

■ SCOTT M. SHAFER, Feature Editor, Department of Management, Auburn University

Membership Roundtable

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It is a great honor to have been selected to serve as your new member services coordinator. I am particularly optimistic about serving in this role as President Terry Rakes has decided to make membership the focus of his term, declaring it the "Year of the Member." While I firmly believe the Institute does an outstanding job of meeting the needs of the membership, I am also confident that the coming year will be highly productive in terms of identifying a variety of ways the Institute can do an even better job. I look forward to working with Terry Rakes, Past-President Jim Evans, and the rest of the board.

As my term is just getting underway, I thought it appropriate to initiate this column with my vision and goals for my term in office. One of the things you may have already noticed is the change in name for the column. In the past, this column was called "The State of the Membership." I feel the new title, "Membership Roundtable," better reflects my intention to use this column as a forum to discuss proposed initiatives as well as to keep members up-to-date on membership issues. In future columns, I plan on using a website in conjunction with the column so that you will be able to provide input on specific topics. Ultimately, I hope this column will establish a dialogue among members on important membership issues.

In January I presented my strategic plan to the Board of Directors. I began with my definition of the member services coordinator's mission, namely, to support the Institute in the fulfillment of its mission by identifying membership requirements, developing better relationship management strategies, and by providing membership data as an input to the Institute's strategic planning process. To achieve this, I proposed focusing on three primary initiatives.

First, a comprehensive annual process for acquiring key information about Institute stakeholders needs to be developed and implemented. Examples of the types

of data that need to be collected and monitored over time include the percent of members who do not renew their membership, percent of members attending the national meeting, total attendance at the national meeting, number of submissions to the national meeting, and membership satisfaction data. Ultimately, my objective is the development of a comprehensive scorecard related to membership satisfaction that can be monitored over time.

Second, the campus representative program needs to be reinvigorated. As you may know, this program was designed to promote Institute activities and to help identify and attract new members. DSI has long had the goal of establishing at least one representative at each campus with Institute members. One of my first tasks will be to update the campus representative database and have this information available via the Web. Also, I believe the member services committee needs to reexamine the campus representative responsibilities and to identify ways to better recognize the contributions made by the campus reps. In the meantime, if you are interested in increasing your level of participation in the Institute, I encourage you to consider becoming a campus representative.

The last initiative is to identify ways that technology can be used to better meet the needs of the membership. We received a wide variety of suggestions from the membership survey conducted at the last annual meeting including allowing members to register for conferences online; developing an online membership directory with links to email, home pages, and course syllabi; and distributing conference proceedings on CD-ROM.

In closing, I want to encourage each of you to provide me with suggestions for ways the Institute can better serve your needs. Your input is important, so please feel free to email me, grab me between sessions at the national meetings, or give me a call regarding your suggestions. Also, be sure to complete the membership surveys that will be conducted periodically. ■



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Dr. Shafer is the current member services coordinator of the Decision Sciences Institute, a former member of the Board of Advisors of SOLE - The International Society of Logistics, and is certified in Production and Inventory Management (CPIM) by the American Production and Inventory Control Society.

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