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# Giving back by helping future actuaries

**A**s president of the Society of Actuaries (SOA), one of the most enjoyable experiences is speaking with many different practicing actuaries from around the world. During these conversations, one idea consistently emerges: I often hear how grateful actuaries are for having chosen the actuarial profession.

Some of the reasons why include variety, challenge, opportunities to employ math and critical thinking skills, respect of peers, opportunities for growth and favorable compensation. We have earned these benefits with years of sweat equity—by staying in school, taking exams and working overtime to climb the corporate ladder. However, sometimes we forget the people who helped us get there. Isaac Newton once famously said, “If I have seen further than others, it is by standing upon the shoulders of giants.” We also can safely say, “If I have climbed higher, it is because I have been helped up by giants.”

Some of the giants who helped me along the way include:

❶ | My many great math teachers, most notably my Algebra II teacher, Terry Wuebke, who told me, “People who can do math can do anything.” This simple (and only mildly exaggerated) statement inspired me to pursue the study of mathematics.

- ❷ | My family, who inspired me and demonstrated an uncompromising work ethic, while providing me with the money and encouragement to pursue a top-notch college education.
- ❸ | Dennis Loring, an actuary who came to my college campus to recruit, who convinced me that the profession was worth pursuing.
- ❹ | The first job interviewers I encountered, who were patient with my ridiculously unprepared questions of the form, “So, what exactly is an actuary, anyway?”
- ❺ | All of the supervisors, peers and staff with whom I have worked, who have been patient with my foibles, conscientious in their teaching and supportive in my struggles.

We all have influential and impactful people in our lives—people who have given us a boost up or who held the light to illuminate the path ahead. I can continue to show my thanks in a tangible way by giving back to those who follow me. I encourage you to do the same.

What are some ways in which you can do so? Let me offer a few ideas:

- ❶ | When a high school or college student calls to ask about the profession, take a few minutes to talk to him or her. Or, even better, offer to let him or her job shadow you.

“Helping others grow and thrive within the profession takes only a few moments of your time, and it can make a lasting difference for them.”

- ② | If your local university has an actuarial club, offer to speak about actuarial work, participate in its online forums or attend networking events. (This is particularly important for women and underrepresented racial and ethnic minority programs.)
  - ③ | Visit your old high school or university to share your thoughts about the rewarding work that can be obtained with a degree in mathematics or actuarial science.
  - ④ | Help others—on LinkedIn, for example—by providing job-hunting advice or by critiquing a resume.
  - ⑤ | Volunteer to tutor students in mathematics at a local school. One key way to help our profession’s diversity challenges is to grow the pipeline of qualified candidates from other racial and ethnic groups.
- ⑥ | Take the time to talk to your coworkers who need career advice or insights on how to pass actuarial exams.

Of course, the best way we can give back is to be the best actuaries we can be. It is important to recognize the social responsibility that comes with this profession. Your work at all times must utilize assumptions and methodologies that are fair to all users of your actuarial work product. By doing this, you honor those who helped you get to where you are today.

Helping others grow and thrive within the profession takes only a few moments of your time, and it can make a lasting difference for them. Give back, to say thanks for all that has been given to you. ■

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