bringing in the EC communities. This is exactly the problem mentioned, having the address directly for them, not just like an outline without a specific concept but really reaching them and providing the answers they're looking for. So bringing personalization could be one way of thinking. But, overall, it's happening. So I don't see much of a difference so far.

Thanks.

>> HELENA MENTIS: Well, thank you for that last question, Neha.

We're at the top of the hour, so I'm going to respect everybody's time, and we're going to end the session.

For anybody watching this, we'll, in about a week and a half, start having our second rounds of Meet-the-Candidate Open Forums.

If you're going to CHI, Ignacio and Pejman will be there in person. You can try to find them over coffee break.

And Dilrukshi and Susan will be available over email.

I believe everyone's statements will be on the ACM to read.

Remember, you get to put in a vote for two candidates for VP At-Large. I hope this was helpful for everybody to get to meet our candidates.

Thank you, everybody, for being here. Whether or not it's early in the morning, late in the day, late at night. We're all over right now, but thank you for making the time.

>> SUSAN DRAY: Thank you so much for doing this.

>> PEJMAN MIRZA-BABAEI: Thank you, all.
Thank you, Helena, for arranging this.

>> HELENA MENTIS: No worries. We'll post this up on YouTube, and we have the video and the transcript from our captioner as well.

>> GROUP: Thanks, everybody.