



SOCIETY OF ACTUARIES

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# INTERNATIONAL OUTREACH WHAT HAVE WE BEEN DOING?

BY MARTHA SIKARAS AND WAI LING YUNG

## EMERGING DEMAND FOR ACTUARIES IN ASIA

Asia is clearly a promising area for financial and insurance markets with steady growth expected in the coming years.

*Our outlook last year indicated that growth-seeking insurers would look to Asia-Pacific, and this continues to be the case. The region leads the world in expected GNP growth rates, despite a slowdown in overall global economic growth. Standouts include China, Hong Kong, India, Indonesia, Vietnam, Malaysia and Thailand. Each country has experienced rapid development of its financial markets and services sectors.<sup>1</sup>*

*China is expected to become the world's third largest insurance market by 2015, and it is estimated that demand for professional actuaries will climb to 5,000 in the coming decade. However, there are fewer than 500 qualified actuaries to support the strong growth of the industry, creating a supply gap.<sup>2</sup>*

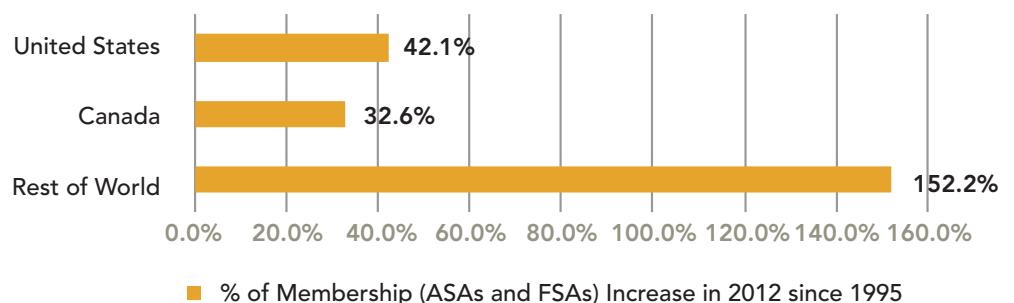
*"There has been a steady growth in the insurance sector as a whole, so the need to acquire actuarial talent extends beyond our shores," says Patrick Tan, principal consultant, Key International Search. "We are starting to compete with regional markets to bring good actuaries at all levels into Singapore."<sup>3</sup>*

*...according to a study by the Southwestern University of Finance and Economics in Chengdu, China will need approximately 58,000 new insurance management staff and 700 new actuaries*

*by 2015. Such is the shortage of qualified actuaries across the region, insurers have now begun to look for expertise in related fields, such as statistics and mathematics, to provide the analytical skills supporting underwriting and rate-making functions.<sup>4</sup>*

But what has the SOA been doing so far to support the actuarial profession's growth in Asia? This article explains the commitments the SOA has made and the actions the SOA has taken as part of its international outreach strategy to better support its members and

## % of Membership (ASAs and FSAs) Increase in 2012 since 1995



	CURRENT MEMBERSHIP (FSAs AND ASAs)	CURRENT CANDIDATES
United States	68.9%	55.0%
Canada	17.8%	17.9%
China, Hong Kong and Taiwan	7.7%	16.9%
Malaysia, Singapore, Thailand, Japan and South Korea	1.9%	5.8%
Rest of the World	3.8%	4.3%
Total	100%	100%

candidates who live and work in Asia and other regions outside of our traditional markets.

**GROWING FIGURES OF SOA MEMBERS AND CANDIDATES ACROSS REGIONS**

SOA membership and candidates have grown steadily outside the Canadian and U.S. regions over the past two decades. For example, the number of FSAs and ASAs outside the United States and Canada has grown 152.2 percent since 1995 (see graph on page 34).

Moreover, our changing candidate population means that the SOAs membership is becoming more globally diverse as current candidates become members. According to 2012 membership and candidate data (see table above), fewer than 15 percent of members are located outside of the United States and Canada, but more than 25 percent of candidates are based outside of the United States and Canada, mostly in Asia.

In short, the SOA is growing, and much of that growth is from outside of the United States and Canada.

**SOA’S COMMITMENT TO IMPROVED INTERNATIONAL SERVICE**

In October 2011, the SOA board of directors approved several strategic recommendations

to enhance the presence, influence and quality of service to those members outside the U.S. and Canadian regions.

The primary elements of the recommendations were to:

1. Strengthen the value of the SOA credentials in today’s increasingly global environment
2. Meet the needs of the SOAs members outside of the United States and Canada more effectively in the context of rapidly growing internationalization
3. Advance the reputation and impact of the actuarial profession globally.

Education, networking and other outreach opportunities have been keys to helping the SOA pursue these goals.

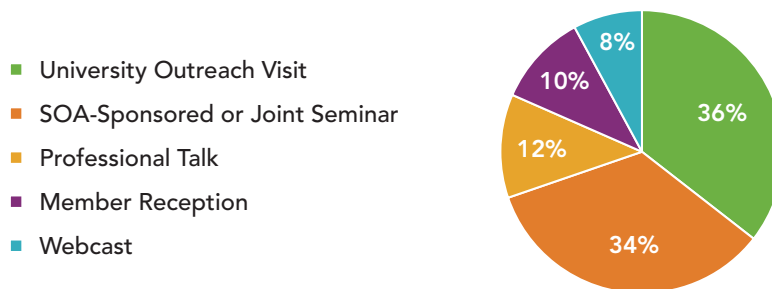
**ASIA PROJECT UPDATES**

From 2011 to 2013, various events were organized for our members and candidates in Asia to promote the value of the SOA credential, support our actuarial communities based on their interests through professional events and continuing professional development (CPD) opportunities, and promote a culture to support our values of professionalism and excellence of service through translation of promotional materials and e-Learning modules. These activities included events like university outreach visits, seminars, professional talks, member receptions and webcasts. (See chart below.)

**ENHANCED CANDIDATE RELATIONSHIPS AND BETTER PUBLIC AWARENESS**

The SOA has organized different types of events to strengthen our candidate relationships and facilitate the communication with our candidates and members and with the financial services industry. These events have included university outreach visits, focus

**2011–2013 Asia Events Opportunities**

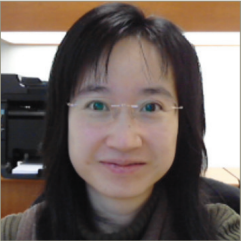




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groups, individual interviews, social media development and industry visits.

More than 20 university outreach visits were conducted in different Asian regions during the past two years, connecting with universities in mainland China, Taiwan, Korea, Hong Kong, Singapore and Malaysia. In each visit, SOA delegates



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introduce the background of the SOA and the profession to the faculty and student participants, as well as provide an update on any changes to the SOA education pathway. The sessions have been well received by participants.

As always, the SOA values feedback and suggestions from stakeholders. We respect the views expressed and the ideas generated from our interested parties. Some suggestions are under consideration for incorporation into a framework to enhance

support for candidates and members. Through focus groups and individual interviews, we have learned about the perspectives of our key stakeholders, including candidates, members, academics, math-focused high school and university students and their parents, and high school guidance counselors with regard to their needs in such areas as professional image, exam process, market needs and their “wish list” for the SOA. The results of this research further contribute to advancing our initiatives.

Social media development is another key component in the SOA’s efforts to foster greater public awareness. Updates on professional development (PD) opportunities, exam restructuring details and the new General Insurance track are all hot topics in our regular announcements to the media below:

- Local and regional publications
- Chinese version of Facebook (<http://www.facebook.com/SOA.EducationTW>)
- Sina Weibo website (Chinese as: 新浪微博)
- Renren network (Chinese as: 人人網)

- Chinese version of SOA micro website now available at [asia.soa.org](http://asia.soa.org).

Corporate and industry visits are considered one of the major opportunities for SOA management to share views and news with the industry professionals. From time to time, SOA management and delegates visit local employer stakeholders, including regulatory officials, actuarial societies and employers, to keep abreast of local market trends as well as to keep these professionals informed of the SOA news such as the new General Insurance track initiative. The SOA is also participating in different local industry events such as the 26th East Asian Insurance Congress in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia.

**SUPPORT STRONG ACTUARIAL COMMUNITIES BASED ON PROFESSIONAL INTERESTS AND/OR LOCATION**

To better serve our members with region-specific educational services and PD opportunities, various SOA-sponsored and joint seminars such as the SOA Annual Symposium and Joint Regional Seminar were organized over the past two years in different parts of Asia.



University outreach students with SOA Immediate Past President Bradley M. Smith at Shanghai University of Finance and Economics.



Students enjoy visits at the Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia; Sessions at the SOA Annual Symposium-Shanghai (November, 2012)

Apart from the face-to-face seminars and professional talks, the SOA has organized webcasts in Asian time zones in order to suit the needs of our members and candidates. In order to maximize the opportunity for our audiences to participate in the event, the webcasts are usually organized during midday local time. Our seasoned speakers conduct their sessions in real time via an Internet connection with audio-visual capabilities. Audiences and speakers also interact and share their views directly via the online question-and-answer sessions. When it is appropriate, audiences are able to communicate with our speakers in the local language as well.

### TRANSLATION INITIATIVES

The SOA is aware of the need to satisfy local language concerns. Apart from the social media developments mentioned previously, the SOA e-Learning team is also working on two pilot projects to meet the language needs of China region candidates and members. The first project is the development of a traditional Chinese version of the Regulation and Taxation e-learning module for Taiwanese members

and candidates. The SOA has collaborated jointly with the Actuarial Institute of Chinese Taipei and its designated volunteers to implement this project. The second project is the development of an International Professionalism e-course. A team of actuarial experts from different regions is producing local content materials that are sensitive to the regional context and applications.

Each opportunity to connect with our members and students is a learning exercise as we strive to keep pace with the needs of our overseas constituents. Technology tools such as e-Learning and social networks further support a greater level of connectivity. The SOA is cognizant that providing quality yet cost-effective local learning opportunities is of prime concern to our members in the region. The work accomplished in recent years has been a good start, and the SOA is looking to build on that success so that members come to expect a regular and robust slate of learning options created with their needs in mind. We welcome the chance to hear from you as to topics and programs that may be of interest to you. **A**

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### ENDNOTES

- <sup>1</sup> Ernst & Young Global Limited. "2013 Asia-Pacific Insurance Outlook," retrieved from [http://www.ey.com/Publication/vwLUAssets/2013-Asia-Pacific-Insurance-Outlook/\\$FILE/EG0100\\_2013-Asia-Pacific-Insurance-Outlook.pdf](http://www.ey.com/Publication/vwLUAssets/2013-Asia-Pacific-Insurance-Outlook/$FILE/EG0100_2013-Asia-Pacific-Insurance-Outlook.pdf).
- <sup>2</sup> Mortlock, Simon. "As Demand Grows, Overseas Actuaries Are Moving into APAC," *eFinancialCareers*, Nov. 5, 2012, retrieved from <http://news.efinancialcareers.com/124426/actuaries/>.
- <sup>3</sup> Harrison, Selina. "Challenges and Opportunities in the Asia-Pacific Insurance Market," *Financier Worldwide*, May 2012, retrieved from <http://www.financierworldwide.com/article.php?id=9313&page=2>.
- <sup>4</sup> Munich Re. "Pioneering the Industry's Largest Internship Competition in China," May 23, 2012, retrieved from [http://www.munichre.com/en/media\\_relations/company\\_news/2012/2012-05-23\\_company\\_news.aspx](http://www.munichre.com/en/media_relations/company_news/2012/2012-05-23_company_news.aspx).