



SOCIETY OF ACTUARIES

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CHAIR'S CORNER

by Mike Eckman

Like many of you, I am currently involved in several high

priority projects that require continuing education. These projects include statutory, tax, and GAAP accounting. In addition, now that my company, like some of yours, is part of an international concern, there is a new need for knowledge in the international accounting area. Since the Financial Reporting Section is in the business of continuing education, we on the Council want to be sure we are working to meet the needs of our members.

At the Society's Annual Meeting last October, we asked the attendees at the Financial Reporting Section Breakfast to complete a survey and indicate some topics that they would like to see on future meeting programs and that deserved funding. Responses were submitted by about 50% of those present.

In talking to other section chairs and Society staff, I found that this was a response rate well above normal and considered excellent. The responses indicated the wide range of interest of the Section and a desire to use the resources of the Section for worthy projects. As we move into 2001, the Section Council will use the survey responses to help make decisions.

There was great interest in continuing the GAAP seminars. A few responses wondered if the new textbook could replace the seminar, but more saw it as an additional resource. Ninety-two percent of those responding want us to continue funding research, as we did for the UVS

project. There were comments that the research should be focused and have a practical application. The Council will continue to entertain proposals for research and take an active role in making sure the research is practical and that the results are available to the membership.

Numerous ideas were given for future research projects as well as session topics for future Society meetings. The variety of the suggestions confirms that we have members working along the entire gamut of financial reporting activities and at a variety of levels.

One of the interesting combinations of responses was that some thought that Regulation XXX had been over-exposed as a meeting topic, and yet Regulation XXX, including the X-factor calculation in particular, was often mentioned as a potential research topic and meeting topic. I believe that combinations of responses like this indicate that we have members who are at different points on the learning curve and that we have to be attentive to this in setting topics.

Many of the responses focused on statutory codification, international accounting standards, fair value accounting, capital requirements for insurance and other financial institutions, and performance management including benchmarking. There were several requests with respect to quantification of risk, including funding for mortality and morbidity studies as well as X-factor research.

The responses to the section of the survey regarding the newsletter indicated that members think highly of the newsletter and want to see a balance of both current events and in-depth articles. Last year, the Council discussed the distribution of the newsletter and considered alternatives. The survey confirmed that most want a hard copy of the newsletter

even if it were available on the Web site or by e-mail. Recently, we have incurred the expense of sending the newsletter by first class mail in an effort to get it into members' hands quickly. As we move through the year, we will strive to make the newsletter even better and more timely.

Members would also like us to use the Society's Web site for activities that range from communication to education. I know that other Sections have experimented in this area, and we will use their experience in considering proposals. Deb Poorman has taken on a new position created by the Council as the Web Content Manager and is anxious to take advantage of the Web as a communication, reference, and education tool.

As you can see, we do have a challenge in pleasing the membership over the next year, and we will work to fund research and design sessions and seminars to meet the demands. The newsletter and other communications will keep you informed. We will continue to ask you for opinions and input. We are planning an Annual Meeting section breakfast session similar to last year's. Since any of these initiatives have to be staffed, I hope that you will be willing to volunteer to help us meet the expectations.

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