



SACAC President's Report

Good morning everyone to this annual general meeting of the South African Council of Automation and Control or SACAC.

As I was reflecting on 2023, it was certainly an exciting time for the South African Council for Automation and Control (SACAC), because the International Federation of Automatic Control (IFAC) held its 22nd World Congress in Yokohama, Japan. The IFAC World Congress is held only every three years and it coincides with the new IFAC leadership being appointed for the next triennium. SACAC was well represented at the World Congress and we sponsored seven South Africans to attend the conference. On the governance side, the Vice-President (Prof. Tobi Louw) and myself was present to vote on the new council and other matters for the triennium 2024 – 2026 that will culminate in the next World Congress held in Busan, South Korea. We are proud that a number of SACAC representatives were voted into the IFAC structures, namely Prof. Derik le Roux was voted on the technical board with special function as liaison to social media. Dr. Kevin Brooks was voted on as the Chair of the Industry Committee and becomes an ex-officio member of the IFAC Council. Prof. Ian Craig is now the chair of the IFAC Publication Management Board.

The council was hard at work providing value to its members in the form of a guest lecture series on practical experience of applying automation and control with the focus on post graduate students, but this is equally valuable to our industry practitioners.

The council hosted a high quality workshop, namely the observer design workshop.

The council was honoured to host Prof Lucy Pao from University of Colorado Boulder in the United States. She presented a talk on Efficient wind energy systems, the challenges and opportunities to enable a clean energy future. This was done with the support of the IFAC Distinguished lecturer program, that allows national member organizations such as SACAC to benefit from exceptional talent in the IFAC community.

The council also worked to strengthen its relationship with other professional organizations, such as the South African Institute of Mining and Metallurgy, by co-hosting a talk on advance process control in mining.

As part of our outreach programs, Prof. Syamala Krishnannair coordinated the girls in control workshop to inspire young minds to pursue careers in the fields of Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM). For 2024 we received IFAC Activity Fund support to expand the activities beyond KwaZulu Natal, which is a very exciting development for the Council.

On our media presence, the council embarked on updating the SACAC website look and feel and to make sure the content is more recent and relevant. The council also changed our LinkedIn presence from a group to a page. We will use the LinkedIn page to actively market our activities, so I encourage everyone to follow the LinkedIn page to stay abreast of the council activities.

Looking towards 2024, it is shaping up to be a big year for the Council. The highlight is the triennial Control Conference Africa (CCA) that will be held in Balaclava Mauritius from 16 to 17 September this year. The aim of this conference is to grow the discipline of automation and control on the African

continent. The council will be sponsoring people from Africa to attend the conference and so grow the exposure of academics and practitioners throughout Africa to the latest developments in the field.

The council will continue with its monthly guest lecture series to give post graduate students, but also practitioners valuable insights derived from practical experience of applying automation and control in industry. Part of the intention of these guest lectures is to introduce members to each other. If there are member that want to do a talk on what they are doing, please get in contact with Derik le Roux.

The council is planning two workshops for the year, as well as another guest lecture by one of IFAC's distinguished lecturers. The council is also planning in-person events to enable the council members opportunity to network. The council is planning a control systems day, where the post graduate students get opportunity to present their research and also for industry members to get insight into the current research being conducted.

The council will also pursue further work with related organisations, such as SAIMM, SAIChe, SAIEE, NTSF, SAIMC and IEEE.

The council also aims to provide value to its members in the form of sponsorships to allow individuals from our member organisations to attend high level conferences, such as this year's CCA 2024.

We hope that you will find 2024 packed with relevant activities and benefit from networking opportunities and world-class workshops and lectures.