



## **2023 SACAC AGM - President's Report**

Dear valued members, affiliates and guests

Welcome to the 62nd Annual General Meeting of the South African Council of Automation and Control (SACAC). The AGM marks the end of my term as President. I would like to sincerely thank you for the honour and privilege. It was a truly remarkable experience of growth for me.

I would like to express my gratitude to the SACAC leadership team, not only for their support to the organisation over the past year, but more personally for all the support I received during my term. All initiatives that we were able to deliver were on the back of their efforts.

In particular, I would like to thank our Honorary Secretary and Treasurer Prof Derik le Roux. His role requires constant administrative attention, which is a heavy load to balance with the challenges of an advancing career and a young family. Not only has Derik assisted with the financial matters of the organisation, he was involved in organisational matters more broadly, and identified a number of his own initiatives including the observer design workshop and the guest lecture series.

We bid farewell to our Secretariat Miss Keri Garland-Soldo from Office Executives. Towards the end of last year she immigrated with her family. Keri was with us from 2015 and supported me for the majority of my term. I would like to commend her for her dedication and a distinctive personal approach. It was a pleasure working with Keri and we wish her all the best with the new chapter.

The organisation relies heavily on a secretariat to enable its day to day functioning. I'm very glad to say we've managed to find an excellent Secretariat team with lots of relevant experience. We welcome Turners to the SACAC team.

### Look back at 2022

Workshops, lectures, and familiar events:

- Control Systems Day - An event where postgraduate academic groups from around the country present their control systems research. This year we had a jointly hybrid and in-person event hosted at WITS and Stellenbosch University.
- A lecture by Prof Limebeer on the adaptation for NASCAR of minimum-lap-time simulation technologies, originally developed in Formula One.
- A joint lecture by Dr Loutjie Coetzee and Dr Kevin Brooks on Model Predictive Control
- A joint lecture by Clyde Govindsamy and John Atherfold on Fault Detection



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We further strengthened our relationship with related organisations:

- National Science and Technology Forum (NSTF) - Nomination of Prof Krishnannair to serve on the ProSET committee.
- South African Institute of Mining and Metallurgy (SAIMM) - Hosted two collaborative lectures
- Robotics Association of SA (RASA) - Assisted with an application for sponsorship from IFAC's Activity Fund for the hosting of Cybathlon 2024, which is an international competition that aims to promote the development of prosthetics and assistive devices

The highlight for the year was the Girls in Control (GIC) Workshop arranged by Prof Syamala Krishnannair. This was a two part workshop hosted at the UNIZULU Science Centre. The IFAC GIC lecture material was translated into Zulu and presented to a number of school girls from rural KZN. Together with control system exposure, these girls got exposure to Science more broadly, there was a career talk by a senior female engineer from a similar background, and finally a number of hands-on coding sessions. This workshop delivered on a primary goal for 2022, namely to align ourselves to the national agenda of increasing STEM exposure.

### Goals for 2023

We are bidding to host the *14th IFAC Symposium on Dynamics and Control of Process Systems, including Biosystems (DYCOPS)*, the premier Chemical Process Control conference in the IFAC calendar. If we are successful in our bid, this conference will be hosted in Stellenbosch University in June or July 2025. We are working closely with the Cape Town and Western Cape Convention Bureau, who has assisted with securing sponsorship from the South African National Convention Bureau (SANCB). We believe that by hosting DYCOPS we will strengthen support of local control communities who are servicing the Chemical Process industry.

We aim to build on the GIC workshop by collaborating with other Science Centres around the country. This will broaden our reach of STEM and control system exposure among school girls, and work towards developing efficiently hosted annual events that can be sustained for years to come.

### SACAC Mandate

The SACAC mandate directs our focus towards *promoting the science and practice of automation and control for the benefit and economic prosperity of the people of South Africa*. The organisation's efforts are largely led by a leadership team who, although senior engineers in academia and industry, might have limited experience with or insufficient sight of some needs particular to South Africa. We therefore appeal to our broader membership and affiliates to participate and assist in steering our councils' efforts and resources towards unlocking latent potential of our automation and control communities.

### Conclusion

Thank you members for your continued support. I sincerely wish you and your families success and good health for the year ahead.

Best Regards,  
John Burchell