



SOCIETY OF ACTUARIES

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INTERNATIONAL FOCUS: CHALLENGES FOR ACTUARIES IN ASIA

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THE YEAR OF THE DRAGON serves as an appropriate backdrop for an article focused on the challenges faced by actuaries in Asia as they strive to keep their professional education up-to-date. The dragon is considered both a symbol of good fortune and sign of authority. Certainly, there is no more opportune time for actuaries to utilize their risk management training and serve as key players in leading their companies through the complex issues of modern-day financial services. At the same time, the Society of Actuaries (SOA) has plans to enhance its presence, influence and member service to those members outside of the United States and Canada. Most recently, the SOA announced its decision to begin offering an exam track in general (property-casualty) insurance in 2013, helping fulfill the strategic vision for the SOA to be the leading global provider of actuarial education. (Please see the “Letter From The President” on page 10 for more information.) That commitment to an international focus is part of the strategic recommendations approved by the SOA board of directors in October 2011. The recommendation, based on a yearlong effort of the SOA’s International Membership Strategy Task Force, commits the SOA to:

1. Strengthen the value of the SOA credentials in today’s increasingly global environment,
2. More effectively meet the needs of the SOA’s members in the context of rapidly growing internationalization, and
3. Advance the reputation and impact of the actuarial profession globally.

The task force and the new International Committee, which has assumed the work begun last year, recognizes education, both pre- and post-credential, as a critical component toward meeting these goals. The International Committee has representation from a cross-section of the membership but, importantly, designated representatives

from the Education Executive Group, the Professional Development Committee and the International Section.

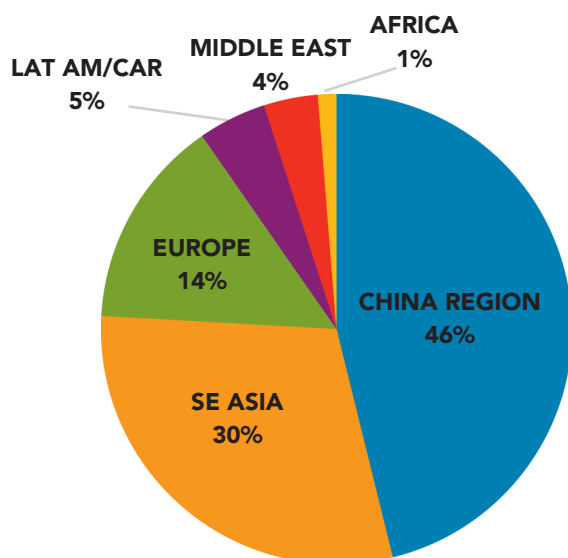
Over the years, the SOA has seen substantial member and candidate growth in the Asia Pacific region. See table below.

Of the close to 3,000 ASAs and FSAs resident outside of North America, 46 percent are residents of Hong Kong, mainland China or Taiwan, collectively labeled as the China Region, and 30 percent are in Southeast Asia, including Singapore, Malaysia, South Korea and Indonesia. See pie chart, pg. 29.

From past SOA member and candidate surveys, as well as the 2011 focus group study conducted by the SOA, some shortcomings in

REGION	TOTAL FSAs AND ASAs			
	1995	2005	2011	% INCREASE FROM 1995 TO 2011
CANADA	3,153	3,485	4,004	27%
UNITED STATES	11,411	13,551	15,764	38%
REST OF WORLD (ROW)	1,248	1,780	2,937	135%
TOTAL	15,812	18,816	22,705	

2011 Member Distribution Outside United States and Canada



the area of post-credential education were identified. The most critical are:

- Perception by international members that there is less focus on relevant research and professional development, and

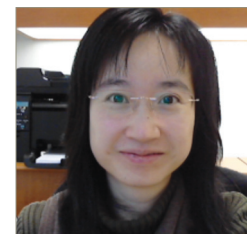
- Non-delivery of SOA professional development face-to-face learning opportunities locally.

The focus group work also yielded information on some possible areas of improvement for the SOA. See table below.

From industry reports and information supplied from local area volunteer groups such as the China Region Committee, we also know that there is increased demand for more training on ever-evolving standards, both nation-specific and international. Thus, with the challenges clearly defined, the SOA has begun making plans to address the needs. First, the new International Committee will be working closely with the Professional Development Committee to draw up plans to begin to address the gaps. In 2012, plans are underway for several in-person events in mainland China and Hong Kong with research into the feasibility of expanding beyond those markets. Those plans include a seminar jointly produced by the International and Investment Sections as well as the 2nd Annual SOA Symposium in China. The first such symposium took place in late October 2011 and the staff and volunteers involved in the process took



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GLOBAL RESEARCH	INDUSTRY NEWS AND STANDARDS	COMMUNITY	SPECIALIST KNOWLEDGE	PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT
Many members identified the need for the SOA to provide greater research and education regarding non-U.S. markets.	Most members believe the SOA does a good job of distributing information on industry-related matters, including providing links to relevant resources.	Most members agree that the SOA is not reaching out to members outside the United States and should offer presentations, online conferences, webinars, etc. Some members recognized that the SOA cannot be expected to reach every market.	Many members expressed a need for learning opportunities in advanced topics applicable to a variety of markets.	Most members saw improvement in coverage of personal development (communication, business skills, etc.) topics in the past several years.

A Look at the Actuaries Joint Office in Hong Kong

IN 1997 THE SOA opened a representative office in Hong Kong. Today the office is jointly funded with four partner organizations: Actuarial Society of Hong Kong (ASHK), Institute and Faculty of Actuaries (UK), Actuaries Institute (formerly named the Institute of Actuaries of Australia) and the Casualty Actuarial Society. The office is staffed with three full-time employees. The Joint Office serves practicing actuaries and candidates in Hong Kong, mainland China, Taiwan and other countries within the Asia-Pacific region. Through this extension, we continuously cultivate the professional development opportunities, international growth and research outputs for our members, candidates and partners worldwide. For SOA



members in the region, the Joint Office is likely most well-known as the organizing force behind the annual Joint Regional Seminar (JRS). The JRS program assembles a group of speakers around a focused topic and then visits four to five countries within a 10-day period, with the full support and involvement of the local actuarial association. The Joint

Office staff consists of Pat Kum, manager of Asian Services, and her operations support staff of Emily Lye and Tiffany Wong. In 2011, the SOA hired Wai Ling Yung, Ed.D., as its programs manager. Dr. Yung is housed within the Joint Office, but is dedicated solely to the development of locally relevant CPD content as well as local university outreach programs. **A**

away valuable insights to be applied to the 2012 program.

In addition, because the SOA is aware that even local-area in-person events may be out of reach of some members, the SOA will be looking to expand its repertoire of globally relevant and available (offered in local time) webinars and e-Learning programs. The SOA's China Region Committee has been working diligently for many years to provide content and interactive learning opportunities and look to build upon a strong history of volunteer support in the region. A strong and efficient volunteer network will keep the SOA apprised of changing needs, enabling it to be more nimble and produce content in a variety of accessible formats. In his travels while

serving as president of both the SOA and then the International Actuarial Association (IAA), Cecil Bykerk, FSA, MAAA, FCA, HonFIA, observed, "As I toured many of the Asian countries and talked to many new actuaries as well as seasoned actuaries, it is clear that the profession is growing rapidly in those countries. The demographics are clearly skewed to younger people with limited actual hands-on experience. One of the more interesting elements of addressing these challenges is that it has encouraged us to make use of many of the electronic tools that seem to come on line almost on a weekly basis. As we learn to provide educational opportunities at a distance, we also recognize that we can use those in North America as well."

Conversations with members in South Korea, Taiwan and mainland China indicate our members are interested in more training opportunities to develop better business skills such as presentation and communication, and effective means to access actuarial materials published globally. Academic members also addressed the need for more publishing opportunities in worldwide recognized journals.

Genghui Wu, FSA, and current chairperson of the SOA's International Section says, "A particularly interesting challenge with international actuaries lies in the area of determining the needs of those who work in a variety of countries and who face interacting in different cultures and possibly adhering to multiple codes of professional conduct."

Addressing those needs is further supported by August Chow, FSA, CERA, FCIA, a member of the International Membership Strategy Task Force and a past chairperson of the SOA China Region Committee, “More recently, local associations in the region have implemented their own CPD requirements on their members, for instance in China and Hong Kong. Many of the local associations welcome partnership and knowledge-sharing opportunities. The SOA has a vast network of volunteers and speakers and has much to contribute to fill local CPD demands,” says Chow.

There is also benefit for domestic members seeking more information on what is happening outside the United States and

Canada. One of the value statements that the task force adopted early on was that the international strategy work must be accretive to the value of the SOA credentials and the strength of our brand, to the benefit of all our members around the world. “As the SOA increases the CPD offerings in Asia, it will provide a forum for our members in the region to become better connected, to form a closer community. I believe this will lead not only to a stronger SOA community, but ultimately to strengthening and growing the overall actuarial community in the region,” says Darryl Wagner, FSA, MAAA, chairperson of the SOA International Committee. He and the SOA volunteers and staff working on these goals envision an increased sharing of knowledge to and

from the Asia region, which will ultimately benefit all our members as we learn from each other’s experiences in a truly global community. **A**

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