

FUTUREtakes

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From The Desk of Tim Mack, President, World Future Society



Hello -

Well, the last half of 2004 could certainly qualify for the category of “Interesting Times” for the World Future Society as an organization. Especially since not every new non-profit president has the opportunity provided by the outpouring of ideas and energy received from the WFS membership in response to my call for member input and advice. One strong message I heard is that the Society needs to be more involved in connecting with young people of all ages. I took this to include both students and young professionals, and our Future Generations Fund program has been going full speed ahead in this direction for the past several months.

For example, WFS is participating in a CyberFair with the Global SchoolNet Foundation, where students from around the world compete on educational web project development around the theme “Unite and Prepare for the Future.” These students will examine the conditions that will affect the future of their communities, and around the globe. Working in small teams, they will conduct original research to produce high-quality web-based responses to these problems. These entries are judged first by groups of their peers, and finally by a panel of World Future Society judges to determine the ‘best of the best.’ Finalists will be joining us in Chicago as our guests to present their winning entries to the conference.

WFS is also working with another group in the science and technology area to develop “Discovery” tools for school-age inventors to solve new and challenging problems. This program is based on a recent Smithsonian conference on Inventing for Humanity and modeled on an approach in Japan where high school students successfully produced a major breakthrough involving hydrogen-powered cars.

At the college level, WFS is assessing the state of university training in the area of foresight studies around the world, and will be releasing a comprehensive study of this area by the end of the year. As well, we have been holding a series of focus groups with university departments and relevant professional associations concerning the type of training they would find useful in both academic and work settings. These and related matters have been an area of global concern, and the foresight community needs to better understand the options for developing new tools and teaching futures skills in ways that reach the broadest possible audience.

Other recent initiatives have included a foresight policy conference at Tamkang University in Taiwan and a Nanotech innovation conference at Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute in New York State, both co-sponsored by the World Future Society. We are also working with faculty at George Washington University to develop a conference on Space Business toward the end of 2005. This effort is part of an adult learning program at WFS that is aimed at mid-career and post-retirement audiences, and we are working with a variety of organizations to reach those targets.

For 2005, WFS has resolved to substantially upgrade its Internet presence, with a new look and greater online capability, which will include more support for Society chapters and user-friendly communications and e-commerce features. The ultimate goal is to provide additional value to World Future Society members all over the globe. I am encouraged and energized by the possibilities that lie before us and hope you are as well. Please continue to talk to me about your ideas and hopes for the Society and tell me what we need to improve. We will go the farthest working together in partnership and I believe it will be a great year!

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