

## Creating a Culture of Professionalism

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**INGRAINED CULTURAL TRADITIONS** are found in many regions of the nation. Having lived in the South my whole life, the refreshing taste of sweet iced tea with real sugar, the blossoms of dogwoods and azaleas in the spring, and the sound of “y’all” in every other sentence form the backdrop of daily life. When I was growing up, another mainstay was manners: You address your elders as “ma’am” and “sir,” and you always say “thank you” and “please.” Such patterns of speech become so ingrained, you don’t even think about them. It’s just who you are. It’s the culture of the South.

So what does this have to do with the challenges of actuarial professionalism? As I begin my role as Academy vice president, professionalism, and chairperson of the Council on Professionalism (COP), I would like to promote a professionalism “culture” that enhances the way professionalism is integrated into the daily practice of actuaries. The U.S. profession already has tools that support this goal. The Actuarial Board for Counseling and Discipline’s request for guidance process and the



COP’s mission. Several of my predecessors also served as Academy president, namely Jack Turnquist (president in 1994), Larry Johansen (2001), and Dan McCarthy (2002). Because these and other leaders recognized that the Academy is the home of actuarial professionalism for the entire U.S. profession, the COP is a liaison body representing all of the U.S. actuarial organizations. The hard work of earlier leaders has created a rich professionalism history, and their vision for how the COP should operate has paved the way for the current COP to consider new initiatives to fulfill that mission.

The COP’s mission—fostering members’ desire to maintain professionalism in daily practice and providing them the tools to do so—is closely related to the Academy’s current Strategic Plan, which calls for inspiring and enabling

members to attain and keep a high level of professionalism in their work. The challenge ahead for the COP is to focus on how we can help instill a culture of actuarial professionalism into everyday practice. Some ideas that the COP may explore include

- ➔ Encouraging more-experienced actuaries to model good professionalism for less-experienced actuaries;
- ➔ Encouraging more-experienced actuaries to communicate the rich history of actuarial professionalism;
- ➔ Recognizing and honoring actuaries who “do the right thing” from a professionalism perspective in order to celebrate the profession’s successes;
- ➔ Looking for opportunities to reinforce professionalism at transition points in actuaries’ careers, such as when an actuary becomes a manager of other actuaries;
- ➔ Engaging directly with students and younger actuaries through local actuarial clubs to stress the importance of professionalism in daily work;
- ➔ Reaching out to older actuaries to ensure they are aware of professionalism developments; and
- ➔ Looking for opportunities to explain the role and importance of the Academy in the development, maintenance, and promotion of actuarial professionalism to ensure that actuaries understand how the Academy fits into their professional life.

I look forward to working with the COP over the next two years to create a culture that instills core professionalism values in Academy members. The actuarial profession will be well served by actuaries to whom “doing the right thing” comes as naturally as “y’all” does to a Southerner. ▲

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Committee on Qualifications’ [FAQs on the U.S. Qualification Standards](#) are prime examples. (And those who cannot find an answer to their question in the FAQs may send questions to the Committee [via the Academy website](#).) Our challenge is to determine what new tools the COP can develop to make professionalism a part of actuaries’ daily habits.

Before I expand my vision for the “culture” of actuarial professionalism, I want to take a moment to thank Ken Kent for his leadership of the COP for the past two years. It was a pleasure to serve with him, and I appreciate his support of the Academy. I would also like to recognize the other past vice presidents of professionalism who have volunteered countless hours and shown a deep dedication to the