

FUTUREtakes

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Chapter Activities Session 2006 – Revisited

The year 2006 saw a new format for the annual chapter activities sessions that are held during the annual WFS conferences – specifically, a participatory format designed to ensure session ownership among the chapters. A departure from lecture formats and unfocused discussion, “CAS2006” showcased three vibrant chapters and laid the groundwork for meaningful follow-on action.

Among other accomplishments, we identified several challenges that various chapters are facing at CAS2006 and the subsequent e-mail dialog:

1. Enhancing chapter stature and recognition
2. Obtaining funding, including corporate sponsorship and tax-deductible grants (recognizing that applicable tax laws vary from nation to nation)
3. Facilitating the necessary financial transactions between the International WFS and its members and chapters in other nations, when such transactions are impeded by exchange controls
4. Maintaining an effective chapter or chapter-equivalent to serve members who are geographically dispersed (as when a single chapter serves a large region)
5. Arranging chapter access to names and contact information for WFS “members at large” in their respective local areas, as is customary in professional societies
6. Making chapter membership, activity participation, and volunteer service a priority among people, especially in large metropolitan areas that have numerous competing activities
7. Maximizing chapter and chapter activity appeal among prospective members and participants who represent an eclectic mix of disparate niche interests (for example, someone who is interested in one month’s program on the future of privacy but not in the next month’s program on the future of biotech)
8. Inspiring volunteer service (almost always in short supply) to the chapter.

For three of these challenges, possible solutions were identified:

1. National-level “umbrella” WFS organizations to interface between the International WFS and local chapters in their respective countries (a three-tier structure) – a possible solution for pursuing nonprofit status or equivalent and for facilitating cross-border financial transactions with the International WFS.
2. Web-enabled “e-programs” for members who are geographically dispersed – perhaps leading to a “next-generation” type of chapter.

Finally, we identified areas for possible inter-chapter cooperation:

1. Joint chapter-classroom activities and student networking
2. Pair-wise partnering between chapters in affluent nations and chapters in nations that are less affluent.

Inspired by the success of CAS2006, **FUTURE*takes*** has proposed a similar multi-stakeholder participatory format for the **2007 Learning (Education) Session**, to be held in conjunction with World Future 2007 in Minneapolis.

To meet the challenges that we have identified, facilitate inter-chapter cooperation, and help every chapter “be everything that it can be,” it is essential that we maintain our inter-chapter discussions. Group e-mail is the fastest way to communicate, but the “Chapters’ Corner” column is normally available to more people than we normally reach via e-mail. Either way (or better yet, both ways), let’s remain in contact!