

ABSTRACT

The Actuarial Faculty Forum

What is it? What should it be?

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This paper attempts to broaden awareness of the Actuarial Faculty Forum (AFF) within the academic actuarial community and to stimulate some conversation about the future role of this organization.

Begun in 1990, the AFF has brought together people involved in actuarial education. Those most actively involved have been faculty members at 'one person' actuarial and pre-actuarial programs. AFF members have provided numerous faculty members with information about getting involved in actuarial education.

Through the AFF newsletter, Conversations, ideas are shared. The AFF has sponsored information sessions at the past three MAA/AMS joint winter meetings. The AFF was involved in assembling an actuarial library list and providing the information for the actuarial science section of the MAA library list.

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The Education and Research Section of the SOA, now sponsoring the Actuarial Research Conference, has invited papers on actuarial education issues as well as research papers. In this spirit it seems appropriate to take a few minutes to increase the awareness of the leaders in actuarial education, who are always well represented at the ARC, of the status of the Actuarial Faculty Forum.

Some History

The Actuarial Faculty Forum originated in 1990 out of efforts of Jim Daniel to get help as he assumed responsibility for the Actuarial Science Program at the University of Texas, Austin. Jim was aware that there were others, usually mathematics faculty, who could use assistance in beginning and maintaining actuarial science programs of various forms. The need was not being met by either the professional actuarial or the professional mathematics organizations.

Jim arranged with Allan Affleck, then President of the SOA, to have a group of five interested people (Len Asimow, University of Wyoming; Mary Sue Beersman, Northeast Missouri State University; Bob Brown, Ohio State University; Jim Daniel, University of Texas Austin; and Bryan Hearsey, Lebanon Valley College) meet with the SOA Board of Governors at the Annual SOA meeting in Orlando in October 1990.

The SOA Governors agreed that the AFF was a useful idea and provided suggestions for its organization. The organizers were encouraged to pursue the idea with the AERF. The AERF was a natural umbrella for the AFF because the organizing committee of AFF did not want to be seen as affiliated directly with either actuarial society. The AERF, being supported by both organizations, was a natural location for the AFF.

By December 1990 the AERF, under the Chairmanship of Curtis Huntington, has agreed to sponsor the AFF. Since the beginning the AERF has provided the AFF with membership and dues record keeping services, and has printed the AFF newsletter, Conversations.

The AFF continues to operate as organized in 1990, very informally. There is no charter, no officers, no budget, records are kept in the AERF office. Annual dues are sent to the AERF and these funds are used to help defray the costs of record keeping and publishing Conversations.

To this point Conversations has had two editors. Jim Daniel got the publication started with the first issue in the spring of 1991. Since the fall of 1992 Bryan Hearsey has been the editor.

PURPOSE

The original list of purposes for the AFF called for promoting quality actuarial and pre-actuarial education by providing communication:

1. Between practicing actuaries and actuarial educators.
2. Between the actuarial educators and other academics.
3. Among actuarial and pre-actuarial educators.

RESULTS: How/What has the AFF done?

The AFF has done little directly on item 1, and for good reason. The AFF predated the Education and Research Section of the SOA by only a short time. Most of what the AFF might have done involving practicing actuaries and actuarial educators is being effectively done by the E&R Section. It appears that a natural division of labor or responsibility has evolved with the E&R Section concentrating on Research and higher level education issues and the AFF concerning itself with more basic actuarial/mathematics education.

As a bit of an aside, it is my impression that the AFF has been US focused and for natural reasons. It seems that most university actuarial education in Canada is done at schools with well developed actuarial programs. In the US, on the other hand, a more significant portion of actuarial education (measured in terms of future actuaries graduated) takes place in smaller programs often coordinated by one person, frequently a person with little actuarial background. It is exactly these situations that led to the formation of the AFF.

On communication goal number 2 the AFF has had significant if narrow success. The AFF, along with efforts of the SOA Career Encouragement Committee and the CAS External Relations committee, has made actuarial education quite visible within the mathematics community. Beginning with the Annual AMS/MAA meeting in San Francisco in January 1991 the SOA/CAS has sponsored a booth promoting the actuarial profession. As a member of the Career Encouragement Committee, I have been able to involve AFF members in this effort.

Beginning with the annual AMS/MAA meeting in Baltimore in January 1992, and following with the 1993 San Antonio and 1994 Cincinnati meeting, Jim Daniel has kept the AFF involved in the program at these annual national mathematics meetings. The AFF has sponsored panel discussions, information sessions, research paper sessions, as well as informal dinners.

One of the early projects of the AFF was to put together a Library list for undergraduate actuarial mathematics. I was able to get a modified version of this list included in the 1992 MAA Library Recommendations, and actuarial mathematics is therein now recognized as a distinct area. This should mean that an increased number of schools will include some actuarial material in their library collection.

On goal 3 the AFF has also had significant impact. The AFF has become a useful organization for many interested in undergraduate actuarial education. The events at the AMS/MAA meetings have been valuable in presenting actuarial mathematics to the larger mathematics community, but they have been even more important in bringing together people involved in actuarial education, especially those with only limited other contact with others involved in actuarial education. The US has numerous "one person" pre-actuarial programs, and it is a goal of the AFL to have all such people aware of and then involved in our organization.

At the core of the organization is the assistance AFL members have provided and continue to provide faculty members interested in getting started in actuarial education. As an indication of the service provided by the AFL, each year I deliver by phone, writing, e-mail and sometimes personally, to a half dozen or so mathematics faculty members, information and advice on various aspects of beginning or continuing an actuarial program. The AFL has recently provided the SA with a (short) list of people interested in serving as informal consultants to faculty interested in becoming involved in actuarial career advising and education. If you are interested, let Judy Anderson know.

COMPARING THE AFL AND THE EDUCATION AND RESEARCH SECTION

The E&R Section serves well many needs of those whose primary is actuarial research and education. Most of those served are SA members. The AFL may provide some service to this group, but its special place is in serving those entering and/or only partially involved in actuarial education.

Many members of the AFL are not members of any professional actuarial organization. Most are members of some professional mathematics organization. They are frequently faculty members whose mathematics interests are often elsewhere, but recognize the service they can provide their students by being informed about actuarial careers and education. These people influence many future actuaries. By increasing their awareness of what is going on in actuarial education, the AFL provides valuable service to the actuarial community.

MEMBERSHIP

The original call for membership in the AFL was for college and university faculty members involved in actuarial and pre-actuarial education or research, including faculty that might not- be teaching formal organized classes on actuarial material but are involved in advising or encouraging students with actual or potential actuarial interests. This remains an accurate description of the vast majority of the AFF membership.

The AFF does not discriminate for membership on the basis of anything. You have \$5.00 you can join (is this in itself discriminatory?) But, in fact, those interested in joining have pretty well met this description.

Every paper at a research conference should involve research, what follows is the research in this paper.

1993 AFF membership analysis

Based on SOA list of Actuarial and Pre-actuarial Programs

Members by type of program

From pre-actuarial programs	64
From actuarial programs	45
From unlisted schools	45
Non-academic	9
Total	163

Schools by membership

	Have Member	No Member
Pre-actuarial	60	112
Actuarial		
Canada	5	7
US	23	20

Goal: To have at least one faculty member from each school involved in actuarial education as a member of AFF.

