System Dynamics NEWSLETTER

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FROM THE PRESIDENT   *Rogelio Oliva*

Dear Colleagues,

I am honored to write this letter as President of the Society for 2010 and I look forward to working with the officers and members of the Society. I will use this opportunity to bring you up to date on recent activities and ask for your input and support as we explore exciting new opportunities.

First, let me thank the outgoing President, Erling Moxnes, for his service last year and in particular for his work on strategy development. On behalf of the Society, let me also thank the outgoing members of the Policy Council – Jim Lyneis (Past President), Krystyna Stave (VP Member Services), Renan Jia, Özge Pala, Warren Tignor, and Khaled Wahba (Policy Council members) – for their service to the Society. I would also like to welcome the new members to the Council – David Lane, Laura Black, Ignacio Martínez-Moyano, Martin Schaffernicht and Kim Warren. We look forward to their contributions.

There are some changes on how the Society plans to run its conferences and these changes create new opportunities for developing system dynamics expertise across the world. Although the new conference policy is not so different from the existing one, there are modifications, and it is important for all members to understand the rationale for those changes and why we believe this is the right thing for the growth of the field. Traditionally, the conference has been invested with three separate goals: (1) to provide a forum for all practitioners to meet and exchange ideas on the principles and practice of system dynamics with the aim of advancing the field, (2) to provide income to the Society to help fund its operating expenses, and (3) to develop the emergence of interest in the field in new disciplinary and geographic areas.

Running the annual conference at diverse locations is widely seen as a way of achieving goal number three. But too frequently the unintended consequence of this strategy is that it reduces the extent to which the first two goals are met. Namely, conference attendance drops and key colleagues are often unable to attend, thus reducing the quality of interactions and presentations. Recognizing that the conference has not been very effective in creating awareness or increasing membership in other parts of the world, the Policy Council has decided to maximize the conference fit toward providing a forum location that is as easy as possible to reach for the greatest number of people. As a result, the new guidelines for conference location designate future conference sites (starting in 2013) to be gateway cities in North America and Europe, where gateway cities are those that can be reached through direct flights from multiple origins in other continents. We believe this will ensure higher participation in the conference since 43 and 36 percent of the Society's membership resides in North America and Europe respectively, and traveling into a gateway city is more convenient and inexpensive. This policy also reduces the carbon footprint of the conference as the average trip length will be reduced.

The Policy Council has decided to make these (to be determined) locations in Europe and North America the default locations for the conference. Having the conference in the same location every other year allows the Society's home office to leverage significant learning curves and economies of scale that will reduce the effort to organize the conference and costs. Having these default locations, however, will not prevent interested parties from putting forward proposals to host the conference in other locations. Those proposals, however, will have to match the attractiveness of the default location in terms of attendance and the cost for the Society. While this has been the "espoused" policy for the last decade, the new policy guarantees the

President, continued from page 1

Society a viable conference site (the default location) with clear performance expectations.

Acknowledging that the conference is not the correct mechanism to foster system dynamics practice in other geographies also creates tremendous opportunities for the Society. The second part of the above initiative comes with a new mandate for the Society's officers (and members) to identify and promote the correct mechanisms to support that development. We envision this taking the form of workshops and seminars where some of the top system dynamics practitioners and instructors would teach or mentor groups of interested individuals in other areas. We expect the Society Chapters and Special Interest Groups to take an active role in creating these experiences as strong initiatives and local enthusiasm are required to make these events successful. I encourage you to work through your geographical chapter or interest group to identify activities that you would like to organize and forward them to Tim Haslett (VP Chapter Activities), or Etiënne Rouwette (VP Member Services), or the home office. We are excited about the opportunities that this creates and look forward to developing viable models to support them.

Thank you all for giving me the opportunity to serve as President of the System Dynamics Society. I hope to see you all in Seoul.

Policy Council Report
by J. Bradley Morrison, Secretary

As the governing body of the System Dynamics Society, the Policy Council meets twice a year, during the annual conference and again in the winter. As part of an effort to increase participation from our globally diverse membership, the Winter Policy Council Meeting follows a three-session format incorporating electronic discussions.

The 2010 winter meeting opened with an electronic discussion in early January. The second session was a face-to-face meeting in Cambridge, Massachusetts on January 15th to discuss administrative and open policy issues, and to develop and propose motions. The third session, spanning approximately five weeks after the face-to-face meeting, was an online discussion and voting on proposed motions.

The meetings included reports by officers and committees, publication reports, conference reports, and existing and new business. Motions voted on and passed included nominating a replacement for the position of VP Member Services, designating the slate of candidates to take office in 2011, appointing conference program chairs for 2011 and 2012, confirming the 2012 conference location as St. Gallen, Switzerland, and adopting a policy of rotating default conference locations between North America and Europe. Policy Council Meeting minutes can be accessed via the "Governance" page of the Society's website.

2011 Policy Council Nominations

During the 2010 Winter PC Meeting the following were nominated as officers and members of the Policy Council, to take office in 2011:

•*President Elect (2011)*
David Ford
•*Secretary (2011–2012)*
J. Bradley Morrison
•*Vice President Finance (2011–2013)*
David Andersen
•*Vice President Chapters (2011–2013)*
Tim Haslett
•*Policy Council Members (2011–2013)*
Allyson Beall
Peter Hovmand
Len Malczynski
Markus Schwaninger

Brief biographies of candidates are available at "Activities/Governance,"

on the drop-down menu of the Society's website.

The Nominating Committee submits a single nomination for each position to be filled in the pending election. However, members may submit other nominations for these offices and positions, provided: (1) each such nomination is accompanied by a petition signed by twenty-five members in good standing, (2) each nominee is a member in good standing, (3) written evidence is submitted to the effect that each nominee has agreed to stand for election, and (4) such nominations reach the Secretary within five weeks after publication of nominations received from the Nominating Committee.

If no nominations are received by the Policy Council from the membership at large, the slate of candidates submitted by the Nominating Committee, and approved by the Council, will be deemed elected. For more information on elections go to "Activities/Governance" on the drop-down menu of the Society's website, then go to "Policies of the System Dynamics Society."

Our Electronic Community
by Bob Eberlein, VP Electronic Presence

Tom Fiddaman started a thread of the System Dynamics Discussion Forum recently titled "Is the forum moribund?" Ironically, or perhaps this was Tom's intention, discussion picked up after that post so that in the month and a half since that thread emerged another dozen threads came out in open discussion. Thus, I am fairly sure the answer to Tom's question is "no." But, I do agree that our electronic discussion is not as active as it might be.

A number of people have mentioned that the extra steps needed to access a website to see what people are discussing creates a barrier. To overcome this, it is possible to receive a digest of discussion via email. To

2010 Conference
Seoul, Korea
July 26 – 29, 2010

The main theme of this year's conference is *Beyond the Crisis: Greening Society, the Economy, and the Future,* reflecting global concerns about the environment and economic problems. The program will consist of invited and contributed sessions and workshops demonstrating the state of the art in the theory and application of system dynamics. The program schedule also includes exhibits, model assistance workshops, panel discussions, special sessions, a student colloquium, and Society business meetings. There will be time for social and professional interaction in a relaxed and fascinating setting.

A **Special Guest Lecture Series** will include, among others, presentations by Andrew Ford, Ali Mashayekhi, John Morecroft, George Richardson, Khalid Saeed, and John Sterman. The Vice President of the Korea Research Institute for Human Settlements, Young-Pyo Kim, will deliver a keynote address on "Eastern Philosophy and Systems Thinking," a new subject being introduced at this conference.

Submissions are encouraged on the theme *Beyond the Crisis: Greening Society, the Economy, and the Future* and on the topics of climate change and energy transition. **Featured plenary speakers** include top governmental officers and ministers who will discuss the main theme as it pertains to Korea and worldwide.

Bonus Day July 30: This extra day has been designed as a special time for groups to meet informally.

Newcomer Orientation is a special event for newcomers. Information is provided by experienced guides to help newcomers get the most out of

the experience. If interested, check the box for first-time participant on the registration form.

Carbon Emissions: The Society has partnered with *Carbonfund.org* as a means of offsetting the carbon emissions associated with the conference. This initiative is co-coordinated by the Environmental SIG. Our footprint is based on our expectations for the number of attendees, places of origin, hotel nights, estimated transportation, conference space, and food. To estimate individual voluntary contributions, the total projected conference impact is averaged among the number of projected attendees. If each participant purchases US$19.55 of carbon offsets, our conference will be carbon neutral. Though encouraged, this program is strictly voluntary.

Society and Outside Awards

The *Jay Wright Forrester Award* is given annually to the best publication in system dynamics during the previous five years. Nominations must be received by March 31st.

The conference paper awards listed below are self-nominating and review processes are conducted separately. You may apply for these awards using the conference submission system, and also submit more than one paper for each award.

The *Dana Meadows Award* and honorable mentions are awarded to outstanding conference papers authored by student(s).

The *Barry Richmond Scholarship Award* is presented to a deserving system dynamicist or systems thinker whose work demonstrates a desire to expand the field or who applies it to current social issues.

The *Lupina Young Researchers Award* will be awarded to outstanding conference paper(s) dealing with

health-related topics, authored by students or recent (past 5 years) graduates.

A limited number of partial **Conference Scholarships** are available this year. Scholarships cover conference registration fees and in some cases hotel expenses. Scholarships are based on financial need and are not limited to students or authors. The application deadline for scholarships is May 12th.

Deadlines and Key Dates

- March 22nd - all submissions due
- May 12th - notifications of acceptance sent; scholarship applications deadline
- May 19th - final abstracts due
- June 2nd - presenter registration deadline
- June 21st - early registration deadline
- July 5th - hotel reservation deadline

Please refer to the conference's webpage for additional deadlines.

The printed Abstract Proceedings will be distributed at the conference. Full Proceedings, including complete papers, will be available on the Society's website after the conference.

Watch for future announcements regarding other events.

Visit the conference page of our website: **www.systemdynamics.org**

Use your "User Menu" page of the web-based submission system to:
▪ submit your work ▪ apply for scholarships ▪ self-nominate for awards ▪ register online

Find information on these and more:
▪ Society awards, Society scholarships, outside awards, and the nominating process
▪ Carbonfund.org
▪ Conference registration, hotel and travel information
▪ Volunteer as a Newcomer Guide

News and Notes

New PhDs & Publications

Bahadir K. Akcam, "Socio-Technical Processes in Inter-organizational Emergency Response and Recovery Process at The World Trade Center," University at Albany, SUNY, May 2009. Congratulations Bahadir!

Maria Larsson, "Learning System Thinking: The role of semiotic and cognitive resources," Lund University, December 2009. Congratulations Maria!

Warren Tignor has authored a chapter titled "System Dynamics and Synthetic Worlds" about climate change, published in *Working through Synthetic Worlds* (Ashgate, December 2009). More information on this book can be found at Ashgate's website: www.ashgate.com/pdf/tis/9780754677 123_US.pdf.

John Sterman's work on mental models of climate change at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology and with Climate Interactive appeared in the December 2009 "Big Idea" feature section of *National Geographic Magazine* and online at: http://ngm.nationalgeographic.com/big -idea/05/carbon-bath. The article conveys complex ideas clearly and incorporates excellent illustrations. Also included is a link to the online version of C-ROADS.

Other News

Jorgen Randers was awarded the "Academics Prize 2009" by Akademikerne for his contributions to fostering academic freedom. Dr. Randers, Professor of Climate Strategy at the Norwegian School of Management, has researched climate issues for over forty years.

The **Climate Rapid Overview and Decision-support Simulator** (C-ROADS) was used at the United Nations Climate Change Conference in Copenhagen, Denmark in December 2009. C-ROADS was developed by Drew Jones, Beth Sawin, and Lori Siegel of the Sustainability Institute, Tom Fiddaman of Ventana Systems, and John Sterman of the System Dynamics Group at MIT. The C-ROADS simulation calculates the long-term climate impacts of proposals under consideration in the negotiations to produce a global climate treaty.

19th PhD Colloquium

Students and faculty from the University of Arkansas, Massachusetts Institute of Technology, Simon Fraser University, Worcester Polytechnic Institute, and University at Albany, held a day-long PhD Colloquium in Albany in October 2009. Please visit the Society's "Activities" webpage for more information about this event.

In Memoriam

Russell Ackoff, Anheuser Busch Professor Emeritus of Management Science at the Wharton School, University of Pennsylvania, passed away October 29, 2009. Dr. Ackoff has been honored by the establishment of the Ackoff Center for Advancement of Systems Approaches at the School of Engineering and Applied Science, and the Russell L. Ackoff System Thinking Library at the School of Arts and Sciences.

Upcoming Conferences

The **European Academy of Management's** annual conference will be held May 19-22, 2010 in Rome, Italy. The theme is "Back to the Future." The conference will feature two tracks on the application of systems thinking and system dynamics to management topics. For more conference information visit: www.euram2010.org.

The 24th **European Conference on Operational Research** will be held July 11-14, 2010 in Lisbon, Portugal. The conference includes a stream of interest to many system dynamicists, "Facilitated Modelling in Operational Research." The stream welcomes contributions from researchers and practitioners. Please find more information on the conference website: www.euro2010lisbon.org.

sign up for this, or to set up an RSS feed, log in to the Forum at www.systemdynamics.org/forum, click on the "User Control Panel" link and then select the "Digests" tab. More details on both these conveniences are available in the "Instructions and Questions" forum.

Set up an email digest and see what people are talking about! To "talk back" you will need to log in to the Forum directly. The Forum allows attachments and inline graphics, making it a substantially more expressive medium than the former mailing list. The Forum also maintains a thread-based archive of all discussions, and we intend to move the archive of the former email discussions into the Forum as well.

Though discussion forums are a great way to tell people about things and ask questions, they are not as well-suited to organizing knowledge. For that purpose we started the System Dynamics Wiki, accessible at www.systemdynamics.org/wiki. The WikiSD has had a few spurts of effort occur now and again but, unfortunately, they seem to fade out quickly. This is an area where volunteer effort would be strongly appreciated. If you are an expert in the field, your wisdom is welcome. If you are a novice, there is still much you can offer, especially if you are willing to create some organization. One of the best ways to construct the WikiSD would be for those of you looking for answers to create pages addressing the topics of interest to you. That done, you could post a note on the WikiSD, asking someone to fill in the content. This is a community project – one where we can all excel.

The Forum and WikiSD are open to everyone; you do not need to be a Society member to participate. If you have not used the submission system before, please register at www.systemdynamics.org/cgi-bin/sdsweb.