

# DECISION LINE

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## PRESIDENT'S LETTER

### Looking Forward to an Exciting Year

Gary L. Ragatz, *Michigan State University*

The Decision Sciences Institute has been my primary professional association throughout the twenty-plus years of my academic career and has been played a key role in my professional development. I've had the opportunity to be involved with the Institute in a variety of ways over the years, and I'm honored to serve you as president for the 2004-2005 year.

I first joined the Institute in 1980 as a doctoral student and have been attending annual meetings since 1982. The annual meeting is one of the Institute's most important "products," with valuable offerings for members with a variety of interests, at all stages of their careers. As a student, I participated in the first DSI Doctoral Student Consortium in 1983. The Consortium was a great resource that helped me launch my academic career, and it was also a chance to start building professional relationships that have lasted for many years. The Consortium continues to support doctoral candidates making the transition from student to faculty member.

For both students and established faculty who are actively engaged in research, the DSI annual meeting is a great venue to present and receive feedback on our research, to learn about colleagues' research activities, and often to discover new or emerging research issues. For members interested in improving their teaching, courses, or curricula, the conference is also a great place to share experiences and ideas about teaching methods and pedagogical issues. I've never attended an annual meeting and not come away with at least a few new ideas for research topics or teaching approaches.

This year's conference in Boston is shaping up to be one of our best ever. Ken Kendall and his program committee have been working on the conference for well over a year now, and it looks like their efforts will pay off handsomely in November. The response to the call for papers was very strong, with more submissions than we have seen for several years. Whether you're presenting a paper or not, there will be plenty to make this meeting a valuable professional experience. Ken and his committee have put together a variety of professional development offer-

## Inside This Issue

### FEATURES

**From the Editor.** *Decision Line* Editor Keong Leong provides an overview of 35(3) feature articles. **3**

**Instructional Innovation Award Competition Finalist.** "Classroom Jeopardy: A Winning Approach for Improving Student Assessment, Performance, and Satisfaction," by Lee Revere, University of Houston – Clear Lake **4**

**Research Issues.** "Ten Reasons Why MBA Rankings Do Not Make Sense—And One Reason Why They Do," by Jack A.A. van der Veen, Universiteit Nyenrode, The Netherlands Business School. **7**

**The Deans' Perspective.** "Lessons Learned from the Dean's Suite," by R. Charles Moyer, Dean, College of Business and Public Administration, The University of Louisville. **11**

**Information Technology.** "Quality Decision Making, Input Technologies, and IT Education," by Farhad Moeeni, Arkansas State University. **14**

**From the Bookshelf.** "The Business of Teaching Statistics," by Susan E. Pariseau, Merrimack College. **18**

### SPECIAL REPORTS

**Placement Coordinator Vacancy** **22**

**8th International DSI Conference** **24**

**2004 Program Chair's Message** **26**

**2004-05 Committees** **31**

**2004-05 Board Objectives** **33**

### DEPARTMENTS

**Board of Directors' Report** **21**

**Names in the News** **22**

**Announcements** **23**

**Hotel Reservation Form** **39**

**Calendar** **40**

ings, special sessions, and events that will augment the value of the regular conference sessions. I want to encourage all of you to attend the 2004 DSI Annual Meeting and take advantage of all it has to offer.

## Goals for the Year Ahead

The Institute's 2004-2005 Board of Directors, including continuing members and those elected to office in January, met for the first time this April. I'd like to extend my welcome and congratulations to the newly elected officers: Tom Callarman of Arizona State (President-Elect), Cliff Ragsdale of Virginia Tech (Treasurer), Mark Davis of Bentley College, Arnoud DeMeyer of INSEAD, Jan Hartley of Bowling Green State, Janelle Heineke of Boston University, Tim Smunt of Wake Forest, and Charlie Watts of John Carroll University (Vice Presidents). We have a dedicated group of people on the Board, and I'm looking forward to working with them this year. I'm confident they will serve the Institute's interests well.

One of the key discussions at the April Board meeting each year is focused around establishing the Institute's objectives for the coming year. Based upon input from a number of committees, particularly the Development Committee for Excellence in the Decision Sciences, the Board set four goals for the coming year.

**Goal 1: Enhance the value of membership in the Decision Sciences Institute.** The Institute, as with any professional society, exists primarily to serve its members. In the long term, if we don't offer high-value products and services to the membership, the Institute won't thrive. In recognition of this fact, the Board identified enhancement of membership value as its top priority. To this end, we will be exploring new services that might be offered to members, new services that might be offered to the regional organizations, and enhancements to the annual meeting.

Many of the new services being considered for members and regional organizations will be technology-based, such as a common Institute-owned Conference Information System, an on-line Proceedings archive, and an on-line funding opportunities database. As for the annual meeting, we will be looking for ways to enhance both the content of the program as well as the amenities that go along with the program. As noted above, the annual meeting is one of the Institute's most important

products, and we need to make sure that it continues to deliver a high-quality professional development experience.

**Goal 2: Increase membership.** Bigger is not always better, and growth in membership is not an end in itself. Increasing membership, however, gives the Institute more resources, and the fact is that many of the products and services we offer are subject to economies of scale—we can afford to offer more and better services if we're bigger.

The Board recognizes that this goal is inextricably linked to Goal 1. The best way to increase membership is to make sure that we offer products and services that encourage existing members to renew their membership and encourage non-members to sign on.

But it's also important that we make sure we have the right processes in place to get the word out to members and potential members, and try to find ways to nudge those who might consider joining the Institute to "take the plunge." We will continue developing our marketing systems to improve retention and also attract new members. We will also explore ways of working with the regional organizations to attract new members to the Institute.

**Goal 3: Enhance globalization of the Institute.** Business and business education are increasingly global. DSI, though U.S. based, is an international organization with an important segment of our membership either residing outside the U.S. or with roots outside the U.S. We must continue to expand the Institute's global presence and its global orientation in order to meet the changing needs and interests of the profession.

We have one established regional organization outside the U.S.—the Asia-Pacific Region—and the Board recently approved the formation of a Mexico Region. We will continue to develop such regional organizations, as appropriate. We will also work to extend the Institute's global presence through our international conferences. Our last international meeting was held last summer in Shanghai. Interest in that meeting was high, with over 250 submissions received, though attendance was limited due to the SARS outbreak. Our next international meeting will be held in Barcelona next summer. We will begin work this year on identifying a venue for our 2007 international meeting.

We can also grow our global visibility through our publications. We will work

with Blackwell Publishing to raise the visibility of *Decision Sciences* and *Decision Sciences Journal of Innovative Education* in Europe and Asia.

Finally, we will explore opportunities for collaboration with other international or internationally oriented organizations. Such collaborations may help us leverage our resources and provide us with access to additional resources to assist in our globalization efforts.

**Goal 4: Improve communication with the membership.** Like many organizations, the Institute is sometimes less effective than it would like to be in letting its constituents know what is going on in the organization. Some of the services the Institute offers are time sensitive, and timely communication is critical in helping members take advantage of what the organization offers. We will be working on several initiatives to improve communication with the membership and also within and across the regional organizations.

These are challenging goals, but ones that we must achieve if the Institute is to thrive. The goals have been translated into charges for the Institute's various committees and coordinators, who will either take specific action or make actionable recommendations to the Board. I'm confident that with all the talented and dedicated people we have in committee and coordinator roles, we'll meet the challenge and make important progress in the year ahead. ■

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## BOARD OBJECTIVES, from page 35

### Technology in the Classroom Mini-Conference Coordinator

*Chair:* Tom L. Roberts

1. Prepare a report briefly summarizing your experiences with the 2004 Technology in the Classroom Mini-Conference. Highlight your recommendations for any changes you would like to see for future programs. Send this report to Ken Kendall, Program Chair, by December 10, 2004.
2. Prepare a report for the 2005 Technology in the Classroom Mini-Conference Coordinator, briefly summarizing your experiences with the 2004 Technology in the Classroom Mini-Conference. Highlight your advice to next year's coordinator, lessons learned, specific implementation, guidelines, etc. Send this report to the Home Office by December 13, 2004.

### Treasurer

*Chair:* Cliff T. Ragsdale

1. Provide a brief note regarding any explanations necessary preceding the audit report published in *Decision Line*.
2. Make other suggestions to the Board, Home Office or future officers. ■