

## Message from the FAST '25 Program Co-Chairs

Welcome to the 23rd USENIX Conference on File and Storage Technologies (FAST '25). Like in the past, this year's event brings together researchers and practitioners from industry and academia for a program of innovative and rigorous storage-related research.

FAST '25 received a record number of submissions—167 papers! This is 35% higher than in the past year and 15% higher than in the previous record year (2019). We attribute this to a more intentional outreach campaign, reintroduction of short papers, and delayed rebound from the COVID hiatus.

To handle the high review load, we have assembled 49 PC members, also a record high. We are delighted and grateful that many members of the storage community were excited to serve and contribute to this year's committee. We are also blessed to achieve a healthy level of diversity in various dimensions. The PC consists of 18 female and 27 male members, 17 junior, 21 mid-career, and 11 senior members, 36 from academia and 13 from industry, 29 from North America, 10 from EMEA continents (Europe, the Middle East and Africa), and 10 from Asia.

We have employed a two-round online review process. The first round had three reviewers assigned to each paper, followed by an online discussion. 75 papers were advanced to the second round, with an early rejection notification sent to the 92 remaining papers at the end of October 2024. The second round solicited two more reviews for each paper and was followed by active discussions that led to a summary request by the discussion lead listing specific items that the authors needed to respond to.

This is the fifth year that FAST has allowed author rebuttal, and most of the 75 papers participated. More online discussions happened after the rebuttal period, resulting in 25 papers being pre-accepted and 20 pre-rejected. The remaining 30 papers were discussed in a two-day online PC meeting in December 2024, with PC members joining virtually from global locations across multiple different time zones. Additional 11 papers were accepted at the PC meeting, resulting in 36 accepted papers in total and the acceptance rate of 21.6% (around the historical average for FAST).

In addition, for the first time in FAST history, seven papers were offered a major revision option. These papers could be re-submitted to next year's FAST (which will use a two-deadlines-per-year system) and will be accepted if the revisions address very specific and actionable concerns identified by reviewers.

We used HotCRP to manage all the stages of the review process, from submission to author notification. A total of 654 author-visible reviews (over 330,000 words) and 830 internal comments were submitted on the FAST '25 submission site! All accepted papers were assigned a shepherd from the PC, who worked with the authors to address comments from the reviews and provided editorial advice and feedback on the final manuscripts.

The review process produced a program covering a wide range of traditional topics—cloud storage, file system design, security, integrity, consistency, hardware-assisted technologies, compression and deduplication—as well as many papers at the intersection of storage and Artificial Intelligence. We continued to accommodate a special category of deployed-systems papers, which share experiences with the practical design, implementation, analysis, or deployment of large-scale operational systems. We received four submissions in this category and accepted one. In addition, after a break of several years, FAST '25 solicited short papers. We received 24 short paper submissions and accepted 4.

For the second time, FAST '25 adopted an optional artifact evaluation (AE) process, led by Huaicheng Li and Juncheng Yang. Half of the accepted papers participated and after extensive evaluation, 18 papers were awarded AE badges, with 9 of them receiving all 3 badges (“available”, “functional”, and “reproduced”). We also continued the FAST WiP and Poster Submissions tradition, led by Janki Bhimani and Erci Xu. They received 16 submissions and accepted 13 (5 as a poster and WiP, 4 only as a WiP, and 4 only as a poster). In addition, this year's conference maintained the FAST mentorship program designed to enhance the conference experience for student attendees. The program, led by Zhichao Cao and Aishwarya Ganesan, offers students the chance to connect with and gain valuable career insights from seasoned community members, as well as to receive constructive feedback on their research.

Overall, we are utterly thankful to the many people who contributed to this conference. First and foremost, we are grateful to all the authors who submitted their work to FAST '25, as well as our conference attendees and future readers of the published papers. We extend our thanks to the entire USENIX staff, who have provided outstanding support throughout the planning and organization of this conference with the highest degree of professionalism and friendliness. Most importantly, their behind-the-scenes work and meticulous care of details make this conference happen. We are also grateful to all PhD students in the University of Chicago UCARE research group for spending many hours supporting us in scheduling the discussion order, writing notes, and managing conflicts before and during the online PC meeting.

Our thanks also go to the members of the FAST Steering Committee, especially Gala Yadgar, who is always available to give feedback whenever we need it the most, as well as recent FAST chairs who provided their prior documentation to ensure smooth continuity of past positive practices.

Finally, we cannot thank our Program Committee members enough for their many hours of hard work reviewing, discussing, and shepherding the submissions. The reviewers' evaluations, as well as their thorough and conscientious deliberations at the PC meeting, contributed significantly to the quality of our decisions. Similarly, the paper shepherds' efforts led to significant improvements in the final quality of the program. We look forward to an exciting and enjoyable conference!

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Vasily Tarasov, *IBM Research*

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