

■ Barbara B. Flynn, Babcock Graduate School of Management, Wake Forest University

From global business to e-commerce, this issue of *Decision Line* has lots of interesting articles. We begin with the President's Letter from our new president, Mike Showalter, of Florida State University. Mike describes the goals and priorities of the Institute for this year and shows how they are reflected in charges to various committees. Foremost is the creation of a new teaching journal, *Decision Sciences Journal of Innovative Education*. This exciting new journal arises out of the commitment of the Institute to be at the cutting edge of both research and teaching related to the decision sciences. Be sure to check out the Call for Editor in this issue of *Decision Line*.

In the "POM Issues" feature, Srinivas Talluei of Fairleigh Dickinson University provides an overview of data envelopment analysis. This statistical approach has a number of potential applications for empirical research in operations management and other areas, particularly research that compares organizations on multiple criteria. He also provides solutions for some of the typical problems that can occur when using DEA, such as dealing with decision-making units which are not inherently similar in their operating practices.

Rick Hesse of Pepperdine University describes the use of a triangle distribution in Excel, using the Mathematica Link, in "In the Classroom." This distribution is useful in many commonly encountered situations, such as project management, where the smallest, largest, and most likely outcomes are known. However, it can be tricky to simulate this distribution without the use of macros, add-ins or extra programs, particularly determining the variance. Rick provides a brief program for using the Mathematica Link for Excel to simulate this distribution.

In "From the Bookshelf," Andrew Ruppel discusses three books and a journal dealing with global business. This set of resources provides a number of perspectives on global business, ranging from global literacies in various areas to analysis of globalization pressures on organizations, to questioning whether globalization is really such a great idea. It looks like they will provide interesting reading for anyone interested in global business.

The "Doctoral Student Issues" feature begins a two-part debate on online education. In this issue, Peter Carr, of Athabasca University in Canada, describes his university's development of the foundation for an on-line Ph.D. program. This university is already known for its large and successful on-line MBA program. Professor Carr describes how his university is tackling some of the more difficult issues, such as creation of a research environment and collaboration in an on-line program. In the next issue of *Decision Line*, a different perspective on on-line Ph.D. education will be presented.

In the "Ecommerce" feature, Chris Westland of Hong Kong University of Science and Technology describes his website for global exchange of e-commerce teaching resources. One of the unique features of this website is its auction feature for educators and publishers who would like to sell their materials. He describes how this approach could become a model for traditional textbook publishers in the future.

In the "Specialist with a Universal Mind," Andrew Vazsonyi describes the difficulty in teaching complex concepts, such as probability distributions, without a good physical counterpart, which he describes as "personal knowledge." He describes how Excel can be used as a virtual laboratory for experimenting with stochastic models in order to allow students to develop their own personal knowledge of complex concepts such as queueing theory and random walks.

Finally, Jeen-Su Lim, of the University of Toledo, John Heinrichs, of Wayne State University, and Lonnie Hudspeth, of Florida A&M University, describe their finalist entry in the 1999 Innovative Education Competition. They show how they used data mining approaches to teach students about knowledge-based decision models, using data from real organizations, rather than case studies. They helped students discover how to base strategic decisions and actions on careful analysis of an organization's operating data, based on the real ongoing competitive pressures faced by organizations.

I think you'll enjoy the articles in this issue of *Decision Line*. Happy reading!



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