



SOCIETY OF ACTUARIES

Article from:

International News

August 2010 – Issue No.51



John Robinson, FSA, is chief actuary at Capital Region BOCES in Albany, N.Y. he can be reached at jrobinson@gw.neric.org or 518.464.3949. He is the current president of the International Association of Black Actuaries (IABA).

IABA Makes Connections with Actuaries in Africa and the IAA

By John Robinson

The International Association of Black Actuaries (IABA) has a mission to increase the number of black actuaries in North America. Currently, our membership is just north of 100. We are supported by an advisory group of twelve actuarial employers and three actuarial organizations: the Society of Actuaries, the Casualty Actuarial Society and the Actuarial Foundation. Membership in IABA is open to any person interested in supporting the organization's mission.

The Association of South African Black Actuarial Professionals (ASABA) has a similar mission in South Africa and the Actuarial Society of South Africa is fully supportive of this mission. The current president elect of the Actuarial Society of South Africa is Themba Gamedze, the country's first black fellow and the first president of ASABA.

Wanting to bridge the gap between these two organizations and our sister continent Africa, I contacted current ASABA president Lusani Mulaudzi last September and proposed a mini-conference on March 6, to precede the International Congress of Actuaries (ICA) 2010 held in Cape Town, South Africa on the 7-12. My vision was to invite the leaders of all the African and Caribbean countries who might be attending the ICA. Lusani agreed that ASABA would host it, and we were off and running. The conference theme was **A Conference to Promote Diversity in the Actuarial Profession Worldwide.**

Contacting the leaders proved to be a bit of a challenge; first we had to locate them and then we tried to elicit a response and found that calling worked better than e-mail, but cell

phone calls to Namibia can get a bit pricey! However, we eventually issued invitations to actuarial leaders in Benin, Botswana, Côte d'Ivoire, Egypt, Ghana, Kenya, Morocco, Mauritius, Nigeria, Namibia, Senegal, South Africa, Tanzania and Uganda, as well as the Caribbean Actuarial Association. In addition, the International Actuarial Association (IAA), which runs the ICA, sent two representatives. The result was an impressive 17 attendees from 14 organizations.

The primary goal of the Diversity Conference was to explore ways the respective organizations could help each other. Each organization was expected to leave the conference with a to do list of either bi-lateral or multi-lateral projects. This gathering was organized as a whole-day affair. To kick-off the day, each organization introduced itself, its history and its goals, and then we discussed ways to assist each other. Throughout the day, as we worked together to understand each others needs and challenges, there was a real spirit of cooperation amongst the participants. We came to a mutual consensus and all organizations present signed a Memorandum of Understanding, indicating our intention to continue to support each other's missions. After the meetings, there was a dinner to which the Actuarial Science students at two nearby universities were invited. College students don't pass up free food, so it was well attended. Dinner speakers were Jeffrey Johnson of the IABA and Themba Gamedze. Jeffery highlighted the respect for the actuarial professionals by telling an anecdote about having a fellow-passenger on the flight request his autograph, after learning he was an actuary. Themba emphasized the value of diversity in the profession and in society generally.



Front row: Lusani Mulaudzi (South Africa), Soshan Sobramoney (South Africa), John Robinson (USA), Kamal Benchekroun (Morocco), Basil Reekie (South Africa), Cathy Lyn (Jamaica), Kgodiso Mokonyane (South Africa)

Second row: Jean Hendricks (South Africa), Odwa Madolo (South Africa), Adrian Vugs (Namibia), Eugene Woodard (USA), Astor Duggan (Jamaica), Guillaume Moussa (Benin), St. Elmo Whyte (Jamaica)

Here's some feedback and comments we received about the Conference:

From Lusani Mulaudzi, ASABA president:

ASABA hosted the Diversity Conference on March 6, 2010 at the Sanlam Offices in Bellville. This was a major success, although some of the delegates did not manage to be with us for the whole conference. The discussions were fruitful and have culminated in ASABA taking a more active role in developing the actuarial profession in Africa. ASABA has decided to establish an International Mentorship program with a focus on African countries—Kenya being the first beneficiary. We intend to raise funds from local and international organizations to support this initiative.

From Charles Mpundu, Actuarial Society of Zambia president:

The Diversity Conference held in Cape Town in March 2010 under the auspices of IABA couldn't have come at a better time for the Actuarial Society of Zambia (ASZ) which at that time was only two weeks old. The interventions, encouragement and networking that the conference presented were just great and provided a strong foundation for us on which to build diverse and sustainable actuarial outreach programs. The proceedings and exchange of experiences that took place have helped us in focusing and prioritizing initiatives to enable us to contribute effectively to the development of the actuarial profession in Zambia and elsewhere. Arising out of the interactions, we are already following up on areas of local capacity building as well as how best we could benefit from the expertise provided by IABA and IAA through the Actuaries Without Borders and other similar

programs. As ASZ, we cannot thank IABA and IAA sufficiently for making it possible for me and two other colleagues to attend this important conference and the ICA2010 that followed. ASZ and its members are appreciative and will remain indebted to the two institutions for their support and on our part we will remain committed to play an active role in ensuring the diversity and growth of the actuarial profession.

Faith Mpatwa, Actuarial Society of Tanzania vice president:

I thoroughly enjoyed the Diversity Conference as it provided a common forum for discussing challenges and experiences facing the diverse Actuarial societies worldwide. It was evident that most of these societies face similar issues and the conference provided a common ground to address these. I saw a picture of how the societies in other countries achieved their success stories. This was quite beneficial in particular to the Actuarial Society of Tanzania (AST). Being at infancy stage, the AST drew key ideas how other societies overcame similar issues we face as a society. With this knowledge I took back the lessons and expect our society to achieve all our key objectives by implementing the ideas gathered at the conference.

This conference was largely a successful event and we plan to continue with our purpose. We have our eye on the future and have already started discussions with Bob Conger, who represented the IAA at the Diversity Conference and serves as the chairperson for the Organizing Committee of ICA 2014, to be held in Washington, D.C.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 16

IABA Makes Connections ... | from Page 15

ORGANIZATIONS IN ATTENDANCE

Association of South African Black Actuarial Professionals (ASABA, host)
 Actuarial Society of Tanzania
 Actuarial Society of Zambia
 ASSA Africa Interaction Committee (AIC)
 Caribbean Actuarial Association (CAA)
 Ecole Supérieure d'Actuariat (ESA), Benin
 ASSA Sub-committee for Africa
 ASSA Transformation Committee
 IAA Advice and Assistance Committee
 IAA Fund
 International Association of Black Actuaries (IABA)
 South African Actuarial Development Program (SAADP)
 Society of Actuaries of Namibia
 Association Marocaine des Actuaire (AMA)
 Institute of Statistics and Applied Economics (ISNEA), Morocco

The IABA will be working with Bob in two areas:

1. Identifying black actuaries interested in supporting the IAA's mission of promoting the actuarial profession in Africa, by travelling to Africa to give presentations on the role and value of actuaries;
2. For ICA 2014,
 - (a) scheduling another Diversity Conference to precede the ICA;
 - (b) introducing a professional development session about Diversity during the ICA; and
 - (c) identifying a charitable project in the D.C. area.

I look forward to what we will accomplish in the future and would like to extend a great thank you to Lusani and ASABA for hosting the first Diversity Conference, and to all who attended. I hope they got at least half as much out of as I did. I would also like to recognize and thank our sponsors: Sanlam Group of South Africa, the IAA Fund and the Conference of Consulting Actuaries.

Our leadership of the Diversity Conference has established IABA as an international leader in diversity in the actuarial profession, which is part of our vision. Our initiative to "increase awareness" has now gone global—we are now known and respected by the leadership of the IAA and we will be expected to continue to play a key role in the important area of diversity. □

SOA 2010 Elections Let your voice be heard!

SOA 2010 elections are just around the corner. Online voting will be open 24 hours a day from Aug. 9 through Sept. 3 at 5:00 p.m. Central Daylight Time.

Visit SOA.org/elections to learn more about candidates for SOA president-elect, vice presidents, board of directors and section council positions—and to vote.

Have questions? E-mail elections@soa.org