



SOCIETY OF ACTUARIES

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our members. We look forward to hearing from you. □

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SOA Latin American Committee Breakfast

by Jim Toole

The SOA Latin America Committee (LAC) took advantage of the ICA in Cancun to host an informal breakfast with the many representatives in attendance from the region. Invitations were sent to educators, regulators and businessmen from throughout Latin America, as well as interested parties from the SOA. Over 30 people responded positively to the opportunity to learn more about the SOA and the role of the LAC in the region.

The breakfast was beautifully presented and went very smoothly, thanks to the efforts of Martha Sikaras, SOA manager of global initiatives and Michael Braunstein, LAC committee member. Over 30 people attended from ten countries distributed throughout North, South and the interstices of Central America. SOA representatives included past president Rob Brown and president elect Harry Panjer, along with VP Stuart Klugman, board members Ed Robbins and Warren Luckner, and Randy Makin, long-time editor of the International Section newsletter.

After 30 minutes of coffee and conversation, everyone sat down for breakfast and 45 minutes of content. Jim Toole, LAC chair, welcomed the gathering and reiterated the committee's focus on education and research. The committee has been successful in promoting the exams in the region in its inaugural two years, and is eager to serve as a resource on research projects in the future, in roles ranging from peer review to partnership.

Attendees were invited to the Pan American Congress September 11–13 in Buenos Aires, and two members of the organizing committee were introduced: Eduardo Melinski and Simon Groel. LAC participation in the conference, along with tentative plans for having a Course

One seminar in conjunction with the congress, is being coordinated by LAC committee member Josh Bank.

Michael Braunstein then gave an animated talk about the wealth of experiences that being a member of the SOA has afforded him, and how many doors are opened through membership in the SOA. Warren Luckner discussed the two Course One seminars that he has taught on behalf of the LAC, one in Puebla at Universidad de Las Americas (UDLA) and the other in Mexico City at Instituto Tecnológico Autónomo de México (ITAM). Warren is currently a professor at Benedictine University, and some of the challenges of teaching an exam prep course across cultures were highlighted.

Martha Sikaras introduced herself as a contact within the SOA for the Latin American actuarial community and gave a presentation (in Spanish!) summarizing the many projects she is involved in and the services she provides in her role as manager of global initiatives. Rob Brown batted clean up with a few words about the University of Waterloo's relationships with universities abroad (including ITAM in Mexico City) and the possible convergence of the worldwide actuarial education process in the years to come.

Questions in a brief follow-up session ranged from technical aspects of taking the exams (such as establishing an exam center) to when the exams might be available in Spanish. Surely the greatest benefit of the breakfast came from spreading the word that the SOA is proactively seeking to serve the needs of the actuarial profession in the region, and that there are people in the SOA who speak their language, literally and figuratively. □



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