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OUT WITH THE OLD AND IN WITH THE NEW

The Investment Section prepares for another year

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AT YEAR-END—A TIME TO REFLECT AND LOOK AHEAD

Most people normally celebrate New Year's Eve on Dec. 31. But for some, the new year comes early—in October! The Investment Section, just like the other sections and the Society of Actuaries (SOA) generally, begins its annual cycle during our annual meeting, roughly 10 weeks before calendar year-end. That means that this year, New Year's Eve actually was Wednesday, Oct. 14—the last day of our get-together in Austin.

We've had a good 2015, and if you are a member of the Investment Section, we trust that you got a lot from your section membership. We are expecting a great 2016, and sincerely hope that you will rejoin us if you are a lapsed member or might give us a try if you've never been a member of our section before. As one of the largest of the 20 special interest sections, with roughly 3,000 members and the scale to bring significant value to our members, we are looking forward to a great 2016.

MAY YOU LIVE IN INTERESTING TIMES

As investment actuaries working in insurance, we are confronted with several challenges: a three-decade-long falling interest rate environment; unprecedented near zero interest rate policies from developed market central banks; and the opportunity to provide effective and secure retirement income solutions to fill the void left by employers retreating from pension plans and possible future social insurance program shortfalls.

As pension investment actuaries, we face other challenges: helping corporate pension plans deliver benefit promises while reducing volatility; helping collectively bargained plans find ways to responsibly close funding gaps; and sharing our insights on the public pensions debate regarding the merits of using expected asset returns to discount future benefit payments.

Regardless of where and how you apply your combination of investment and actuarial skills, there is plenty to keep one busy!

2015—A YEAR OF ACCOMPLISHMENT

We accomplished a lot in 2015, and here are some highlights:

➤ **Access to financial and business journals**—Investment Section members had access to a vast database of current and past articles from publications such as *Harvard Business Review*, *Financial Analysts Journal*, *Journal of Finance*, *Journal of Financial and Quantitative Analysis* and many others via our EBSCO program.

➤ **Networking**—We sponsored events to bring our members together, including the Thomas C. Barham III Speed Chess Networking Event in collaboration with the Technology Section—featuring International Chess Master Carolina Blanco—at both the 2014 and 2015 SOA Annual Meetings. We also reached out to other professional organizations with similar interests, including a February 2015 meeting in New York with the Society of Quantitative Analysts where we discussed liability-driven pension plan investing.

➤ **Investment contest**—For three years running, the Investment Section has sponsored an investment allocation contest, providing our members an opportunity to pit their wits (and good fortune) against other members. The prizes were iPad minis for the winners in each of three categories: highest return, lowest volatility or best ratio of return to volatility. Look for your chance to participate in the fourth contest next March. All you need is a dartboard and a section membership!

➤ **Annual meeting sessions**—The Investment Section sponsored a full slate of sessions, plus a section breakfast, at the 2015 SOA Annual Meeting. These sessions provided a forum for section members to hear knowledgeable presenters speak on current investment topics.

➤ **Investment Symposium**—Last March 26–27, in Philadelphia, we sponsored another Investment Symposium with several tracks and received strong attendee feedback from a broad audience of investment professionals. The upcoming 2016 symposium will be held at the New York Marriott Downtown on March 14–15.

➤ **Redington prize**—The Investment Section sponsors a biennial contest for the best investment paper by an SOA member published during the preceding two years. The winner of the 2015 prize, “Optimal Portfolios Under Worst-Case Scenarios,” written by Carole Bernard; Jit Seng Chen, FSA, FCIA; and Steven Vanduffel received \$10,000, and the authors had the opportunity to present the paper during a section-sponsored webcast.

2016—WHAT WILL THE INVESTMENT SECTION DO FOR YOU?

How can we help you be more successful as a professional? What training or networking events can we develop for you? Reach out and let us know. Even better, why not turn over a new leaf in the spirit of the season and find a way to get more involved with the Investment Section! Like most things in life, what you get out is in direct proportion to what you put in.

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