

DECISION LINE

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2008 Annual Meeting Award Winners



Dhir (right) receives plaque from DSI President Norma Harrison.

Dennis E. Grawoig
Distinguished Service Award

Krishna S. Dhir,
Berry College

Instructional Innovation Award Competition

Janelle Heineke, Boston University; Larry Meile, Boston College; Linda Boardman Liu, Boston

University; and Jane Davies, Boston University

Elwood S. Buffa Doctoral Dissertation Competition

Scott C. Ellis, College of Business & Behavioral Sciences, Clemson University; Dissertation Advisor: Nallan C. Suresh, University at Buffalo, SUNY

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PRESIDENT'S LETTER



The academic "Steady State"— Is it good for us?

by Norma J. Harrison, CEIBS, President, DSI

I am sure that most of you enjoyed the 2008 DSI Annual Meeting in Baltimore as much as I did. Many thanks to Program Chair Mark Schneiderjans and his team, the track chairs and coordinators, as well as the DSI Home Office in organizing the conference. We also had the good fortune to hear industry leaders such as John Janney of Independence Blue Cross and Theo De Kool of Sara Lee Corp, who presented views of management from their companies' perspectives. I would also like to sincerely thank the chairs and members of the various DSI ad hoc and regular working committees. I was able to attend most of these meetings during the conference and was most im-

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pressed by the continuing dedication and generosity of the committee members.

In addition to the many paper presentations and discussions, the annual conference afforded us the great opportunity to network in a number of ways, conduct research meetings between colleagues and plan collaborative projects, and for junior academics and doctoral students to reap the benefits of valuable mentoring from senior faculty.

I was also very pleased to see the growing numbers of the "Women of DSI." Not only is there more of a move towards a gender balance in what was previously a male-dominated professional stream, but that many of these women are very credible in their areas of expertise and for whom I have the greatest respect.

One of the places I noticed that received a lot of use in the evenings (and which, I am sure, helped with networking) was the Kozmos Lounge of the conference hotel—that huge area where there was a lot of laughter and gaiety, and constant toasts to each other—right up to the early hours of the morning.

This was where I got the material for this message... what were some of our topics? I posed some questions and challenges to you as researchers and educators, some of which were as follows...

- a. Would you give up tenure for a contract posting that was exciting, allowed you to stretch yourself in many ways, paid you more—but still a contract position?
- b. Why do you research and publish in the areas you do? Why are you chasing so-called top-tier journals? To senior academics, will you dare to stretch the art of decision sciences into areas without a comfort factor but which leads you to distinctly improve the way that businesses or governments offer their products or services?
- c. How do you give back to the country and industrial structures that have afforded you such a superb education?
- d. If you are a dean, what would make you broaden your reward systems, tenure criteria, change your metrics, to accommodate your faculty conduct-

ing decision analysis that is relevant, practical, and which aids decision makers, especially in the present difficult economic times? How would you give incentives to faculty who contribute to the improvement of the way companies or governments make decisions?

- e. Where is DSI today? What ground has been covered? What are its potentials? What are the possibilities?

In your "relaxed" state, many of you were frank enough to tell me of the phenomenon you strived for, called "the steady state"—which basically constituted tenure, then full professorship, having many research students capable of writing and presenting papers for you, large research grants, top journal publications—and with the present status of the economy and the incentive system for new faculty, people did not want to stray from the "steady state." This response was not surprising but rather sad. The problem is that this "steady state" is too comfortable, you are not stretched, and often this results in very little real creativity and sustainability, especially in the present economic climate, thereby eventually dropping you off from this steady state.

For those of us privileged to work as academics and in education, we have a great opportunity to become builders of the future. As state-of-the-art thinkers, we could lead the way to creative decision analyses which would really make a difference to the economy and to the welfare of the global society. We need to hurry though and not wait for others to lead. We need daring people to jump off the "steady state."

On behalf of the DSI Board, I wish you all a productive and successful, yet peaceful and happy 2009! ■

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"Women of DSI" gather at the 2008 DSI Annual Meeting.