Candidate Statement

My name is Howie DeFelice, AB2S. I am currently a Sr. Principal Engineer with Intelsat General Communications, LLC where my primary responsibility is designing satellite based solutions for U.S. government customers utilizing our fleet of over 50 geostationary satellites and network of fiber interconnected teleport facilities. I have worked in wireless communications for over 40 years, starting as a test technician fresh out of high school for a manufacturer of HF SSB commercial marine radios. Communications Associates Inc. was a leading edge designer and manufacturer in 1974 and made the first digital synthesizer equipped transceiver approved by the FCC for commercial maritime use. This job taught me the importance of being on the forefront of technology if you wished to relevant in the market place. This small company captured a large market share away from much bigger and well established players like RF Harris and Rockwell-Collins. The draw of being on the edge of technology lead me to other companies that were looking forward. I worked for Databit Inc. who made some of the earliest TDM muxes, Magnavox/Nav-Com that built the first transportable INMARSAT standard-A terminal and MobileSat that designed and manufactured the first INMARSAT standard-B digital terminal.

Amateur radio was a natural draw to me. Not only could I learn about the latest advances being made in all the different aspects of the hobby, it gave me the opportunity to replicate and expand on these advances on my own. I enjoy operating HF mobile and experimenting with different antennas. You can see my latest creation on my QRZ.com listing. Field day was always my favorite operating activity, mostly for the challenge of setting up and keeping everything o the air.

I started getting interested in amateur satellites about 30 years ago with AO-10 and AO-13. These satellites were HEO's and were visible on the ground for hours at a time. This made it easy to find the satellite and get the feel for using my mostly home brew equipment. AO-40 was the most exciting satellite for me. It's 2.4 GHz. downlink and UHF uplink let me use a small dish and yagi at a time when I did not live in a place I could have a permanent antenna. When AO-40 ceased functioning I lost interest in amateur satellites until I got involved with building a small satellite with two other hams. This was a new standard proposed by Prof. Bob Twiggs called the PocketQube. Each one is 1/8 the volume of a cubesat. Our three person team built the satellite and Prof. Twiggs launched it. We made the entire project open source. You can read all about it at 50dollarsat.info.

After the success of 50dollarsat, I became involved with the AMSAT effort to be part of the NAS Lunar Cube Quest Challenge. This was the kind of cutting edge challenge that had been missing from AMSAT for a long time. As the AMSAT project lead, I worked closely with the challenge entrant Ragnarok Industries. This was my first time working as part of an AMSAT project and I learned allot about inside workings of the organization and has led me seek a position on the board in order to possibly effect change.

Anyone who has been a member of AMSAT for a reasonable period of time has seen the ever increasing lack of transparency. The organization has used the veil of "ITAR compliance" to restrict all manner of information from the membership even when it has nothing to do with ITAR. Even something as mundane as how many members do we have. Within the engineering group, teams are segregated and each individual team is isolated from what another team is doing. I don't think I need to explain how counter productive this is. There needs to be a more welcoming, collegiate environment if the organization expects to attract new volunteers.

While we may not know the number of members, we do know that the organization has not been self supporting for several years. This negative funding has had to be subsidized form cash reserves. I feel the dwindling membership is a function of the focus of the organization. The mandate that the majority of the current membership, which is focused on traditional operating activities i.e. collecting grid squares, counties and other certificates, requires that all new satellites service this constituency. New people coming into the hobby are not excited by talking to someone far away with a wireless device, they grew up in an age of instant always on communication. These new people are interested in facilitating their curiosity with new forms of digital communication. Amateur satellites provide a whole new medium beyond the restrictions of Part 15. These new hams are looking for new ways to interconnect their Arduino's and Raspberry Pi's and create applications we haven't even though of yet. If we want these people we can't keep feeding them LEO FM and analog satellites.

It's time to move AMSAT out of the 1980's and become relevant to the 21st century. It's time to use new technology to move beyond LEO in an affordable manner. It's time to show industry that AMSAT has the ability to build payloads that are truly state of the art and worthy for inclusion in commercial launches.

It's time to change, before there is nothing left to change. But one person on a board cannot change anything. It takes a team of like minded individuals to be effective. If you think it's time for a change then help us do it by selecting the team of Michelle, Patrick, Tucker and myself. Please be a force for change and vote for our team.

73,
Howie AB2S