Student Brings New Ideas to Society While Taking Away Valuable Lessons

Interview with Amber Schauf

The future of the System Safety Society, and the future of the field of system safety itself, is tied to the aspiring professionals who must decide on what to base their careers. For Amber Schauf, that decision has become clear.

Close to completing her electrical engineering degree at University of Maryland College Park, Schauf has been a student member of the Society for the past two years. That interaction, and her life experience, have led her to the safety field.

"I think I need to have a career in system safety after I graduate," Schauf said. "One thing I find — since I'm probably 10 or 12 years older than a lot of my classmates and I'm a parent, as well — is that all of these young engineering students have wonderful ideas of things to build and programs to create. They're great ideas, but they don't necessarily see the danger in what they're building. So, while they have great ideas, they're going to need somebody who's more grounded in a safety aspect to let them know how to make it safe for the rest of society to utilize their project. I think, for me, it's more of a need for safety, because I see the need for it."

Schauf first became involved with the Society through the International System Safety Conference. "I became a student member through David Shampine," she said. "He was working on the Conference planning team for the 25th ISSC and I was brought on as the spousal chair to help with the program and ended up in the Society working through the Conference." Schauf has gone on to work on the 26th and 27th ISSCs, as well as the Washington DC System Safety training symposium in 2008.

By working with the Society, Schauf said, she's getting a view of the field of system safety that will prove valuable as she goes on. "I've made a lot of networking contacts that will help me find employment when I finish my degree," she said, "but it also gives me the opportunity to see how safety affects different areas, whether it's healthcare, military or software — it's such a broad view for me to be able to gain as a student. I can take what I'm learning from the Conferences and the chapter meetings and apply it to my own studies and research, which increases my grade and value in school. It's helping me both professionally and scholastically."
Her work with the Society has given Schauf a perspective on safety that she hopes she can share, not only with her fellow students, but with everyone.

"Everything the society has to offer, not only to their members and the student population, but to the general public is a valuable asset that can never be underestimated," she said. "All the individuals who work in this field truly deserve the recognition and the pat on the back for everything they do to make it safe for everyone else, and I don't think they receive that every day. I think they just need to know, from someone on the outside looking in, they really do deserve a big 'thank you.'"