Winds of Change in Chicago

WINDS OF CHANGE CERTAINLY BLEW IN CHICAGO AT THE 2014 ACCT Leadership Congress. In addition to the change in ACCT leadership, a new slate of officers for the Professional Board Staff Network began their term on October 24 with enthusiasm for an exciting upcoming year. Great things are already in the works for next year’s Congress.

This year’s sessions were huge successes, with presentations on electronic board packets and roundtable discussions covering a wide range of topics. Participation was greatly increased — there wasn’t an empty seat in the room.

The annual business meeting, held on Friday, October 24, included the election of the new executive committee. Newly elected members to the executive committee include Vice President Christina (“Tina”) Heskett of Hillsborough Community College in Florida and Secretary Alonia Sharps of Prince George’s Community College in Maryland. Members-at-Large include Sherri Bowen, Southern Region; Margaret Lamb, Pacific Region; Jane Thomas, Northeast Region; Heather Lanham, Central Region; and Carla Patee, Western Region. I appreciate each one of these ladies’ service in their respective roles.

I would also like to congratulate all PBSN members who won regional Professional Board Staff Network Awards. These included: Central Region — Benita Duncan, Lansing Community College, Michigan; Northeast Region — Yolanda Howell, Westchester Community College, New York; Pacific Region — Jeannie Odle, Chemeketa Community College, Oregon; and Southern Region — Michelle Lee, Cape Fear Community College, North Carolina. All regional recipients were nominated for the national-level award. The recipient of this award was Jeannie Odle. Congratulations, Jeannie, and to all the regional winners!

I am honored to represent Seminole State College and hold the position of President of the Professional Board Staff Network. I believe this group is a great resource for everyone, and I hope each of you will utilize our networking abilities to make your job easier. Let’s all work to keep attendance high at next year’s Congress. If you would like to see a certain session in San Diego, please let me know. These sessions are for your benefit and will contain valuable information. Spread the word about the Congress sessions and please feel free to contact me at m.downey@sscok.edu or (405) 382-9260 if you have any ideas, concerns, or questions.

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MEMBERS OF ACCT’S PROFESSIONAL BOARD STAFF NETWORK (PBSN) kicked off this year’s Congress with their annual Meet-and-Greet on Wednesday, October 22, at Giordano’s, home of the Chicago classic, deep dish pizza. New friends were made, old friends were reunited, and pizza was shared by everyone — with the exception of the lone anchovy-lover who had one all to herself. This was a nice opportunity for everyone to get together, away from the hustle and bustle of arriving college presidents and trustees, to discuss the operations at our respective colleges and meet the ACCT Professional Board Staff Award nominees. Thankfully, the PBSN workshop did not begin until 2 p.m. on Thursday, giving us plenty of time to sleep — or, work off the carbs from that oh-so-scrumptious pizza!

This year’s workshop was extremely successful with a record-setting 65 attendees — it was literally “standing room only,” with not so much as a single seat remaining. After a short icebreaker, the workshop was divided into two sessions, with the first half dedicated to electronic board packets. PBSN President Debbie Novak, assistant to the president for Colorado Mountain College, presented the low-cost option of preparing an agenda using Adobe Professional, and I presented on the use of Diligent Boardbooks, software created specifically for board meetings. The two presentations offered insight into preparation, transition, research, expense, and implementation, and were followed by a Q&A and open discussion on what is currently being used by others throughout the country. This provided everyone the much-needed opportunity to share ideas on best practices and future trends.
For many, the highlight of the workshop was when ACCT Chair LeRoy W. Mitchell stopped by to personally thank everyone for our hard work and dedication to ACCT and to our respective colleges, stressing that we “…are the glue that holds this organization together.” He reiterated the importance of the work that professional board staff members do both in front of and behind the scenes; his kind words and recognition were greatly appreciated.

The second half of the workshop consisted of six roundtable discussions on a variety of subjects ranging from legal issues and sunshine laws to trustee orientation and board assessment. The discussions were so involved that when it was time to break up and share the results, Novak had to whistle to get everyone’s attention. Wrapping up this year’s session by sharing ideas not only helped to solidify the bond that we, as professional board staff members, share, but it also provided us an opportunity to recommit to inspiring and helping each other through ongoing communication.

When asked what she liked most about this year’s workshop, first-time attendee Jane Thomas of Chesapeake College in Maryland responded, “Meeting this amazing group of professional men and women gave me the opportunity to expand my knowledge and discover tools that will enhance my role as secretary to our board of trustees and executive associate to our president.” Lindsey Vanek, assistant secretary to the board of trustees for McLennan Community College in Texas, added, “We compared our jobs, ideas, and struggles. I felt like part of a group and that was very encouraging to me.” Their sentiments were shared by many, and several participants stopped by after the workshop to thank the Executive Committee for continuing to advance the PBSN.

Preparations for another successful workshop will begin when the Executive Committee meets in Washington, D.C., during the National Legislative Summit. If you would like to present, offer suggestions for roundtable topics, or just want to make a suggestion, please email PBSN President Mechell Downey at m.downey@sscok.edu. We encourage everyone to participate in the planning and look forward to working with each of you to make next year’s Congress even more successful — we couldn’t do it without you!