

■ G. Keong Leong, Management Department, University of Nevada, Las Vegas

The destruction caused by the earthquake and tsunami in south Asia and parts of Africa towards in the last week of 2004 was mind-boggling. Our thoughts and prayers are with those who have been affected by this disaster.

In this issue of *Decision Line* we have included several interesting feature articles. We begin with the letter from DSI President Gary Ragatz of Michigan State University. He acknowledges the tremendous contributions made by the Program Committee and the efforts of numerous other volunteers who put in countless hours in organizing a very successful annual meeting in Boston. He also notes that the attendance at the meeting was more than 1,450, the largest meeting since 1996. Participants at the annual meeting were treated to a presentation entitled "Putting the fun back into Two-Echelon Repairable Item Inventory Systems" by the Improv Asylum. The show was a riot!

You'll find a variety of interesting articles in this issue of *Decision Line*. Sunil Babbar of Florida Atlantic University presents an experiential learning exercise on product usability that can be used in core operations management, quality management, and service operations courses both at the undergraduate and graduate levels. From the exercises, students are shown how attention to details in product design can enhance customer experience. Students liked the experiential learning approach because they find the approach to be more beneficial than the traditional learning through the textbook or cases.

E. James Burton, dean of the Jennings A. Jones College of Business, Middle Tennessee State University, reflects on the challenges of being a dean. Being a dean for only five years, he provides a different view of the dean's tasks than the one provided in an earlier article by Dean Williams, Sam Walton College of Business, University of Arkansas, in the October 2004 issue of *Decision Line*. He concludes that being a

dean is indeed a great job because he gets to work with "fantastically intelligent faculty, energetic and ambitious students, dedicated alumni and friends of the college."

Peter Ittig, University of Massachusetts, discusses the concerns about rising textbook prices. He provides a Web site where a free copy of the report by Merriah Fairchild entitled, "Ripoff 101: How the Current Practices of the Textbook Industry Drive Up the Cost of College Textbooks" can be obtained. The report was based on a study of the most widely used textbooks at 10 public colleges in California and Oregon. He also provides a list of suggestions on how a professor can help reduce the economic impact of this problem on students.

Best wishes for a safe, healthy, and productive year ahead! ■



### G. Keong Leong

is professor and chair of the Management Department in the College of Business, University of Nevada, Las Vegas. He holds a Bachelor of Engineering from the University of Malaya, an MBA and a Ph.D. from the University of South Carolina. Professor Leong has held leadership positions in Decision Sciences Institute such as at-large vice president, Doctoral Student Consortium coordinator, Instructional Innovation Award Competition coordinator, and POM track chair. He has published articles in *Decision Sciences*, *Journal of Operations Management*, *Interfaces*, *Journal of Management*, and other journals. His current research interests include international operations, operations strategy, technology management, and supply chain management. Professor Leong has co-authored two books, won teaching and research awards, and received the Educator of the Year award from the Asian Chamber of Commerce in Las Vegas.

### DSI Online Membership Directory Is Available to All Institute Members

To ACCESS the DSI online membership directory, point your browser to:

<http://decisionsciences.org/directory/auth.asp>

Log in using your email address and membership number as password. If you do not remember your membership number, you can have the system send your password to you from the authentication page.