

DECISION LINE

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E. Powell Robinson, Texas A&M University

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Mexico Regionally Elected Vice President

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Midwest Regionally Elected Vice President

William J. Tallon, Northern Illinois University
Gene Fliedner, Oakland University

Northeast Regionally Elected Vice President

R. Dan Reid, University of New Hampshire
Shaw Chen, University of Rhode Island

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PRESIDENT'S LETTER

Miscellaneous (but not necessarily random) Thoughts

Thomas E. Callarman, *Arizona State University*

A few of you already know, most of you don't, but I hope some of you care, that my career has taken an unexpected turn. As of September 1, 2005, I am Professor of Operations Management at the China Europe International

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Business School (CEIBS) in Shanghai. I find this somewhat ironic since one of my two major thrusts this year as president is to try to move the Institute toward an international organization rather than an organization with international members. Perhaps if I can't move the Institute, at least I can move.

After almost 10 years as an administrator at Arizona State University, I no longer have any administrative duties, and can return to teaching and conducting research. This has been an exciting move, as I thoroughly enjoy teaching, and have always enjoyed the discovery aspect of research. Since July 1, I have had the opportunity to begin to catch up on my reading of the Operations Management-related journals. (As an aside, there was a recent article in *Interfaces* regarding the ranking of OM journals, where none of the traditional ones, *JOM*, *POM*, etc. made the top 10.)

I have read many articles from 2000-2005 in five of what I consider to be the most relevant journals for my interests, including *Decision Sciences*, and have come to several conclusions. First, there is a lot of good research that has been published over the last five-plus years. Second, is it really necessary to continue to study lot-sizing? Third, if it is, then maybe I can finally get an article out of my dissertation! Fourth, the

debate regarding empirical research versus modeling seems to continue, with empirical research winning (at least in volume). It is clear to me that there is a need for both.

Much of the empirical research is high-quality surveys and analysis of what practitioners and academics think, feel, or believe. Much of it appears to describe the current practice—descriptive research. Modeling research appears to be more prescriptive in nature, but still has the same limitations it always has (see, for example, Sprague and Sprague, *Interfaces*, 1976, where the authors describe toy problems and toy research).

Analytical models seem to still have the limitations of being too complex or difficult to use to solve real problems, but we certainly can model larger, more complex and more realistic problems than we could even 10 years ago. I am encouraged by the scope and nature of simulation models, particularly those that are being developed and used to study supply chain problems. As a business professor for 27 years, I have always had an interest to study what business does, but have felt an obligation to try to help business move forward.

Turning to China . . . I have had opportunities to do some research in China

over the past five years, paying particular attention to the auto industry and electronics industry supply chains. Along with a number of colleagues at Arizona State and other universities, I have become particularly interested in supply network integration, developing information technology-enabled, cooperative and collaborative supply chains. This work has assumed that there are physical, financial, and IT infrastructures, as well as the culture to support such integration.

These assumptions will create significant challenges for anyone who wants to develop integrated supply networks in China. Because of a shortage of interconnected highways, trucking and distribution systems, railways, ports, computers (especially true of small and medium manufacturers), etc., etc., supply chain management will likely start with the basics: facilities location, inventory control and management, and vehicle scheduling and routing (Clay, I may finally get to use the first course I took at Purdue in 1975!). Although I have greatly simplified the description in these few short sentences, there appears to be fertile ground for useful supply chain research here. Stay tuned for more, later. ■

the answer to the second question above, concerning why a DSI member should be interested in Alpha Iota Delta, is as simple as the realization that the purpose of the Honor Society and the Institute are historically and philosophically intertwined.

If the goals and vision of DSI and Alpha Iota Delta are intertwined, and if this is the justification for faculty interest, why would a student be interested in being initiated into the Society? The answer might be found, in part, in an excerpt from an Alpha Iota Delta Initiation Ritual which addresses the mean-

ing of the Greek letters A (Alpha), I (Iota), and Δ (Delta).

ALPHA represents the beginning. It not only signifies the beginning of a career in the decision sciences and/or computer information systems but also it signifies a commitment to leadership. A leader develops guiding ideas and articulates them deliberately, demonstrating philosophical depth and recognizing the process as ongoing. The meaning, and sometimes the expression, of these guiding ideas evolve as people reflect and talk about them, and

as they are applied to guide decisions and actions.

IOTA represents integration, both of knowledge and also of concept. The synergy between theories, methods, and tools lies at the heart of any field of human endeavor that truly builds knowledge. The continuous cycle of creating theories, developing and applying practical methods and tools based on the theories, leading to new insights that improve the theories – is the primary

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