Introduction

The AEESP Research and Education Conference is the flagship event for members to exchange information and build our community. It serves as a venue for communication within and beyond academia, particularly relating to the development of our membership. Recent AEESP Conferences have been held biennially (**Table 1**) and feature a host-specific theme. The conference is expected to engage and welcome the multifaceted research, pedagogical and professional interests of AEESP members. Potential hosts are encouraged to contact recent conference chairs for proposal examples, insights, and conference debriefs as they prepare their conference plans at both the pre- and full proposal stages.

This document provides a brief introduction to the conference's history and philosophy as well as planned pre- and full proposal guidelines and due dates. It is anticipated that this document will be further refined between proposal stages and shared with those invited to submit full proposals.

Table 1: Lead Host Institution for Prior Conferences since 2000 (*with chairs of recent conferences)

2003: University of Toronto	2013: Colorado School of Mines
2005: Clarkson University	2015: Yale University
2007: Virginia Tech	2017: University of Michigan
2009: University of Iowa	2019: Arizona State University
2011: University of South Florida	
*2021/22: Washington University in St. Louis (Dan Giammar: giammar@wustl.edu)	
*2023: Northeastern University (Phil Larese-Casanova: P.LareseCasanova@northeastern.edu)	
*2025: Duke University (Heileen Hsu-Kim: hsukim@duke.edu)	

Historical Note: The conference was first held in 1960 and offered eight times over the first four decades by Harvard (1960), Northwestern (1967), Drexel (1973), Purdue (1980), Michigan Tech (1986), Oregon State (1991), U. Maine (1996), and Penn State (1999).

Conference Format and Activities

Proposal writers are encouraged to unify their vision with an overarching theme appropriate for the venue that engages the multifaceted interests of attendees and tailors to host strengths. The conference program should feature a portfolio of events that cover focused and broad areas of interest for the AEESP community and include topics in education, research, and professional development. Recent formats have spanned 3 days and involved a mixture of concurrent sessions of contributed oral presentations, posters sessions, panel discussions, workshops, and plenary sessions. The conference should also provide opportunities for networking between attendees. Examples include designated session breaks, informal activities, gala conference social events, community engagement activity, and complementary parallel receptions for student/postdoc and faculty/professional attendees. Finally, the conference should provide programmatic and logistical elements that support AEESP business functions. These include the integration of AEESP Awards into one or more events, a plenary address delivered by the AEESP President, conference room facilities (~12 people with remote participation capability) for the Board of Directors (~1-day bookend) and Foundation Board meetings (~1/2 day during), space for leadership office hours with members, and designated exhibitor space or networking opportunities for AEESP Sustaining Members. Once selected, the host Conference Planning Committee will develop and refine the ultimate program through iterative discussions with the AEESP Board of Directors.

Timeline and Evaluation Process

Submitted preproposals will be evaluated by the AEESP Site Selection committee and then discussed with the AEESP Board of Directors for final ranking. Full proposals are invitation only and will represent a subset of those who submit pre-proposals. Evaluations will be shared with those who submit a proposal and debriefed by the chair if requested in the hope of refining proposal ideas and developing a pipeline of future prospective hosts. Anticipated submission and evaluation dates are summarized in **Table 2**.

Table 2. Tentative timeline for proposal and evaluation process (dates subject to change)

Call to Host the Conference (RFP release)	July 15th, 2025
Statement of intent to submit (e-mail)	Oct 1st, 2025 (courtesy / not required)
Preproposals due	Oct 15th, 2025
Invitations / declines to submit a full proposal	Nov 15th, 2025
Full proposals due	April 15th, 2026
Selection of Host Institution	May 15th, 2026

- Please contact the committee chair directly with questions or concerns. If any due dates fall on a weekend, the dates shift to close of business the following Monday.

Pre and full proposals should be prepared as a single .pdf file and submitted to the Site Selection Committee Chairperson (Josh Sharp, jsharp@mines.edu). Interested parties are encouraged to contact the chair, members of the committee, and past conference chairs (listed below) for insight, clarification, and examples of past successful proposals.

Current AEESP Site Selection Committee Members / Proposal Evaluators

Andrea Achilli (Arizona)
Jeff Cunningham (S. Florida)
Marwa El-Sayed (Embry-Riddle)
*Dan Giammar (WUStL; past conference chair)
Ramesh Goel (Utah)
*Heileen Hsu-Kim (Duke; past conference chair)
Xue Jin (Oregon State)
Mohiuddin Khan (Washington State),
*Phil Larese-Casanova (NE; past conference chair)
Sidan Lu (Yale)
Erica McKenzie (Temple)
*Josh Sharp (Mines; committee chair)
Lauren Redfern Karatum (FL Gulf Coast)
Xing Xie (Georgia Tech)

Call for Preproposals

Format and Timeframe: Preproposals from universities/consortia interested in hosting the AEESP Research and Education Conference during spring/summer 2027 will be accepted until the due date listed in **Table 2** above. Preproposals are limited to **5 pages** (11pt font) and submitted directly via email as a .pdf to the AEESP Site Selection Chair.

Evaluation Criteria and Guidelines: While not required, recent conferences have been co-hosted by consortia of proximal universities. Pre-proposals will be evaluated using weighted categories below. Tentative criteria for the full proposal are included later in this document to aid in proposal planning. Preproposals are encouraged to unify their vision with a broad overarching theme appropriate for the venue. The intention is to provide a particular "flavor" to the conference venue and/or selected sessions that is wide reaching for attendees; it should not be the exclusive focus as our membership has a diversity of interests. The conference is encouraged to provide a balance between research and education that covers a wide range of topics. Hosts are encouraged to develop mechanisms such as solicited sessions/workshops and building sessions around abstracts to promote AEESP member engagement in both delivery and attendance.

Geographical considerations such as locations that are sufficiently distinct from recent conferences and access to major airports and transportation hubs are viewed to favorably increase opportunities for our members. We encourage proposals that promote interaction among, and professional growth of, faculty as well as analogous events for senior PhD students and postdocs seeking academic career opportunities. Proposing institutions / consortia should demonstrate access to appropriate conference facilities that accommodate our membership, embrace the goals of the conference, and commit to a welcoming environment for all attendees.

Preproposal Evaluation Criteria

1. Vision (30%)
- Compelling vision for how the conference will address the mission and goals of AEESP
- Approach that facilitates networking and professional development
- Provides a platform for research, education, and partnerships within and beyond academia
- Mechanisms for engagement of AEESP members, leadership, sponsors, and stakeholders in conference structure and delivery

2. Facilities and Site Capabilities (25%)
- Appropriate and varied facilities for concurrent sessions, workshops, plenary, and social venues
- Housing options that include affordable choices (e.g. university dormitories) as well as more traditional options at reasonable fees and accessibility to the venue
- Strategy that maximizes attendance and participation by current and future professoriate
- Strategies / accommodations that promote a safe and welcoming environment for all attendees

3. Team and Support (25%)
- Strength of conference leadership (leadership by senior faculty is encouraged)
- Compelling management plan and administrative support network (see **Appendix A**)
- Institutional commitment and support for a thriving conference delivery
- Feasible budget and fundraising plan (see **Table 3** for recent conference details)

4. Geographic Location (20%)
- Broadens geographic access (see **Table 1**) when compared to recent conferences
- Connectivity of conference venue to population centers, airports, and other transit hubs

Table 3. Distribution of attendance, registration fees, and funding from recent conferences.

	2021/22 Missouri	2023 Massachusetts	2025 North Carolina
Total Attendees	846	828	1025
Student Attendees	505	474	564 (w. ~110 postdocs)
Faculty Attendees	333	291	369
Other Attendees	8	63	87
Students Registered Early	451	391	506 (w. postdocs)
Faculty Registered Early	266	177	284
Others Registered Early	8	10	39
Student registration (early, regular)	$270, $325	$330, $430	$450, $550
Faculty registration (early, regular)	$520, $600	$550, $650	$450, $550
Non AEESP member (early, reg.)	$600, $675	+$100	+$100
Total number of early registrants	737	578	829
Funding from Registration*	$322,855	$349,143	~$470,000 ($624,520 including dorm room & board)
Funding from Corporate Sponsorship	$23,000	$24,800	$20,500
Funding from University Sponsorship	$75,000	$30,000	$75,000
Funding from Grants	$94,597	$104,689	~$100,000

- The 2025 North Carolina conference charged all AEESP members the same rate regardless of student, postdoc or faculty status. Total registration revenue for that conference included optional dorm rooms + meal card.
- In planning budgets, interested host are encouraged to contact prior hosts to consider costs and financial commitments. A list of categories to consider and some expanded thoughts are included in **Appendix B**.

<h1 align="center">Call for Full Proposals (Invitation Only)</h1>

Format and Timeline
The full proposal narrative is limited to **15 pages** (11pt font) with additional room for appendices. This should be prepared as a single .pdf file and submitted by email to the AEESP Site Selection Committee Chairperson. The requested due date and evaluation timeframe is listed in **Table 2**.

Please consider feedback from the Site Selection Committee's preproposal evaluation into your full proposal; no specific response beyond incorporating this feedback (when useful) is expected. If you have not already, you are encouraged to contact chairs of recent conferences to learn and build upon examples of their successful proposals and explore professional services such as Stone Harbor Group or one affiliated with your university (see **Appendix A**). The Site Selection Committee Chair and members can provide clarification or guidance associated with evaluation comments.

Evaluation Criteria and Proposal Guidelines
The proposal should provide a narrative and budget that includes sufficient details so that the committee can evaluate the strength of the proposal's commitment to both education and research, the relevance of the conference theme to environmental engineering and science, and a welcoming environment for all attendees. It should highlight the competency, commitment, and depth of the local planning team. Proposals will be evaluated based on weighted categories outlined below, with example details within each category that the full proposal could address:

Full proposal Evaluation Criteria
Vision and Proposal Strength (25%)
- Provides a unifying vision for how the conference will address the mission and goals of AEESP
- Facilitates professional development and expands the network of conference attendees
- Provides a platform for research, education, and partnerships within and beyond academia
- Provides a balance of thematic sessions, workshops, plenary, social and networking events
- Articulates conference location as an asset
- Overall strength of proposal

Structure and Planning (25%)
- Mechanism to identify session topics with input from conference organizers, those proposed by attendees, or organically formed after abstracts are received
- Mechanism to solicit, shape, and support workshop offerings internally and from members
- Workshops on issues of interest to membership segments (e.g., CAREER proposal preparation, teaching effectiveness, accreditation, tenure/promotion preparation, academic job search, novel education and research techniques, PE preparation, leadership development, career planning)
- Mechanism for identifying and selecting plenary speakers of broad interest to members
- Review process for submitted abstracts and strategy to balance oral and poster sessions
- Judging and award process for poster presentations for early-career participants
- Strong education thread throughout conference (e.g., talks, posters, workshops)
- Innovative engagement of stakeholders (e.g. sustaining members who are primarily large consulting firms and partner societies) that could attend and/or provide sponsorship
- Plan for high attendance evening social events that can be shared by all conference attendees
- Parallel faculty vs. student/postdoc evening receptions to provide peer group interactions
- Formal opportunities such workshops and luncheons that provide a mechanism for mentorship, networking, and engagement of sustaining members
- Integration of awards recognition (e.g. Distinguished Service Awards, Fellow recognition, AEESP Faculty and Student Awards, Lifetime Membership) into high attendance events such as receptions, keynotes, or all hands meetings

Team, Administration and Logistics (25%)
- o Strength of conference leadership (leadership by more senior faculty is encouraged)
- o Strength of conference management plan, operational and institutional support
- o Administrative plan such as including professional conference services (e.g. Stone Harbor Group) or a campus-specific services group (See **Appendix A**) or rational for alternative approach
- o Appropriate facilities for evening social functions and other networking events
- o Appropriate facilities for workshops and topical sessions
- o Appropriate facilities for larger attendance events such as keynotes and all hands meetings
- o Conference room facilities (~12-person capacity with hybrid remote participation capability) to conduct Annual Business Meetings for the AEESP Board of Directors (1-day before or after conference) and the AEESP Foundation Board (~3 hours)
- o Array of well communicated and diverse housing with affordable choices (e.g., university dormitories) as well as other lodging options at reasonable fees and distances from the venue
- o Accessibility of conference and lodging to major airport(s) and other transportation hubs with inclusion of estimates of representative travel costs from multiple geographic localities
- o Commitment to promote a safe and welcoming environment for all attendees
- o Plan to identify, use, or develop an electronic interface (e.g., conference website, app) that communicates and facilitates conference logistics to registrants before and during the conference
- o Availability and communication of tourism and family-friendly activities
- o Use of sustainable practices at the conference with an effort to minimize the "carbon footprint" and other environmental impacts of the conference itself
- o Exhibitor space for publishers, sustaining members, NGOs, consultants, public sector entities, etc.
- o Consideration of a mechanism that engages or highlights the local community such as a keynote address from a regional leader, outreach activity or community interaction events.
- o Mechanism(s) that promote international activities, networking and engagement
- o Thoughtful consideration of possible conference delivery date(s) that balance facility and regional constraints, are after annual AEESP award decisions (~April), are cognizant of CAREER proposal cycles, and academic year schedules (e.g. semester vs. quarter) across campuses
    - o Potential complementary conference conflicts are inevitable but please query IWA MEWE, AWWA ACE, A&WMA, ASM Microbe, ASEE, relevant Gordon Conferences (e.g., Microbiology of Built Environment, Nano) and other major conferences associated with professional organizations such as AAAR, ACS, IWA, WEF as you plan windows
- o Plan for gathering and sharing post-conference data to assess financial and experiential success and provide a platform for future hosts

Budget and Approach (25%)
- o Inclusion of clear and comprehensive table(s) that convey estimated expenses and revenue
- o Viability of proposed budget and fundraising (see **Table 3** for recent conference details)
- o Realistic and defensible registration fee with accessible tiers that encourages appropriate participation (e.g., faculty, postdocs, students)
- o Strategy to achieve a desired conference size and attendee distribution with consideration for encouraging strong faculty attendance numbers (e.g. different faculty cap, no fee premium)
- o Strategy to grow AEESP membership in association with conference attendance
- o Inclusion of a $45K premium to support AEESP initiatives and complementary registration for the AEESP Executive Administrator (currently Brian Schorr)
- o Identifies potential contributions from traditional and new external sponsors and mechanisms to solicit this support. The Board can endorse requests and will share past examples of successful proposals for support from NSF, etc. It is the responsibility of conference hosts to solicit support
- o Level of institutional support (financial, facilities, administrative, and other)

Specific Budget Elements

A table(s) that outlines a budget that balances revenue with expenses MUST be included in the full proposal. AEESP expects the conference to run on, or close to, a "break-even" budget. The registration fees, sponsorships, and grants, excluding the $45K premium for AEESP initiatives, should match conference operational expenses. Accordingly, proposers should assume that any financial gains (or losses) are the responsibility of the host organization. Data on attendance, fees and revenues from recent Conferences are included in **Table 3**. Proposers are encouraged to contact prior conference host committees for example proposals, insight into conference delivery, debrief documents, overall organizational procedure, lessons learned, etc.

Fees needed to produce a break-even budget under the projected scenario should be indicated. Potential expense and revenue categories are listed in **Appendix B**. These include personnel (e.g., administration, planning, staff, student hourly, volunteer, etc.), consumable supplies, marketing, communication, transportation, audio/visual, meals, banquets, facilities, equipment, meetings, indirect costs, etc. Recent hosts can provide detailed expense projections from their full proposals as well as post-conference reports.

Attendance data from recent conferences suggest a growing trend toward around 1000 attendees with about 1/3 of those as faculty. In creating your budget, present a realistic scenario for attendance and an approach to achieve your goals for student/faculty/other ratios. The Site Selection Committee and AEESP Board request consideration of mechanisms that prioritize faculty attendance (e.g. uniform fees for all attendees, a mechanism for later faculty enrollment beyond a cap if levied). We also value prioritization of soon-to-be faculty such as senior graduate students and postdocs.

The AEESP Board does not wish to exclude participation of any faculty, students, or practitioners by assigning sponsorship of the Research and Education Conference to one sole sponsor. The Board is supportive of any firm or set of firms who wish to "take the lead" in sponsoring any given conference by establishing matching funds or other mechanisms that not only guarantee their own substantial involvement but also foster participation and contributions by others. The Board favors formal recognition of the level of support of various sponsors by categories (e.g. gold sponsor). These sponsors should also be invited to become Sustaining Members of AEESP.

Self-Assessment Process to Ensure Continued Growth
Following the Conference, the organizers must conduct an assessment of the success of the Conference both in terms of quality of experience and in terms of finances. Results of the assessment must be shared with the Conference Site Selection Committee and the AEESP Board of Directors within ninety (90) days of the conclusion of the Conference and be available to potential hosts of subsequent conferences. Proposers are encouraged to explore these learnings through discussions with recent hosts (**Table 1**).

Appendix A: Consideration of Professional Management for Conference Services

Reflections from recent Conference Chairs highlights the value (and potential tradeoffs) of engaging professional administrative and management services as an element of conference delivery. The use of an external management service that is consistent across years provides further benefits related to efficiencies, transfer of lessons learned, consistent relationships with sponsors, control of event brand, lessening the burden on faculty hosts with respect to logistics, communications and coordination with authors/registrants/vendors, less of a need to build the entire event from scratch (e.g. registration, website, app, tracking), and cohesion in self-assessment and debrief reflections and temporal growth.

In planning full proposals, we encourage the use of a planning company. However, as the conference is traditionally hosted at a campus, prospective hosts are expected to have constraints on conference delivery that may or may not benefit from using external conference services. Institutions may also have pre-existing relationships with effective organizations that they wish to continue. External management could also add financial or logistical constraints to conference delivery. If they are considering external support, we request that prospective hosts engage in discussions with AEESP's management company, The Stone Harbor Group, to assess the value or provide a rationale for why these services are not necessary for the 2027 conference.

The table below provides a possible (and very customizable) division of responsibilities between Stone Harbor Group's event team, led by Caroline Peat, and university consortia hosts. Please contact Brian Schorr, the AEESP Executive Administrator (bschorr@aeesp.org) for more information and to engage in a conversation with Stone Harbor Group to explore this potential fit.

AEESP Events Team (Stone Harbor Group)	Host University
Pre-Event - Budget management and financial oversight - Registration system and attendee management - Marketing and communications (email campaigns, web updates, social media) - Sponsorship management (development, sales, activation) - Determine overall flow and schedule of the event - Creation of event materials (programs, signage, name badges) - Website management - Determining catering needs (menus, headcounts, dietary restrictions) and placing final orders - Hotel block coordination and communication with local accommodations - Offsite programming logistics (transportation, registration, catering, decor)	Pre-Event *Academic Program Development* - Manage call for abstracts and select all speakers, presenters, and moderators - Develop program topics and content for all sessions or workshops - Recruit faculty and student volunteers (for sessions, Q&A, logistics) *Venue & Campus Services Coordination* - Reserve all campus event spaces (auditoriums, classrooms, lounges) - Provide AV services to ensure spaces are equipped with: projectors, microphones, screens, computers or tech carts as needed - Provide in-house catering services or finance off-campus catering services - Set up access to campus Wi-Fi or provide guest credentials - Arrange campus housing accommodations, if applicable - Coordinate parking access or passes for attendees - Ensure all spaces are ADA compliant - Provide campus maps and capacity charts/limitations

• Vendor hiring (photographer, videographer, registration staff, additional catering etc.) • Coordinate in-house AV services to align with program needs • Speaker management, as needed (invitations, speaker material collection)	• Coordinate with university printing services (signs, badges, programs if supporting)
Onsite Operations • Manage attendee check-in and help desk • Volunteer coordination and training (especially for registration and directional help) • Setup and breakdown oversight (signage, materials, swag tables) • Session timekeeping and speaker support • Food & beverage logistics oversight (ensuring timing, dietary needs are met) • Coordinating sponsored elements (banners, logos, materials) • Managing offsite events • Handling day-of troubleshooting and incident response • Capturing event photos or managing photographer/videographer	Onsite Operations • Operational Support • Deliver and oversee in-house catering services as scheduled • Monitor and support AV needs within campus spaces • Ensure buildings are open, climate-controlled, and clean • Provide support staff for facilities, security, or IT (as needed) • Host faculty or student volunteers for session support or directional assistance • Make available campus vehicles or shuttles, if applicable • Activate digital signage or campus display boards to support event wayfinding
Post-Event • Sending thank-you notes to speakers, sponsors, volunteers • Sending post-event survey and collecting feedback • Financial reconciliation and budget reporting • Sharing session materials (slides, notes) if applicable • Archiving documentation for future planning	Post-Event • Collect and return any university-owned equipment or materials • Assist with building closeout • Participate in a debrief with the event team • Archive academic content (e.g. recordings, slide decks) if hosted on university servers • Submit final catering invoices and internal service charges

Appendix B: Example conference revenue and expense items for consideration in budget

As you plan your budget at the full proposal level, potential expense and revenue categories are listed below. These are by no means all encompassing. Recent hosts – and the 2025 Conference Chair in particular - can provide detailed expense projections from their full proposals as well as post-conference reports relating to actual expenses and disconnects.

Example Revenue Categories:
Early Registration
Regular Registration
On-campus Housing
Social Events
Sponsorships and Grants

Example Expense Categories:
Personnel (e.g. event coordinator, professional services, hourly student)
Volunteer rewards (e.g. t-shirts, registration, lodging)
Venue (e.g. facility fees, AV)
Printing (e.g. badging, marketing banners, signage)
App/Website (e.g. Ex Ordo or other)
Hospitality (e.g. welcome gifts, coffee and snack station)
*Evening receptions (catering and site fees for evenings 1-3)
Transportation (e.g. event transportation, transit passes)
Student poster awards
Student travel awards
Keynote and workshop speaker fees (e.g. travel, registration, lodging)
Transfer to AEESP ($45K)

Reflections and Notes:
- Hosts should account for a conference transfer of $45K to AEESP.
- While longstanding support from NSF has been provided in the form of grants for the NSF Career Workshop and associated activities, this was delayed (but finally awarded) for the 2025 conference. There is uncertainty associated with federal grant support for this type of activity going forward
- The major conference social events in North Carolina were more expensive than originally estimated and had a substantial cost not covered by comparatively modest event fees when applied (Weds & Thurs nights). In this instance, the Tuesday (parallel faculty vs. student post), Wednesday (all hands gala) and Thursday (night on the town) receptions ended up costing approximately $100K, $100K, and $60K respectively. They were awesome events that built our AEESP community with food and friends and were well received.
- Hosts are encouraged to consider providing a clear mechanism for non-members to become members before registering via a link to the AEESP membership page and the inclusion of fee differentials.