



Association Nationale des Étudiants en Actuariat
Actuarial Students National Association

ANÉA-ASNA

Official Newsletter

September 2010

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2011
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Convention



Congrès de l'ANÉA 2011
2011 ASNA Convention

London, Ontario

UdeMSimonFraserAlbertaCalgaryLavalConcordiaManitobaTorontoWaterlooWesternYorkUQAM

Career Fair
Foire de l'emploi

Conférences
Seminars

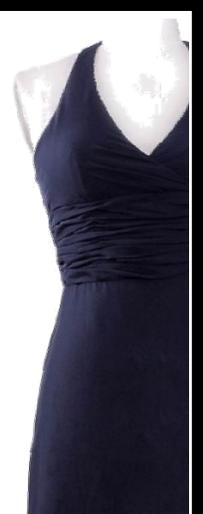
Activités sociales
Social activities

Formal dinner
Souper gala

Registration opens this fall, check our website regularly!
L'inscription commence cet automne, consultez notre site web régulièrement!

January 7 to/au 9 Janvier

Visit(ez) anea-asna.ca



Dear actuarial students, allow me to first introduce myself. My name is **Amanda Khoury** [Concordia] and I am the Editor in Chief of the ASNA-ANÉA September 2010 Newsletter. I am a third year actuarial student at Concordia University (Montreal, Quebec). I have been working with the editors since last summer in order to create a newsletter that will combine information with entertainment. In our team, we have **Jia Qi Ruan** and **David Van** [Concordia] as editors and **Simon Provencher** [Laval] as designer and compilation of the newsletter. Special thanks also go to **Charles Bernatchez** [Alberta] for translation. This quarterly magazine will address several topics ranging from interview and job application tips to actuarial fun facts and information. Before wishing you a good academic year, I would like to personally thank Femi Olami-julo (University of Toronto), our ASNA President for all her support, time and encouragement for making this newsletter an awesome one! Best wishes to all of you!

Amanda Khoury

Editor in Chief

What are the negative and positive impacts of Social Networking Sites on the Actuarial Professional Development?

We cannot deny that we strongly rely on the constantly developing technology, namely the Internet. Particularly, the advent of social networking websites has transformed the course of our lives. Think of Facebook, for example: even though this social networking website has just started in February 2004, there are so many users. More than 35 million users update their status each day and more than 60 million status updates are posted each day.

When you think of Facebook, it's not likely you consider it a productivity tool; so we have come to ask ourselves the following

question: could being on Facebook really have a negative impact on the professional development of actuaries as they progress through their career? The truth is that there are a variety of ways actuarial students can use Facebook for both learning and productivity, and a number of applications that can help you do so. According to a survey conducted by Ronald Poon-Affat (FSA, FIA, MAAA, CFA, Board Member of the SOA), who reached out to the Hawkeyes from the University of Iowa's Actuarial Science Club, 42% thought Facebook is definitely positive for the image of the ac-

tuarial profession. Moreover, the top five areas in which Facebook could have an impact on their careers were (in order): career development, image of the profession, reaching out to a global actuarial network, keeping up to date with regulation, and continuing professional development.

If you wish to explore the different tools and fun actuarial links/pages available to you, visit our website at <http://www.aneasna.ca/>, under "Links".

Next, you will find a brief description/summary of each of those links.

1-Kafe Chew

Link: <http://kafechew.com/actuary/>

Progressive, adventurous and revolutionary, KafeChew.com was founded on December 25th, 2009. Through our Actuarial One-stop Information and Career Center, we will try to provide all the actuarial science students with up-to-date information and resources, which could be helpful to succeeding in professional exams, job search, and career planning. We also aim to enable actuarial science professionals and students, around the world, to network and share information through this site.

2- The When are You Going to Die? Test (Facebook Quiz)

Link: <http://www.facebook.com/apps/application.php?id=6766433271&ref=search>

This test is based on actuarial data collected by insurance companies. Based on your lifestyle habits, this test provides a scientific estimate of the age at which you will die.

3- DO YOU RECKON YOU UNDERSTAND ACTUARIES WELL? (Facebook Quizz)

Link: <http://www.facebook.com/apps/application.php?id=78357932679&ref=search>

For actuarial students, this is a test on whether you are day-dreaming in actuarial lectures and tutorials, and whether you know the typical 'actuariness' of an actuary after dreaming to become one for years. For non-actuarial students, this is a test on how much you understand a friend who is an actuarial student or an actuary -->don't you just think they are humorous and fun?!!!!

4- Actuarial Outpost-SOA/CAS Actuary Exam Discussion (Facebook Group)

Link: <http://www.facebook.com/group.php?gid=4946653047&ref=search>

What is the Actuarial Outpost?

The Actuarial Outpost is the largest social networking site specifically made for actuaries. Our central office is at <http://www.ActuarialOutpost.com> - but we want you to join us here on Facebook as well (and while you're at it, why not LinkedIn? - <http://www.linkedin.com/groups?gid=868847>)

The Outpost itself has three basic subsections: jobs listings, actuarial news, and by far the most important, the discussion forums. These forums are broken into five major sections, subsections, and various forums in each subsection. This partitioning allows for the ability to find a specific forum dealing with near any area of actuarial science, as well as having sections exclusive to specific actuarial exams. One of the largest sections is one that deals with non-actuarial topics such as politics, surveys, and a special forum, known as "The Reef" where nearly anything goes; a place where actuaries may "let down their hair" as it were.

So basically, most impacts of social networking websites on the actuarial professional development are positive, since you get to stay informed about the profession and have access to special resources. Those websites have changed the way we update and expand our knowledge and brought our experience to the application level in the marketplace. Even the SOA is promoting social media in the following forms: SOA BLOG, SOA LINKEDIN and SOA PRESIDENT'S TWITTER ACCOUNT. The only negative impact one could think of is that it can become a waste of time when not used for the right reasons!

Facebook vs LinkedIn

Two of the main networking websites are Facebook and LinkedIn. It would be interesting to consider

some of the main purposes of each one of them.

LinkedIn's original goal was, and still is, to be a business-only service rather than a more generalized social networking site. On the other hand, Facebook, which began in 2004, is more focused on non-business oriented socializing. However, it has also attracted some adults who want to use it as a mean to discuss their professions rather than sharing photos and whatnot.

Nevertheless, the use of Facebook as a means for business networking has been controversial; the reason for that is that all those games, social groups and quizzes can become distracting for people actually doing work.

This brings us to our next question: which website is better for professional use? It is hard to make a decision since each one has its

own advantages and disadvantages: LinkedIn has a more focused approach, whereas Facebook has a multitude of applications. Therefore, both of them excel in different situations; it depends on what you are looking for!

It is often thought that only LinkedIn is efficient when it comes to business networking, but keep in mind that Facebook is not just a place to have fun, as we have mentioned before; even though Facebook is clearly not as business-oriented as LinkedIn, there are still a ton of opportunities for professional networking. After all, Facebook is the world's largest social network, with over 250 million active users, compared to about 44 million for LinkedIn!

A psychologist was studying the problem-solving abilities of engineers and actuaries. During a joint interview with one engineer and one actuary, the engineer was asked "If there was a fire in the wastebasket and a bucket of water on my desk, what would you do?" The engineer responded that he would put out the fire with the bucket of water. Then the actuary was asked "If there was a fire in the wastebasket and a bucket of water on the window sill, what would you do?" The actuary's studied reply was "I would move the bucket to the desk, thus reducing the problem to the previously solved one."

(Submitted by Stephen Prevatt at sprevatt@merlin.nando.net)

Interview with Stéphane McGee, a past ASNA member

- Tell us a little bit about yourself.

Stéphane McGee, Director - Actuarial Services. I graduated from Laval in 1997.

- How did you become involved with ASNA at Laval? Please tell us a little about your experience there.

I became involved with ASNA when elections were called for the new representatives from Laval. I was interested to join because I really liked the concept of an association representing all actuarial students from across the country. During my tenure at ASNA, I was chair of the P&C committee.

- What are your fondest memories from being a member of ASNA?

What I liked the most about being a member of the ASNA was to travel to the different Universities for our regular meetings. We met in Montreal, Toronto and Waterloo. I also met different people with whom I still have contact nowadays. I also fondly remember the annual conventions. I attended three of them. These events really were highlights of my time in University.

- Do you think ASNA in any way helped prepare you for life after university? If yes, how?

Yes, by having to interact with people from other universities, or even from outside the actuarial world, it helped me develop leadership and communications skills. It also opened my eyes to other parts of the country, which really helped me when the time came to make my decision to move to Toronto. At Laval, we need to make a decision about our actuarial specialization during our third year of the baccalaureate. Having been member of the P&C committee really helped me in weighing the pros and cons, and helped me in making my decision to become a non-life actuary.

- How would you advice current ASNA members to make the best of their tenure with the association?

I would advise the current members to try to make a difference. Their work is very important in helping students develop as future actuaries, and in connecting with potential employers. Non-life actuaries are a very small group, and there is a good chance you'll have to interact in your professional life with other actuaries you met at ASNA. Increasing the interactions between students from different universities is a way to further the profession.

An engineer, an architect and an actuary are stranded on a desert island with only one can of baked beans and no can opener. The engineer suggests lighting a fire to heat up the can so that the contents will expand and force the can to open. The architect says the contents would scatter all over the place, so he suggests building a structure around the fire to catch the contents. The actuary says, "Assume a can opener ...".

(Submitted by Jon Lavi at cahal@netvision.net.il)



Future Education Methods Proposal: Rational or not?

Have you ever heard of the FEM Proposal? Whether you have or not, it does concern you! In a nutshell, this proposal suggests that actuarial students be granted exemptions for some multiple-choice preliminary SOA/CAS examinations; instead, they would be required to perform well in individual actuarial courses at accredited universities.

If you want to learn more about it, please visit our website, www.anea-asna.ca, under "Links" and "Fem Letter".

If you have carefully read the letter, you might see why this topic is a very controversial one. Let's examine both sides of the medal.

At first, one can explore the positive things about FEM.

One of the requirements of the FEM Proposal is that students would have to pass P/1 during their undergraduate term. This is a crucial point

since the passing of the exam shows a desire, willingness, and ability to be an actuary. If a candidate cannot pass this first exam, then it would probably be hard for them to pass the rest of the exams and to be considered a potential professional in the actuarial field.

Another requirement would be that every actuarial program has a FSA on staff, as this would ensure the efficiency of the testing system. The FSA would make sure that the final exams are comparable to the level of the SOA exams.

Some students are concerned by the rigor of the exam process: since passing the exams requires a great deal of commitment and perseverance, it could even happen that some of the brightest students in the actuarial programs were turned off to

write them. As a consequence, it is possible that there is a loss of talented actuaries. Chances are, if these students had to meet these exam requirements in the context of university, the quality of students would improve because they would see a motive to be fully devoted to the required work. Moreover, the education received in class would be more consistent with the examination requirements instead of the "easier" level of most of the current actuarial programs. As far as the Proposal goes, it would not replace the upper level exams, which are the most difficult ones. Therefore, even if the FEM makes it easier for one to obtain the ASA/ACAS title,

(Cont.) this does not necessarily mean that it would be easier to become a FSA/FCAS because those upper level exams would remain at the same difficulty level as usual. Furthermore, the FEM proposal would be an alternative to the usual exam process, and therefore candidates would still be able to follow the original process if they wish to do so. So why not let them explore it to see if it's feasible?

The people in favour of the FEM Proposal believe that the university environment offers an appropriate approach to prepare candidates into the actuarial profession. They believe that introducing the FEM will make the actuarial profession more attractive for students and improve the quality of the actuarial education. They anticipate that the SOA preliminary exams aren't a very good way to evaluate the abilities of students, and that the university grading system would be able to distinguish the students that truly understand the material from those who don't.

On the other hand, some people totally disagree with the FEM Proposal.

They are convinced that, no matter how hard we try, it is impossible to reach uniformity across the different universities.

One of the arguments is based on the following excerpt from the letter:

“Final examinations are to account for a significant proportion of the course marks and have similar length, approved materials, and a level of difficulty corresponding to the SOA and CAS examinations”.

Therefore, if one of the conditions of the FEM is that university courses give final exams of the same level as SOA, what is the whole point of allowing this alternative path? Every university has its own way of teaching. Therefore, the SOA would spend too much time trying to decide which universities should be accredited instead of improving the current system. Including FEM would be a big expense that changes almost nothing about the process. They should just keep the current examination process, because anyway, the only ones that would really benefit are the schools who are certified.

Moreover, the quality of actuaries would decrease as a result of their poor knowledge of risk. It is possible that college professors, who are human, sometimes give favoured treatment to certain students. However, many people choose the actuarial field because they see the exam process as a way to handle their career by earning it; for many of them, it is the main reason why they chose this profession because it is a good way to prove their math skills. If the FEM Proposal is accepted, it wouldn't be fair to all those ASAs, who spent a lot of time and effort studying for these exams.

It is understandable that the SOA wants to increase its number of members, but it should at least think about the consequences for its current members. It would become too easy to become an ASA, with only a degree and some modules. Instead, the students should prove themselves by taking the actuarial exams, which are an independent verification of knowledge.

(Continued.)

(Cont.) The people who disagree with FEM think that the current actuarial exams are much tougher and more independent, objective, and uniform than university courses.

Now, dear student, it is your turn to give your opinion!

Please visit our website (www.anea-asna.ca) under Newsletter 2010, FEM Discussion and tell us what you think!

Two people are flying in a hot air balloon and realize they are lost. They see a man on the ground, so they navigate the balloon to where they can speak to him. They yell to him, "Can you help us - we're lost." The man on the ground replies, "You're in a hot air balloon, about two hundred feet off the ground." One of the people in the balloon replies to the man on the ground, "You must be an actuary. You gave us information that is accurate, but completely useless."

(Attributed to Fred Kilbourne at Fred@thekilbournecompany.com in the *Journal of Commerce* on 4/21/78, and submitted by David Fountain at fountain@supernet.net)

The actuary on the ground yells to the people in the balloon, "You must be in marketing." They yell back, "Yes, how did you know?"

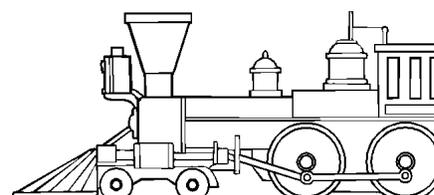
The actuary says, "Well, you're in the same situation you were in before you talked to me, but now it's my fault."

(This joke was improved upon by both John Dinius and Stacey Haws at shaws@gwic.com)



A group of lawyers and a group of actuaries are travelling by train to conferences in the same city. The lawyers were surprised to see that the actuaries had only bought one train ticket for the entire group. When the conductor entered the front of the car, all of the actuaries got up and went into the same bathroom. As the conductor went down the aisle, the lawyers dutifully handed him their tickets. When he came to the bathroom he said, "Ticket, please." One ticket slid out, he punched it, and went on his way. On the return trip home, the lawyers thought they'd try the same trick, but this time they noticed the actuaries had not bought any train tickets. As the conductor entered the front of the car, all of the lawyers got up and went into the same bathroom. One of the actuaries walked over to the bathroom, knocked on the door, and said, "Ticket, please."

(Submitted by Steve Pummer)



Interview Tips for Actuaries

Imagine that you arrive home one day and find out that you have been asked to pass an interview for a job you've been dreaming of having for so long. What is your reaction? Clearly, you are very happy, but you know that there are no miracles, and that you will have to prepare very well for that interview if you want to get that job. Remember, this is not your typical McDonald's interview, where you sit down with the boss for 20 minutes, answer a few questions, and expect a phone call the next day.

Needless to say, the worst thing that you could do is to stress right away! Just make sure you follow some of the most important tips, which are the following:

1- Show that you are the right person for the job: passing the exams is great, but you also have to be able to show future employers what you are able to provide and how the whole company you want to be part of can improve if they hire you. Most importantly, be able to tell the interviewer why he or she should choose you and not one of twenty other applicants. Responsible, reliable, hard-working etc just isn't enough anymore. Give some spice!

2- Show that you are motivated, dynamic and imaginative:

You should be enthusiastic when it comes to acquiring new information on the job and be able to adjust to different situations. Because you need to gain skill and knowledge in junior actuarial jobs, it is important that you be devoted to work and ambitious. Show that you have aptitude and charisma. Put in appearance that you have been involved in many things that helped you build up these qualities. Sure, everyone is a member of Finance Organization, Consulting Club, participated in Business Plan competitions, right? Well, don't mention it without giving details. Explain what you did there, what you got out of it and what was so different. Show that you are insightful, yet different from other well-informed people out there.

3- Look at the job in a global perspective: Nowadays, actuaries are considered to be business-oriented people who are able to show sharp mathematical and analytical skills. In addition to that, communication, presentation and time-management aptitudes are important because you need people to understand you when you are involved in work with marketing, underwriting and claims departments, especially if you work in insurance companies or consulting firms.

Try to think in a global way; don't focus on only one thing. If you want to broaden your thoughts, read some relevant books and be able to talk about them. If you read business magazines, websites, attend shows and seminars, talk about them and show that you can think outside the box.

4- Work on your analytical skills: Junior-level actuarial work is highly technical as it demands a lot of detailed calculations. Therefore, you have to be quick and still be able to present precise results.

5-Be positive: At the beginning of their careers, analysts deal with repeated projects to get themselves used to actuarial work cycles. Strengthening your skills to keep up with employers' standards demands a lot of time and effort. Therefore, you should have the right attitude toward work. Make sure that your manager can always count on you. Even if you are clever and require less time to learn, you still need to spend time developing your experience.

6- Keep your career goals in mind and establish your plan for the future: During interviews, students are often asked why they would like to work in the actuarial field. As getting the fellowship designation requires a lot of perseverance and discipline, one should be convinced that this is the field that they want to continue in. If you set up a clear career plan in advance, you will have a better idea on how to measure your professional performance and establish your priorities.

7-Be able to work independently as well as part of a team: Analysts should be able to think and work independently, but at the same time, the best solutions often come from discussing, brainstorming and combining others' suggestions because teamwork is often more productive than the sum of individual work.

Extra advice here and there:

In any case, "tell me about yourself" is always the most important question in an interview, so prepare yourself for it.

Lesson to be learned: Actuaries really deal with a lot of issues besides life and health insurance. Some actuary firms work in business consulting and risk analysis and not in "typical" actuary work. If you are applying for a small firm, find out what field they specialize in, if any.

If you have another job or classes during the day of your interview, make sure you get at least a half-day off. Don't drink anything before the interview. Studies show that you think better on an empty stomach than you do on days when you don't eat well

DO plan to arrive on time or a few minutes early. Late arrival for a job interview is never excusable

DON'T enquire about SALARY, HOLIDAYS, BONUSSES, RETIREMENT, etc. on the initial interview; wait until you are sure the employer is interested in hiring you. If the interviewer asks you what salary you want, indicate what you've earned but that you are more interested in opportunity than a specific salary at the present

When you're asked a question, answer the question and then stop. Don't give a long, 2-3 minute answer where you elaborate on everything you did right in a given situation, answer the question briefly but leave the interviewer room to ask follow-up questions.

Important lesson to be learned: be prepared to justify why you want to be an actuary. When you are offered an internship, chances are they will expect you to stay at least 2 years. Nobody is going to hire you in this profession if they think you're just here to "try it out" as a possible job. Show a real interest in being an actuary and that you understand the exam process and the time involved in passing exams, and that you are serious about earning your FSA/FCAS. When you're asked why you want to be an actuary, **don't** answer with something like "Well, I'm good in mathematics and know that actuaries use math, and I didn't know what else I could do with a math degree so I figured I'd give this a shot."

Ask relevant questions about the job, the company, the department. Also try to make a personal connection with the interviewer in a friendly, casual way - show that you're interested in them and their experiences too. If you don't ask questions, it indicates that you either aren't interested or haven't researched the company.

Thank the employer for their time and their consideration of your candidacy.

Follow the above tips, have some confidence, and a rewarding actuarial career will not be far.

An actuary is a person, who passes as an expert on the basis of a prolific ability to produce an infinite variety of incomprehensible figures calculated with micrometric precision from the vaguest of assumptions based on debatable evidence from inconclusive data derived by persons of questionable reliability for the sole purpose of confusing an already hopelessly befuddled group of persons who never read the statistics anyway!

(Submitted by Kathleen Miller at Kathleen.C.Miller@state.or.us)

Future Actuary Meeting: A Write Up

KRISTINA LUCAS

"The Casualty Actuarial Society (CAS) /Society of Actuaries (SOA) candidates' newsletter, The Future Actuary, reaches thousands of actuarial candidates yearly taking the first four jointly administered CAS/SOA exams. Published quarterly, readers gain insights on topics like career development, nontraditional careers, study tips, and professional conduct and ethics."
(<http://www.soa.org/news-and-publications/publications/newsletters/the-future-actuary/future-actuary-detail.aspx>)

On August 6 I was lucky enough to be ASNA's representative at the SOA's annual Future Actuary meeting. In addition to the focal point of the meeting – that is, brainstorming ideas for the publication in 2011 – we discussed two other topics in depth that should be of interest to all actuarial candidates. The first was the redesign of BeAnActuary.org, the SOA website with the aim of providing resources for high school or early university students who are considering actuarial science as a career. The site currently holds the first or second search engine ranking for keywords "actuary" or "actuarial careers", making it an important portal for those students

wishing to get more information about the profession. The SOA and CAS are jointly sponsoring the redesign; some of the proposed improvements include:

- A more graphical interface to improve navigation;
- A “one-stop-shop” for exam information including when and where each one is offered, guidelines for writing CBT and paper-and-pencil exams, and a direct link to the SOA’s online application; and
- More prominent listings of universities with actuarial programs, including direct links to the program website and the ability to map multiple schools.

The second topic was that of communication with actuarial candidates. The SOA wants to ensure that there is sufficient, relevant communication between the organization and students who are working towards their fellowship. We felt that there was generally enough communication, but had the following suggestions in terms of content:

- More transparent communication of exam results (for example, if a student does not pass an exam they would receive feedback on what topics need improvement);
- A presence on Facebook or other social networking sites to foster a community for candidates; and a more robust job board for advertising open actuarial positions

I encourage everyone to visit BeAnActuary.org and to submit any additional ideas on the redesign or communication questions to either ASNA or myself.

The main event of the meeting was the discussion of story ideas for 2010 and 2011. Look out for some of the following topics in the next several months.

- Centre of Actuarial Excellence (CAE) school spotlight
- CIA Future Education Methods (FEM) update
- Working in one area and writing a different exam track
- Transition from CBT preliminary exams to paper-and-pencil fellowship exams
- Area of practice interviews
- What it’s like coming from a non-traditional background
- Going from an intern to a full-time employee

As always, if you have other ideas please feel free to send them along!

Do you have any questions, comments, or criticisms? Please email me at asna.editor@gmail.com.