

Societies like MRS rely on enthusiastic members to volunteer in many ways. And it is not an afterthought- in fact, it is a necessary element of the health and prosperity of both the organization and the community for people to volunteer in and through diverse manners and mechanisms across the landscape of the profession and field of materials science and engineering.

But volunteering is more than just “giving back”. In fact, the especially cool aspect of volunteering is that by generously giving your time, energy, and knowledgebase to MRS, you are getting a huge return on your investment. Every time you volunteer, you are helping to advance the profession AND your own career. By volunteering, you gain strategic and critical skills, you market yourself to MatSci movers and shakers, and you implant your brand (your promise of value) into the minds of decision-makers. Interestingly, by demonstrating your commitment to MRS, you are simultaneously demonstrating your commitment to materials science and engineering and related, to the organizations that are represented by other committee members. In other words, you are showing other materials scientists and engineers why they should hire you. Here are a few specific ways to volunteer with MRS to advance your career.

1 Reach out to Michele Feder, feder@mrs.org

and let her know that you are enthusiastic about serving YOUR society and would like to speak with her about how you can volunteer. She will be thrilled to chat with you and help guide you to volunteer opportunities.

2 Peruse MRS Volunteer Central:

MRS wants to make it easy for you to volunteer- so easy, in fact, that the organization's team developed an entire web portal for you to search volunteer opportunities to find volunteer opportunities that will match with your interests, goals, and schedule. You can search the volunteer gigs by job function, job type, location, and industry, and even create an alert when a new (and fun!) volunteer opp pops up. <https://mrs.org/about-mrs/volunteer>

3 Committees:

MRS Committees convene to manage the business of MRS. There are 7 operating committees, ranging in focus from government affairs, academic affairs and member engagement, to meetings, awards, and publications. There are additionally numerous subcommittees. MRS Members are invited to serve on any committee, and committee assignments gives you exposure to how MRS is efficiently managed. You learn strategic business, communications, and strategic planning skills while being able to contribute to the success of MRS in a real-time, tangible manner. Get thee on a committee! <https://mrs.org/committees>

4 Meetings:

The Fall and Spring MRS Meetings are so triumphant because of dedicated volunteers who help out in various ways before, during and even after the conferences. One of the most impactful volunteer opportunities for students at MRS Meetings is to serve as a room monitor, assisting the speakers and the session chairs with anything they might need. During my first speaking engagement with MRS at the Fall 2015 MRS Meeting in Boston, I spoke for 7 hours straight. A student volunteer was assigned to help me- to keep me on time, to source questions from the audience, and to ultimately make my experience (and that of the audience) as successful as possible. Wow- did he make a difference! And I can honestly say I won't ever forget him. And since he was so helpful to me in my time of need, if he were to come to me in the future and ask me to assist me in some way, I wouldn't hesitate. That's how strongly I view his volunteering! There are a few more added benefits of volunteering at MRS Meetings: some student volunteer opportunities include complementary student registration, free one-year MRS student membership, and/or a stipend! Talk about a win-win! Volunteer for a MRS Meeting here: <https://mrs.org/fall2019/student-opportunities>

5 Young Professional/Early Career Membership Advancement:

MRS is continuously investing resources to aid its early career members, and you can get involved in these initiatives to drive the direction of this important membership category! You'll network not only with other early career professionals and students, but you'll also get a chance to chat with society leaders and staff who want to ensure your professional progression is continuously triumphant. Contact Pam Hupp, hupp@mrs.org. <https://www.mrs.org/academic-affairs-committee/>

6 MRS chapters at your institution

whether you are a student, postdoc, or faculty member, you can volunteer to serve MRS at your current institution. If a chapter already exists, you can volunteer as an officer or advisor, or to give a talk, or to aid in fundraising or marketing strategies. And hey, if there is not a chapter at your university, consider taking the lead and volunteering to create one! MRS even has a handbook on how to do this! <https://mrs.org/university-chapters>

7 MRS publications:

The society produces a number of publications, including its family scientific journals, as well as news sources such as the MRS Bulletin and Materials 360® Newsletter. These publications need content. Volunteer to write an article about your research, a timely topic, something interesting in the news that relates to materials science and engineering, or your advice for new members on how to volunteer for MRS! <https://mrs.org/news> And as bonus: consider serving on the publications committee to learn how journals operate- the experience is worth its weight in gold nanoparticles.

8 Outreach:

MRS has a very robust outreach program with many different types of outputs and of course, volunteer opportunities. Whether it is serving sustainability or participating in community events that foster a public passion for materials, contributing as an outreach volunteer is a wonderful way to learn new skills, network, and to have fun! <https://mrs.org/education-public-outreach>

9 Social media:

this isn't exactly volunteering in the traditional sense, but when you do volunteer your time to post about the society and its activities and outputs on social media, you are not only promoting the good works of MRS, but you are also promoting yourself as a good citizen of the MRS community. Post only positive, helpful news on any social media channel- do not post anything that could be interpreted as negative, divisive, erroneous, or gossip. Learn the MRS social media guidelines, and acquire permission from anyone before posting photos of slides or posters.

10 Surveys:

Like any enterprise, MRS needs data about its members and your needs and goals to better serve you. So when MRS announces a survey, such as one that focuses on salaries, career projections, publications, or investment allocations, take the time to participate. And why not take it one step further? There are a few subcommittees devoted to assessments of different MRS projects, programs, and procedures, such as the MRS Meetings Assessment Sub-Committee, which seeks to develop quantitative metrics of assessment for any major MRS meeting activity and analyze survey results, utilizing them to improve the assessment process and subsequent meeting quality.

11 Organize your own events at conferences.

Once you become familiar with how MRS and its Meetings work and you connect with the Engagement Team, consider creating your own volunteer experience. Organize your own meetup/dinner at the Fall meeting or Spring Meeting. You can announce it by twitter, using the hashtag of the meeting, and help other MatSci nerds meet and network with each other.