



SOCIETY OF ACTUARIES

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## Inside Scoop

# SOCIAL LEARNING WITH THE SOA

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**TO DATE**, nearly 20,000 candidates and members have traveled through thousands of pages of e-Learning content in the Society of Actuaries' (SOA) e-Learning system. Fundamentals of Actuarial Practice (FAP) and fellowship modules, end-of-module exercises and assessments have been read, absorbed, downloaded, uploaded, passed and failed.

Each candidate began the journey alone at a desk, logging into the unknown and only aware that the time remaining to complete his course or module had already begun its descent. As the pages slid by, he may have begun to wonder: "What resources are available to help me? I've read the online links. I've thought about the Thought Questions. I've 'Asked An Actuary.' But is there anyone around me also enrolled in the FAP course? Can anyone help me understand the Control Cycle? Are there any actuaries nearby I can consult?"

Until now, the answers to these questions have been: No.

It became clear in the recent SOA Candidate Focus Group discussions that e-Learning candidates lacked the opportunity to connect with other candidates and members while engaged in the e-Learning system. In the focus group, candidates identified key areas where the SOA could better serve and engage the candidate community. In response to the survey and with input from key volunteers, the SOA developed a social learning strategy to address the feelings of "candidate isolation." In addition, the SOA created a Candidate

Engagement initiative to more effectively support candidates as they journey toward associateship and fellowship.

The importance of social learning is supported in the following excerpt from the recently released 2012 Social Learning Research report from the e-Learning Guild:

"The top three benefits of leveraging a more social approach to learning are:

- 1. Learning from others**—students do better in one-to-one and collaborative environments than they do alone.
- 2. Learning in the presence of others**—social comparison is a powerful motivator; without it, it's hard to know how good (or bad) we are doing.
- 3. Learning in groups**—Enabling people to learn from each other's experiences, share best practices, connect with experts, and generally make it easier to work are all a part of the social learning landscape. The bottom line is this: leveraging social learning benefits both individuals and organizations."

To better support these needs and interests, the SOA is extending its e-Learning system with a set of new social learning tools. The main purpose of these tools is to establish an environment for e-Learning candidates to connect with other candidates, reach out to working actuaries, facilitate the creation of local study groups, and establish learning communities which will enrich their learning and understanding of e-Learning content. To

accomplish this, the use of location-based mapping functions and other social media tools will be leveraged.

The mapping functionality will provide the ability for e-Learning candidates to connect with other candidates and members based upon their location and proximity. For example, a candidate will be able to easily identify nearby candidates who are enrolled in the same e-Learning course or module. From there, connections based upon e-Learning courses in common can be made which will facilitate the formation of local study groups. The social learning enhancement will also provide an opportunity for e-Learning candidates to discover and connect with local working actuaries.

By being part of the SOA's social learning environment, members will have the opportunity to give back to the candidate community by offering guidance and support which will in turn increase their own visibility. Additionally, members may benefit by singling out up-and-coming actuaries in an effort to promote themselves or their employer in the future.

The social learning enhancement will be available to all e-Learning candidates in February 2013. More information and specific instructions will be distributed to all candidates and members prior to its release. **A**

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