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## Session 44IF

### Being a Good Advisor: The Professional Development Requirement

**Track:** Education and Research

**Moderator:** MARTA L. HOLMBERG<sup>†</sup>

**Panelists:** NANCY A. BEHRENS  
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**Recorder:** MARTA L. HOLMBERG<sup>†</sup>

*Summary: Attendees learn more about the Professional Development (PD) requirement of the new examination system and the role of the advisor. FSAs who might serve as PD advisors gain an understanding of the objectives and components of the new requirement and their challenges and responsibilities as advisors.*

**Ms. Marta L. Holmberg:** First, let me introduce the presenters. I'm with the SOA staff as the Managing Director of Core Studies and Global Initiatives. I have some grounding in the intention and the practice of the professional development requirement. I have been part of the development team from the onset of the idea of having professional development as part of the educational requirements for the FSA designation.

Max Rudolph focuses on financial risk management at Mutual of Omaha. He has achieved his FSA and chartered financial analyst (CFA) designations. Max has been actively involved with Mutual of Omaha's recruiting of actuarial students and the company's student program. He has experience in being an effective advisor and is going to share that experience.

Nancy Behrens is vice president for process support at State Farm Life. She has been an active participant from the continuing education (CE) side of this effort. She has been trying to ensure that the CE programs of the SOA are effective educational tools for candidates to use within their PD plans. She has served in that vital CE role as a member of the SOA board for two years as a vice president. Nancy has also been a member of the PD committee for its entire existence.

**Dr. Holmberg:** We have a short presentation about the PD requirement. The PD requirement is intended to take the place of highly specialized topics on the

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examinations. These are specialized areas such as regulatory topics, nation-specific topics, or aspects of actuarial practice that are highly specific and that can be variable in terms of the individual needs of the candidate near to completion of his or her FSA. The basic structure of the requirement is that the candidate acquire at least 35 units from formal educational programs, and a minimum of 20 (of those 35) units must be SOA approved. The candidate also needs to complete an independent research project for another 15 units. The project is intended to include critical elements of research, analysis, and communication. For the candidate to be eligible to undertake the PD process, he or she needs to complete the examinations, Courses 1 through 8, and select an advisor. The advisor and candidate develop an initial PD plan together. The initial plan, along with a letter of commitment signed by the candidate and the advisor, are filed with the SOA office.

We have just made a change to the process for the initial plan which allows the candidate to make progress toward completing the PD requirement more quickly. We have had something of a logjam with a large number of candidates sending in their initial PD plans. The review groups of our PD committee have been overwhelmed by the number of PD plan submissions. The number of submissions in the first six months of the requirement has exceeded our original expectations. To eliminate the logjam, we are changing this process so that a formal review of the initial PD plan becomes optional, rather than a required (and time-consuming) step in the process. Under the revised process, the candidate's initial PD plan will be filed with the SOA and acknowledged by the SOA as being received and processed. At the request of the candidate-advisor team, a review group expert in the candidate's area of practice will review the initial plan and provide comments, particularly to point out if there are any problem areas in the plan. Otherwise, if there is no request for a formal review, then the candidate can go straight into proceeding with completing the plan.

**From the Floor:** So is it deemed approved as soon as the candidate files it?

**Dr. Holmberg:** Yes, it is essentially deemed approved.

**From the Floor:** Candidates are not subject to the limit of 15 credits or anything like that, are they?

**Dr. Holmberg:** As soon as the initial plan is acknowledged by the SOA as having been processed, the candidate can proceed beyond the first 15 units of formal programs. Candidates will get a letter of acknowledgement back via e-mail, if we have the candidate's e-mail address, so there will be virtually no delay. We have the acknowledgment process in place so that we can confirm that the candidate has completed Courses 1-8, and the like. Potential problems can be resolved up front. If we get 1,000 plans on the same day, we won't lose track of any of them. Candidates will essentially be able to go full steam ahead with the completion of their plan.

**From the Floor:** Of the plans that have been reviewed so far, have you seen problem areas or something that was missed?

**Dr. Holmberg:** It differs a great deal by candidate. If there is a fairly common weakness that we felt probably stemmed from not having provided enough examples, we've given back fairly standard descriptions of what's wrong. Where we see something uniquely wrong or way off track, we try to provide more detailed comments to help the candidate. We always leave it so that a candidate or advisor can get in touch with somebody in the SOA office or somebody on the PD committee to talk about what is really needed. We have certainly found that there are times when what we communicate needs to be translated or expanded. Sometimes it's not nearly as clear to the person who's seeing this for the first time as it is to the groups that are seeing patterns emerging.

**From the Floor:** Does this "deemed approval" process also apply to custom plans or if a candidate is carrying over some conversion credit that's going to be partially applied to this process?

**Dr. Holmberg:** There is no distinction between a custom plan and a model plan. This is just a full-scale change in the process to remove an unnecessary barrier to candidates being able to move forward with their PD programs.

**From the Floor:** Has this change in process already taken effect?

**Dr. Holmberg:** This is going to take effect July 1, 2000.

**From the Floor:** So anyone that has received approval letters so far was reviewed and can assume everything's fine.

**Dr. Holmberg:** Yes. Absolutely.

**Ms. Behrens:** The second part of the first question was about the 15 units. Our intention is for the criteria to still apply. You can only have 15 credits before you do your initial plan submission. Is that correct?

**Dr. Holmberg:** Yes.

**From the Floor:** Once you've submitted it, you can proceed beyond the 15 units.

**Dr. Holmberg:** Once the plan has been acknowledged by the SOA, you get a nearly instant turnaround.

**From the Floor:** I think the process is a great idea. I had a student come to me and give me his plan and I said, "That is really lame." I looked at the model plan example put out by the Society and I found that his was almost, word for word, the same as the example. I called Bill Cutlip to confirm the intent of the PD requirement. My student's initial plan came back with comments saying, "This isn't detailed enough; give us more information." So I think that what you're doing is a good step forward.

**Dr. Holmberg:** Good. Once the candidate has completed the plan, and the advisor agrees it's completed, they submit the executed plan package with the signature of

the advisor that it is completed to the advisor's satisfaction. Return it to the SOA office, and then it will go through a fairly careful review by review group from the PD committee.

**From the Floor:** I have one candidate who is ready to submit his final PD plan package. We're anticipating a package that's inches thick. Is that what you're looking for?

**Dr. Holmberg:** In terms of the full package, that is probably what we are looking for. However, there are a couple of aspects to that. We are coming up on a deadline for people to register for the Fellowship Admission Courses (FAC). We recognize that there's some anxiety about and keen interest in making that deadline. There is one thing that can be done. The essential part of the package, which is what the candidate actually needs to produce, can be e-mailed to us and we can start the review before we get the full package of material. This part includes the summaries, the descriptions of the educational benefits, and the communication aspect of the project.

We're really trying to commit to being able to get that turned around so everybody can get in. Please tell people we have plenty of room in the August FAC. There's a false rumor going around that those FAC sessions are full and that people will have to wait until 2001 to get into an FAC, but there's plenty of room. However, people need to get those executed plans in by the end of the first week in July to be able to complete the review process and invite candidates to the FAC. We are committed to doing our part of the job right and to get people in.

**From the Floor:** A big concern is that FAC is in August.

**Dr. Holmberg:** We are looking at the possibility of a later FAC in the fall. There are several elements that enter into that analysis. The availability of facilitators, suitable meeting space, and a suitable number of candidates eligible for the FAC are all critical factors. At the moment, it actually doesn't look like we're going to have a large unmet need after the August FAC programs. We certainly recognize that people don't want to wait six months to get their Fellowship.

**From the Floor:** Are you encouraging people to do things via e-mail because that makes it easier for the review committees? Is that how you're sending it to them, or are you printing it off?

**Dr. Holmberg:** When we can, we will e-mail plan documents to the review group as well. E-mail certainly makes the distribution much easier. We go through a very long process when we have to photocopy everything and send it out. It delays things considerably.

**Mr. Max J. Rudolph:** We sent in a packet recently for one of my students and the student had to send in both the notes that she'd written up and the handouts from non-SOA approved stuff, so that's an instance in which the package can get really thick. So if you can e-mail part of it and get it started that's a real win-win situation.

**Dr. Holmberg:** Yes, we'd certainly like to encourage that. I've mentioned that the PD committee reviews the executed plan, and we get back to the candidate and advisor with the result of that review. If the executed plan is approved, the candidate is confirmed as FAC eligible and invited to attend an upcoming FAC.

**Ms. Behrens:** I want to talk about how the process developed and what we talked about in the early stages of the Professional Development requirement with respect to the role of the advisor. Those are things like: who an ideal advisor might be, the questions an advisor should ask when they're first talking to the candidate, and the advisor's professional relationship to the candidate. We have had a lot of discussion about that, which I'll talk about later. I'll also discuss designing the PD plan. I've said many times that I am much less worried about the candidates applying for PD credit than I am about the 10 or 15-year FSAs who haven't been to substantive sessions at a Society of Actuaries meeting in a long time.

So, what characterizes the ideal advisor? First, I would say advisors need to be empathetic. Advisors must pay attention to what the person needs. Understand that everybody wants to get finished with their exams. I used to be on the FAC Committee and hear some sad tales about someone who had a reason why they couldn't attend that FAC, but wondered if they could use the FSA designation anyway. So I know that candidates feel that it's really critical to get their FSAs right away. All of us can remember how we felt in that situation.

One of the main criterion of an advisor is professionalism. A responsibility of the advisor is to make sure that the people who are being qualified as FSAs have truly attained a level of knowledge and understanding of the field that really qualifies them to be an FSA. So we're really relying very much on the professionalism of each of you.

Another characteristic is flexibility. I know that as you go through the PD process as an advisor, there are going to be times that a candidate was planning to go to a specific session or program, and for some reason, they have to change those plans. We would ask you to be understanding and flexible as you're working with a candidate.

An advisor must be knowledgeable. This is one where I really feel like I'm preaching to the choir. The audience must have at least some strong interest in being a good advisor and they have probably taken some time to learn about it already. You also need to be knowledgeable about what it is that actuaries must practice effectively in our environment today and that seems to change every week. So I think all of you need to stay up to date on what's going on in the profession, particularly in the types of fields that your candidate is talking about being involved with.

What are some questions that a good advisor should ask? First, what does the candidate currently need? One of the things that has troubled some people about the new examination system is the lack of country-specific regulatory issues. We answered a lot of questions early on about how students now learn about the U.S. taxation system or pension valuation methods. Look at what the candidate lacks in

terms of being able to practice in their specific field. The next question is, what might the candidate need to succeed in the future? This gives you a chance to talk to the candidate about career aspirations. Where does he or she go after their current job placement? Their plans for the future could impact their Professional Development plan. I think it also gives you a chance to talk about what you think is happening in the actuarial profession and where the needs might be emerging. I think you should ask about the strengths and skills the candidate currently possesses. What things are they good at and what areas do they need a little bit more help in? What are the candidate's interests?

We are talking about the career goals of that specific candidate because that will affect the choices that they make. Finally, what resources are available for meeting all of the PD needs that have been identified through this interview process? In the case of some of the PD plans we've seen, it seems that this last one gets answered first. Some candidates look at what meetings are coming up and how they can crowbar them into the plans that they are putting together.

We had a lot of discussion early on about what the relationship between the advisor should be to the candidate. Concerns were voiced about the situation where the candidate reported to their advisor, and the implications of that situation in terms of company control over the candidate's choices. I think that is a good situation because of the conversations and planning that should be going on.

I think in a good supervisor-candidate relationship those discussions would be happening anyway and would be very natural. I know that a lot of companies have a designated person as the administrator of their actuarial student program. I think that would be another good mechanism for assuring some consistency across candidates within your company and to make sure that when an actuary becomes qualified that you know what your company knows.

In some cases, the advisor might be a peer colleague, although with the requirement that an advisor be a five-year FSA, that might be a little bit more rare. It could happen, and it could work very effectively. In some cases, candidates may have no one in their company or immediate circle that they feel they can go to, or with whom they currently have a professional relationship. The Society office is prepared to help candidates find an advisor if they don't have one available for whatever reason.

Now, let's talk about designing the PD plan. The process really needs to begin with defining educational objectives that address some of the things that I talked about earlier. Everything from that point forward should tie back to those educational objectives, including the write up in the final executed plan. We talked a little bit earlier about content notes from meeting sessions, and some of us write pretty voluminous notes about session content. We've seen some that are a word for word playback of the session.

What we're really looking for out of any given session would be a paragraph or two about how the candidate would apply what they heard in the session content to their work. They should especially fulfill the educational objectives of their PD plan. After

this meeting I suspect we're going to see a fair number of executed plans. I'm going to read the same summary many times, and I really don't want to do that. I'm much more interested in what the person learned from the session and how that impacts their educational objectives.

When planning the activities for a PD plan, you need to look at available resources, including both SOA-approved and non-approved programs. Because there is a place for non-approved programs, I think this is where you can be a little bit creative and tailor the plan to the candidate's individual needs. This would apply to what we refer to as "soft skills," such as presentation skills, communication skills, and writing for non-technical people. Like I said, it gives you a chance to use some creativity. The timeline for completion is a factor, and Marta already talked about it, but I think you need to be cognizant of the fact that people want to finish quickly and balance that desire with solid, relevant education. We would ask you to steer candidates from trying to go to one Society of Actuaries meeting and somehow try to find enough PD credits there. The programs they attend really do need to be relevant to their plan that they've laid out.

The last aspect of PD I want to emphasize is this whole idea of PD being the first step in a lifetime of learning. As I said previously, I tend to be more concerned about the FSAs who got their designation several years ago. I think we are seeing people taking the PD process very seriously. It is a chance for all of you to instill in a group of new FSAs what it means to continuously learn and to be ready to adapt to the changes in our industry and in our profession. With that, I'll turn it over to Max.

**Mr. Rudolph:** I'm going to talk about some of the practical issues to implement a PD plan. I'm an advisor to two candidates right now. One works for me, so I'm an example of the work supervisor being the advisor. We've tried to be somewhat creative based on his plan and where he wants to go with his career. We actually included the Berkshire Hathaway annual meeting. He attended and wrote up some notes from it. Where else do you get an opportunity to hear Warren Buffett speak? Something like that is very appropriate for some candidates who are depending on meeting their educational objectives. The other candidate that I have is not with our company. This person's supervisor didn't feel that he had anyone that met the PD advisor requirements at his company. I work for Cecil Bykerk, who was recognized this morning by Norm Crowder for his extensive work with the complete redesign of the Education and Examination (E&E) system. I think these candidates believed, because they could access Cecil through me, that they'd be able to get their questions answered. We've turned that around and said, "I'll be the lead advisor for this candidate, but we're going to set up a team with people from your company. The next time you have a candidate you can use me as a member of your team, but I won't need to be the lead because your people will have developed that expertise."

Marta called me to ask me to do this presentation, and my first question was, "Well, why is she asking me?" I think that question applies to being an advisor too. I think a lot of people wonder why they are being asked or believe that they are too busy. "Why not me?" is probably the better question. We've gone through the process to attain the FSA. Many of us volunteer for different things within the Society, whether

it be grading exams, helping out with a local actuarial club or a section council, or speaking at a meeting. Being a PD advisor is just another step. Serving as an advisor helps develop the actuaries that we want to have as our colleagues. I think it's tied in with the whole "Big Tent" concept. We can help create a generation of actuaries that are a bit more broadly diversified. We might see that if a person were to take a speaking course, he or she would really be a go-getter. If we can encourage the development of skills in the coming generation of FSAs, I think that's useful.

Let's discuss the educational objective. As Nancy said, you want to help the candidate to grow. If he or she is not growing, then we're not making use of the opportunity provided by the requirement. You want to help the candidate put a plan together that really makes sense for him or her. It should be very individually directed and he or she should believe it is useful. They're the ones for whom this is going to be the first step in pursuing relevant continuing education for the rest of their lives. If you force them to do something that doesn't make sense for them, it's a negative experience.

In the instance I talked about, we put together an advisory team for one specific purpose. There are a lot of other reasons why you'd want to put together a team. Maybe a candidate wants to combine his or her expertise in XXX with expertise in equity pricing. You're probably not going to find one advisor who knows both those topics in great depth. You can pull together different specialties by putting a team together. My understanding is that you need to have one person who signs as the lead advisor.

I wish I had heard Nancy's talk before I started being an advisor. I think her perspective is really helpful, and I was really pleased that almost everything that she said matched with how we had interpreted the role of being an advisor. We are, in a sense, guinea pigs, as are those of you who have candidates over the next few months. I haven't had to deal with the project. So that's something that I don't know that much about personally, but will at least mention it here. I think a lot of this goes back to what Nancy already said. You want candidates to develop skills that are relevant, and you want them to learn something new. If they're already very good at XXX, and you have them do a project on how XXX applies to your company, it probably won't add much to their professional development. Maybe something else applies to your company. Is there a value-added project for the candidate? Maybe you are not the advisor for that person, but you will see the presentation of that project. The project might not address something that this candidate is doing now, but it is something that expands his knowledge and helps his unit. It's really a win-win situation. It's not a Ph.D. thing either, but I guess we'll come back to that. You also want to learn something as you're doing it.

The plan forces the candidate to set goals. I don't know how many appraisals I've done over the years where I've said, "What's your long-term plan?" The candidate says, "I want to pass the next exam." That's not a long-term goal. When somebody is getting close to Fellowship, it is a good time to ask, "What are your long-term goals and where do you want to go?" That doesn't mean goals can't be changed over time. The programs used in a plan need to fit well within the plan. I'm on the Investment

Section Council, and we're being encouraged to put together a lot of seminars. The finance practice area is doing a wonderful job of putting on useful seminars. There are seminars out there for almost everybody so they can find something that would fit in with their plan. If there's not one that fits in with your plan, call somebody from the relevant section council who can recommend one. You know, we're always looking for input. Many of the sections are starting to put things out on the Society Web site. Just give us some ideas. I think we're pretty open to listening.

There is a shared responsibility between the candidate and the advisor for this whole process if it is to add value. When candidates are writing up results, I actually go a little bit beyond what Nancy said. I ask them to tell me "Where didn't you agree with the speaker?" I don't ask only, "How would you apply what the speaker said?" A lot of times I go to a session and say, "I like that concept but I didn't like this one." Encourage the candidate to think. It's important to get that critical thought process going. When you listen to someone give a talk, you need to question as well as listen. Think about what they're saying. Some of it will be good, and some it will not be as good. Most of it's going to be good. The sessions I've attended at this meeting have been very good. Think about what you learned and how you apply it. It really does feed back into Nancy's comments.

No one can know everything, so sharing the work is appropriate. What I've found is that it's a good opportunity to network outside my company and to help some of the smaller companies where they don't have people internally who have been FSAs for five or more years. I'm probably one of the few advisors so far that actually has gone through the FAC. I barely made the five-year requirement. There are pros and cons to the five-year rule that I know were discussed at length when the rules were defined. I'm okay with it because I don't think that you want somebody who has just barely finished. The new FSA might say, "I'm done, so now I'm going to make it really hard for everybody else." I've thought of it that way, but once you're five years out and you've done some other things, you have a little bit more perspective and a little more experience. Getting to know a candidate from an outside company has been valuable. I've also learned about my candidate's supervisor as well. They were people that I knew, but I know them a lot better now. You're actually helping to train others to be advisors going forward.

The learning curve. We, as guinea pigs, have had a pretty steep learning curve. You're going to have questions. I encourage the candidates to do the work for you. They'll tell you exactly what you need to do. The PD page documents on the Society Web site are really helpful; you can print off a bunch of stuff there. There's also an e-mail address where you can ask questions. It is [pdcomments@SOA.org](mailto:pdcomments@SOA.org).

The project is not designed to be a Ph.D. thesis. I would encourage publishing projects when that makes sense. If the project does not use information that's proprietary to your company, consider publishing it in something like the Investment Section newsletter, *Risks and Rewards*. The editors are always looking for articles. I think a lot of the section newsletters are looking for articles. It's a way for somebody just getting his or her Fellowship to get published right away. They might say, "Gee, that wasn't so hard. Maybe I'll do it again." I think that's valuable going forward.

There are a lot of new things going on in the industry. I'm involved with risk management, and there are three or four new things that I will take back from these meetings. If we can get a lot of those things written up, it will just accelerate how quickly we can make use of them.

I have five top reasons to be an advisor. (1) Being an advisor is a lot of work, but it's really not a huge amount of work. The cases aren't large in number. The candidate is not submitting 800 pages of documents for the advisor to review. We are in the early stages of the process, so a year from now, the candidates will have a much better feel for what gets approved and what doesn't. (2) Having the opportunity to network with actuaries from other companies is a real positive. Although we have a local actuarial club, we don't do as much of that as we could. (3) There are free lunches. If you help out somebody from another company, they're probably going to buy you lunch. I've gotten three or four lunches. My second candidate is actually at this meeting and finishing up, so I'm sure that she's going to be writing up her notes on the plane back and will want to get together as soon as possible. I'm counting on that free lunch. ☺ (4) Another reason to be an advisor is I think you can impact the profession by generating Fellows that are poised to make a difference going forward. (5) Finally, the number one reason to be an advisor is to help another actuary get their well-deserved FSA. These people have worked really hard. Some of us will joke with them and say, "Oh, those exams are easy," but they're actually getting harder all the time. As someone who has run our student program, I see what people have had to do over the last five years. I don't know what will happen with the new exam structure. They deserve what they've attained so far, and we need to get them through the process and help reduce the travel time so they can move on with their careers.

**From the Floor:** I'm not quite sure how to phrase this. We're in a little different situation right now in that we're in this transition period. In your presentation you've been talking about the PD plan, and about the complete structure. The two people I'm advising are both people who did not need a lot of PD credits. They aren't inexperienced. They have been working 10 or 15 years in the profession. I just wondered if you'd address a little bit of what might be a difference in dealing with people where it's a fairly limited plan rather than the full-blown plan, requiring 50 credits and a project.

**Ms. Behrens:** I'd say that situation ends up offering a unique challenge. First, I would say that we didn't look quite as hard at the plans of candidates who only needed 5 or 10 credits because it didn't seem necessary; they had gotten a lot of their PD the hard way by taking exams. At the same time, we had to make sure that the programs they used to get those extra 5 or 10 credits did not duplicate something that they had taken through the exam process. PD is intended to cover only new material that candidates haven't previously been tested on or studied in some other way. So while the plan probably gets a more cursory review when candidates don't need too many credits, there's also the other element of making sure that they are learning new material.

**Mr. Rudolph:** I'd add one short comment to that. To get these candidates who are really close to finishing the process, use your local actuarial club. If you have input there, try to design a program that will provide a couple hours of PD credit. It can sometimes save somebody six months or a year in getting their Fellowship.

**From the Floor:** If you have a candidate who has been around a long time and is already in a position where he/she needs to get a certain amount of continuing education because they're issuing public statements, can credit be used for both the PD and their continuing education or should they be focusing on different topics for the PD part?

**Ms. Behrens:** We would be very pleased if the continuing education that they're going to is also relevant to their PD plan. That is the ideal situation. The main thing is that you need to make sure that the course that they're doing for CE is actually appropriate as part of their PD. We've said many times that we really want our continuing education program to have, as a subset, the professional development requirement. While we have a wide range of CE programs, only a portion of them will end up qualifying as professional development. As long as the course would apply in a regular professional development program, I don't think there's any problem if they are also getting some other kind of CE credit for it. That'd be great.

**From the Floor:** Nancy, can I get a clarification on the write-ups, program summaries and reviews. You're not looking for a copious write up of what the session was about, are you? Is a couple of paragraphs sufficient from each candidate?

**Ms. Behrens:** That's right, especially on the SOA-approved programs. With approved programs, we've already looked at the content of the session, and we have decided that it's worth a certain number of credits. So we know what the content is. We're looking for how that content applies to that certain candidate's PD program. How did it help him or her accomplish the educational objectives?

**Mr. Robert L. Brown:** I was hoping to get a reaction. Anecdotally, I've heard that there is a great deal of angst about using non-SOA approved PD units, of which there can be up to 15. The option of having non-approved programs was put there for a reason. The option was put there so you could get outside of the nine dots. How do you get people to feel that freedom? It seems to me that two things are happening. First, they're forcing themselves back inside the nine dots by wanting all 35 of those units to be SOA-approved. Second, there's a whole lot of paperwork going on because a lot of companies and other seminars just really want to get that SOA "seal of approval" for everything that a candidate might want to attend. This is totally unnecessary and is creating unnecessary paperwork and resource involvement. How do we break out of that angst? How do we get people to relax and to enjoy the real value of those 15 open credits?

**Mr. Rudolph:** Our company has the team approach, and we put forth some guidelines. One thing that we are encouraging strongly, if not requiring, is that candidates go to something other than Society meetings. They should at least do a seminar. We're strongly encouraging that at least some of the non-approved

programs be outside seminars such as public speaking or those types of things. So we're encouraging our candidates to go outside the safe traditional approved programs.

**Dr. Holmberg:** That's great. We're trying to find some really good examples of executed plans and were trying to make sure that the examples include some of these outside, non-approved elements which demonstrate that you don't have to be walking this very narrow path.

**From the Floor:** Will they go up on our Web site then?

**Ms. Behrens:** Yes, they will.

**From the Floor:** Excellent.

**Ms. Behrens:** The only other thing I would add to that is we are taking another look at approving programs from other organizations. In the future, I think we're going to make that process a little more stringent so that people are encouraged to use non-approved programs, and so we don't get buried in approving all these other programs. I think that will help too.

**From the Floor:** I have a question about the educational objectives. The one candidate that I have is still working on Course 7, so this is something I'm looking to do in the future. The educational objectives don't have to be a single integrated set of cohesive objectives. Can it be a series of things like management skills and exploring the depths of XXX? It can be a series of objectives that may not necessarily relate to each other. Is that correct?

**Ms. Behrens:** I think some of the really good plans we've seen have presented categories such as management skills and technical skills, i.e., what's my objective with respect to my technical skills? It's certainly possible to have several different educational objectives as part of a plan, and I think that can make a very well-rounded plan. It might give candidates a better chance to get outside the box too.

**From the Floor:** My follow-up question to that would be, is it necessary that it relate fairly closely to the work that they're currently doing, or can it diverge and not really relate to what they'll be working on right away? An example might be management skills for someone who's not a manager at that point.

**Mr. Behrens:** The educational objectives grow out of those questions that I talked about. What are they doing now? What knowledge/skills do they need for what they're doing now and for what they want to do in the future? I think you can certainly have an educational objective that has nothing to do with your current work, as long as it has to do with what you're wanting to do in the future. We just want to be sure people aren't pulling stuff out of the air and signing up for every session at the San Diego meeting just so they can finish their PD. It somehow all has to tie together.

**From the Floor:** Could I get your comments on flexibility in a plan as we move along? A candidate will set up a plan with an advisor. That plan could take 24 to 25 months to implement. We're in a dynamic profession in a dynamic world. What if the candidate comes to me in 6 to 12 months and says, "Well, the situation has changed. I'd like to address some different things." How do we handle that?

**Dr. Holmberg:** To be on the safe side, you might want to send in an amended plan that indicates, "We're changing direction here and here's why." But you don't have to send in a new plan. The changes can actually be addressed entirely within the candidate's final executed plan. "We made a fairly significant change in the PD plan here and here are the reasons why." As long as the nature and reasons for the change are articulated through a thoughtful process, it shouldn't cause a problem.

**Dr. Holmberg:** What more can we do, and what more can the SOA do to help make advisors' lives easier? I can't promise we can deliver, but what would make things easier for you?

**Mr. Rudolph:** Since I was totally unqualified to answer any of the other questions, maybe I'll make a comment here. What I think will be real helpful is providing some of the things that you talked about based on Rob Brown's question. Show us what people have done that has worked. Show us some out-of-the-box type of examples. Give us more information on the project in terms of how much work is really involved. If someone's project is not proprietary, have them put it on the Web site where people can get to it. It would be nice if there were a spot on the Society Web site for PD. Candidates could go there to find out that there's still plenty of room in the August FAC. Rumors could be addressed there. I guess I think you should attack the whole thing with information.

**From the Floor:** You might want to think about putting a Q and A out on the Web site with the questions that have come up at meetings like this.

**Dr. Holmberg:** Okay, we'll try to add that. It's a great idea.

**From the Floor:** It'd be nice to see those kinds of points and questions answered before we even become an advisor.

**From the Floor:** I think the Web site is a great idea. Everything that's out there has been very helpful, and I'll admit ignorance on some of it. Could someone put out an example of a write-up of a session? Maybe there is one out there and I haven't seen it, but something like that would be helpful so that they know that they don't have to send in 18 pages on each session.

**Dr. Holmberg:** It has been on our list for a while, I'm afraid. But it's good to know that those sorts of things would genuinely be helpful. We'll certainly see what we can do with that. I think we'll pretty much promise that we won't put out a bad one.

**From the Floor:** You might even want to consider having people include their e-mail addresses when they send in saying they're going to become an advisor. You could

have an automatic thing that e-mails back and says, "By the way, there's this set of information already available."

**Ms. Behrens:** That's a great idea.