



SOCIETY OF ACTUARIES

Article from:

International News

April 2032 – Issue No.72



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Chairperson's Corner

By Darryl Wagner

I am honored and excited to serve as the International Section council chair for the 2009-10 council year. I am also fortunate to be able to pick up from the great work of last year's council and those before. My sincere thanks go to our outgoing council members, Bosco Chan, Alistair Cammidge, and Carl Hansen. In particular, I'd like to thank Bosco for his exemplary leadership as council chair, Carl for his untiring efforts as our Spring and Annual Meeting representative and newsletter editor (the latter role I am very pleased to say he will be continuing), and Alistair for his advocacy of our section members in relation to the recently adopted Continuing Professional Development requirements.

I'd also like to acknowledge our new council members, Michael Lockerman, Alycia Slyck, and Genghui Wu. They have certainly hit the ground running and made numerous contributions already.

Our section is made up of you, our members, and serving you is our mission. As in prior years, we recently conducted a survey of our membership to help us better assess what you value and are looking for as part of your section membership. Thanks to Rich de Haan and Jill Leprich, SOA project support specialist, for leading this effort. We were pleased to see that the results of the survey indicate a high overall level of satisfaction among our members. The areas you cited as most important to you include this newsletter, sponsored meetings and seminars, monthly e-mail communication, and local networking events. As the council has made plans for the coming year, we gave great weight to the survey results and each of these areas figures prominently in our agenda.

We are certainly proud of our newsletter and will continue its strong tradition. Thanks to all of you for your many contributions. I don't have all the statistics to back this up, but I do believe our newsletter is the thickest, on average, of all the sections! Alan Cooke and Genghui Wu will continue to help Carl with the editorial duties this year, and we are pleased to again offer our Country Feature Competition. So keep those contributions coming! And look for a new feature this year: the Ambassador's Corner.

With respect to meetings, in addition to sponsoring sessions at the Spring and Annual meetings, we will again be sponsoring an International Financial Reporting seminar in Hong Kong this summer. Like last year, we also plan to arrange for some of our Hong Kong speakers to visit other countries in the Asia region. We are coordinating with the SOA China Region Committee to make our collective seminars as seamless as

possible and we are also exploring seminars on other topics such as employee benefits. Thanks to Bill Horbatt (a true friend of the council), Joe Chou, Michael Lockerman, Peter Duran, and Alan Cooke for steering these efforts.

We will also continue to issue our monthly blast e-mails, increasing our level of coordination with our country ambassadors to make the content more relevant to your local area. The SOA is continuously exploring the use of social networking to keep its members more connected. The International Section Council will stay plugged into these efforts, with the goal of facilitating connections and idea sharing among our section members.

With regard to networking, the ISC hosted another successful Annual Meeting reception in 2009, with co-sponsorship from the Caribbean Actuarial Association, the Chinese Actuarial Club, the Institute of Actuaries of Japan, and the International Association of Black Actuaries. This event provides a great opportunity for personal networking as well as learning more about other international actuarial organizations. We also encourage our country ambassadors to hold local networking events, and we have dedicated part of the section's financial budget toward this purpose.

I've mentioned our country ambassadors a couple of times. Our survey feedback shows that our ambassador program is not as visible to our members as we would like it to be. This will be an area of focus for the council in the coming year. In addition to the newsletter features and e-mail blasts, we will be holding quarterly calls with our ambassadors to up the level of communication and coordination. We are also actively recruiting ambassadors in currently unrepresented countries. Joe Chou will be leading our efforts around the ambassador program, assisted by Joanna Chu (Asia), Alycia Slyck (Europe and Middle East), longtime council friend Cathy Lyn (Latin America), and Martha Sikaras from the SOA.

As you can see, we are in for a busy year! The theme that I see weaving through all these activities is connection. We want to stay more connected to you, our members, and help you stay connected with each other. These connections, and the shared knowledge and experience that results from them, benefit us all. Of course, connection is a two way street, so please stay in touch with us as well. Whether it's a suggestion for an article or seminar, an idea for a networking event, or an interest in volunteering, your council would love to hear from you. Let's stay connected! □