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# A time for reflection

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**W**ith this issue, I conclude my two-year term as a contributing editor for *The Actuary*. I also recently finished a three-year term on the Society of Actuaries (SOA) Leadership & Development (previously Management & Personal Development) Section Council. I learned and grew professionally and personally from both of these experiences, and I am now considering new ways to contribute to the actuarial profession.

When I was recruited for the contributing editorial board, I hadn't thought much about the process of creating *The Actuary*, or how it might benefit me. Here are some of the expected, and unexpected, pleasures of being a contributing editor for *The Actuary*:

- ❶ **Expanding your network to include other contributing editors working in disciplines outside your own expertise.** The editorial board is diverse in experience, location and expertise. I was acquainted with exactly one other person (by coincidence) when I joined the board, but now have friends from many disciplines whom I look forward to seeing at SOA events or contacting with a question outside of my health actuarial specialty.

2 | **Developing editing and constructive feedback skills.** A key role for contributing editors is to review every submitted article for content and provide feedback to the authors. Reading and editing the work of others has improved my own writing skills by sharpening my eye to length, style and rhythm of writing. It's not easy to provide meaningful (and tactful) written feedback to someone you may not know, but it's rewarding when that feedback results in an improved article. (That review also sometimes creates some lively email discussions among the editorial board, with more opportunities for sharing opinions in a constructive manner.)

3 | **Thinking more globally about the interests of the SOA membership.** During my time on the editorial board, we have adjusted our model to determine a broad theme for each issue, and to designate a contributing editor (or two) to lead the content development for that issue. The editorial board and SOA staff work together to develop the calendar and themes to reflect current interests and topics that are meaningful to a broad section of our membership. We also try to include sufficient context within articles to allow the less-expert actuarial reader to follow, while still engaging those with greater subject-matter knowledge. I'm more sensitive to the broad interest base of the SOA now, in particular our growing number of international members.

4 | **Developing "influencing without authority" skills.** A contributing editor has no ability to force a volunteer writer to do anything, and it can be difficult to find contributors. Last year, I worked with another editor to compile an article with comments from health actuaries about their experiences implementing the Affordable Care Act. Initially, I thought the survey responses would flood my inbox. However, that was not the case, and I had to spend more time than expected following up with potential responders in my network, addressing their concerns about the article and providing extra time to respond. Fortunately, the extra effort and networking resulted in many helpful and interesting contributions. After giving responders a chance to review the compiled article, the article was completed on time.

5 | **Reading and learning more outside of your specialty.** Before joining the editorial board, I tended to focus on readings that directly affected me as a health actuary in a management role. Making time to review submitted articles on varied topics has increased my awareness of the entire profession and makes me think more about using that information in my health actuarial work.

6 | **Learning more about the behind-the-scenes work by the SOA staff.** Putting together a bimonthly magazine is a lot of work, and deadlines approach quickly. I have a new appreciation for the staff's support for the SOA membership.

My volunteer status change opens opportunities for someone else. Maybe that someone is you. I hope you'll consider how you can learn and grow by contributing to *The Actuary* and to the actuarial profession. Send your article ideas to [theactuary@soa.org](mailto:theactuary@soa.org).

Thanks to all who provided me with the opportunities to contribute and grow over the past two years in this role. Please enjoy this issue. ■



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