



SOCIETY OF ACTUARIES

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# Message from the YAN Chairperson

by Michael Watanabe



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**G**reetings everyone! My name is Michael Watanabe and I'll be taking over as chair of the Younger Actuaries Network (YAN) for Joanna Chu. First off, Joanna has done a wonderful job with the YAN as the chair—we've grown so much, and I will try my best to continue to keep the YAN on that same track. I currently live and work in Honolulu, Hawaii; as such, the opportunities to network with other actuarial colleagues are few and far between. That was my primary reason for wanting to get involved with the YAN back in 2006.

In lieu of a long, introductory narrative about the Younger Actuaries Network, I thought I might include a few Frequently Asked Questions that the YAN committee has come across when spreading the word about what we do. It's always better to have a dialogue, right?

## WHAT'S A "YAN"?

"YAN" stands for the Younger Actuaries Network, a special interest subgroup of the SOA's Actuary of the Future Section.

## OH, "YOUNGER"? HOW YOUNG DO I NEED TO BE?

There is no age requirement. "Younger" refers to a person's career – we generally try to focus on issues and topics that are geared toward actuaries still early in their career, but our networking events are generally open to all interested parties, whether you're young in age or young at heart.

## NETWORKING EVENTS? SO, WHAT KIND OF STUFF DO YOU GUYS DO?

I'm glad you asked. Last year was a busy one for the YAN – informal get-togethers, continuing education (CE) seminars, college presentations, a webcast, our mentoring program and even a "speed networking" night.

Our New York City planning committee (Joanna Chu, Amanda Platte, Efreem Epstein and Mary Pat Campbell)

did a great job organizing both the YAN holiday party and the networking/continuing education event. The holiday party was a chance to unwind and mingle with other actuaries to celebrate the holiday season, while the networking/CE event featured two education seminars related to communication and the CERA credential, followed by an evening of bowling, with Kelly Kulick as our professional bowling guest. Even Bruce Schobel, our immediate-past SOA president joined in on the festivities!

We've also visited Baruch College and Columbia University in New York and held networking events for college students interested in the actuarial profession. So far, we've had great participation from the student bodies at both events – of course, promising free food to college students always helps. Whether it's the food, the presentation or the camaraderie, the college students have responded favorably and have been joining the YAN, which we are extremely thankful for.

In April 2008, we hosted a webcast titled, "Breaking Away from the Curve: How to Excel Beyond Exams," which featured Rob Frasca and Larry Zimpleman, as they shared their experiences and their advice with the Web audience on how to become successful actuaries. After months of planning, the webcast was finally underway ... and was an absolute success! Based on the survey results that followed the webcast, we estimated that over 750 people joined the webcast that day!

Our mentoring program, headed by Ashwini Vaidya, evolved quite a bit in 2008, both in terms of ideas and size. Since membership in the YAN is required in order to participate as a protégé in the mentor program, we've been able to get a few more people signed up for the YAN as a result. We've set up several successful relationships between mentors and protégés – even as far away as Brazil! We hope to have more continued growth and success in 2009, possibly trying a few new ideas out and

spreading the word to more people about our mentorship program.

The YAN was also involved in the “Speed Networking” event that took place at the 2008 Health Spring Meeting. “Haha, it sounds like Speed Dating,” you say? Well, good—that’s the basic gist of the exercise. Participants went around from person to person with a time limit, discussing anything and everything they could in such a short period. Jim Toole, an actuary who attended the event, commented that this is a technique that can be used anywhere, anytime.

#### **WHEW, THAT IS QUITE A BIT. HOW DO YOU FOLLOW THAT ACT IN 2009?**

You know, you’ve been asking some great questions. We definitely have a lot planned for 2009. The networking/CE event was a success, so we’re planning to have another one later this year. Given the new CE requirements for SOA actuaries (which you may already be satisfying through Academy requirements), it’s important to incorporate a CE component into our plans.

We’re always looking for interested individuals to join the YAN and participate in the mentor program as a mentor, protégé or both. It’s been a challenge to recruit a lot of individuals for our program, but we’re really trying to open it to as many people as we can. That way, people can be paired up with a mentor for whatever purpose they might need, whether it’s a work-related topic, a job search or a question about the future. So, if you read this and think to yourself, “Hey, I could use someone to talk to,” then don’t hesitate to contact us.

We’re also planning for a handful of college networking events in 2009. We noticed that a lot of last year’s events were concentrated in New York, so we’re hoping to get the word out early to assemble some of these events in various other places across the United States. Texas,

Florida and the West Coast are potential locations, as well as New York and Chicago. If you or someone you know is interested in having an event near you, or would like to know more about an event in these areas, please contact me or one of our YAN committee members.

Based on the success we’ve had with the webcast format, we’ll be sponsoring another webcast in 2009 that will focus on mentoring and networking as a valuable resource for professional development. The webcast is tentatively scheduled for September 2009 – more details will be made available via our various online networking groups (Facebook, LinkedIn, etc.) once it becomes available.

#### **WE’RE ALWAYS LOOKING FOR INTERESTED INDIVIDUALS TO JOIN THE YAN AND PARTICIPATE IN THE MENTOR PROGRAM AS A MENTOR, PROTÉGÉ OR BOTH.**

As far as the SOA meetings go, the AOF Section is sponsoring a session entitled, “Where Do You See Yourself in Five Years?” that will be available at both the Life and Health Spring meetings. Also, if the Speed Networking event sounds interesting, there will be one at the Life Spring Meeting this year. If you didn’t have a chance to get to the 2008 one, don’t miss this one!

#### **WOW. ANYTHING ELSE YOU’D LIKE TO SHARE ABOUT THE YAN? I MEAN, YOU’RE ALREADY GETTING A LITTLE WORDY HERE, BUT GO FOR IT.**


Ha ha. I’ll be brief, then. My thanks goes out to all the current and past members of the YAN committee and NYC planning committee who have each contributed their hard work to helping the YAN grow. I would like to thank Joanna Chu, Mark Yu, Amanda Platte, Mary Pat Campbell, Efreem Epstein, Ashwini Vaidya, Randy Koss, Troy Holm, Graham Schmidt, Jennie McGinnis and any others I may have forgotten. Your hard work and ideas helped the YAN prosper.

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We've also come to realize that because the YAN is primarily about networking, our strongest tool to push the growth of the YAN is by word of mouth. We've seen that those closest to the YAN committee are the most likely to participate and get involved, so if you came to our events or participated in one of our activities and you liked it, share it with any and all of your colleagues—the only way we can hope to grow and prosper is to spread the word and make people aware of what the YAN is all about.

And if we can get that done, maybe people won't have to ask what a "YAN" is.

*For more information, visit our group "YAN – Younger Actuarial Network" on Facebook or the YAN section on the SOA Web site (under the Actuary of the Future Section). ☆*



**SOA Continuing Professional Development (CPD):**

# Have Questions? We Have Answers!

**Do you have questions** about the SOA's CPD Requirement? Want to make sure you are meeting the Basic Requirement or one of the Alternative Compliance provisions?

Visit [www.soa.org/cpd](http://www.soa.org/cpd) to read about how to meet the Requirement's provisions, attest compliance and review the Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs).

**Some highlights...**

- The SOA CPD Requirement became effective on Jan. 1, 2009.
- Member input has helped to create a Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs).
- Now is the time to start earning and tracking your credits.
- Most SOA members will easily meet the Requirement with Alternative Compliance provisions.
- Members must report compliance with the SOA CPD Requirement as of Dec. 31, 2010.