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Chapters' Corner

Summary of the Chapter Activities Session 2006, by Youngsook Park, José Cordeiro, Christy Dugger, Ken Harris, and Dave Stein

Chapter Activities Session 2006

The purpose of “CAS2006,” co-chaired by Tim Mack and Dave Stein, was to exchange chapter success stories, and the “winning ways” that made these success stories possible, so that all chapters can be winners in all areas – for example, membership growth, activity participation, activity diversity, sponsorship, and stature. A related purpose was for chapters that are facing challenges to seek the advice and counsel of other chapters that had faced these chapters previously.

It was emphasized that various chapters have different strengths and success stories. For example, some chapters offer impressive, well-attended luncheon programs or dinner programs, in some cases with big-name speakers, while other chapters are struggling with program attendance and activity participation. Some chapters offer short courses or workshops. Some have special interest groups (SIGs) for members who want to focus on particular areas – the future of living and working patterns, for example, or the future of biotech or nanotech and how that will impact our lives, or the future of healthcare, education, privacy, leadership, religion and spirituality, governance – or perhaps even the future of volunteerism, on which our chapters themselves so critically depend. Some chapters offer publications. Then there are chapters that command respect and stature through their involvement with various ministries of their respective national governments. At the same time, there are chapters that are struggling to put themselves on the proverbial map, that is, to position themselves to be noticed by prospective members and activity participants. Some chapters are experiencing modest to excellent membership growth, while other chapters struggle with member retention and high membership turnover. Finally, there are chapters that have pipelines of eager volunteers ready to step up to leadership posts from which they can evolve their respective chapters ever onward, upward, and forward. Other chapters barely have enough volunteers to staff key positions or to even remain viable.

SOUTH KOREA CHAPTER

Accompanied by several students whom she introduced, **Youngsook Park**, President of the South Korea Chapter, gave the first presentation, together with her chapter's junior forum leader, **Whang Hyun-jung**. This highly active chapter is registered in South Korea as a non-government organization

(NGO) with the Ministry of Finance to act as a leading regional, national, and international R&D, training, and consulting organization in the field of future studies. In addition, the chapter functions as the Korean node of the American Council for United Nations University (ACUNU). “Korea 2050” core programs include research, analysis, and formulations of various strategies for alternative futures of Korea, both for government ministries and for businesses. Professional services include establishment of futures research institutes in universities as well as research centers in business. International collaboration extends to the European Union, the World Trade Association (WTA), and the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD). The Web site, www.korea2050.net, is becoming an internationally-recognized database for futures research.

Additional activities include a training program for government officials on foresight and strategic prospective studies, with training to be provided by internationally prominent futurists, and seminars, workshops, and lectures to promote public awareness.

More than 500 futurists, CEOs, and government officials, including former US Vice President Al Gore, have spoken at chapter-sponsored conferences and workshops. These events have included the Seoul Digital Forum in 2005, co-sponsored by the Ministry of Information and Communications, and the First Futures Workshop, also in 2005. Another major event, the conference on the future of culture and tourism, was sponsored by the chapter in cooperation with the Ministries of Culture and Tourism. This conference examined trends that will impact culture and tourism for the purpose of developing effective national strategies. Other ministries with which the South Korea Chapter has worked include the Ministries of Education, Science and Technology, Construction and Transportation, Youth, Environment, and Education.



Left to right: Youngsook Park (at podium), Ken Harris, José Cordeiro.



Left to right: Kim Dae Ho, Lee Jung Min, Jang Woong Jo, Youngsook Park, Hwang Hyun Jung (at podium).

VENEZUELA CHAPTER

Another highly successful chapter, the Venezuela Chapter, was represented by its President, **José Cordeiro**. The Venezuela Chapter has been instrumental in establishing future studies courses at four universities. Monthly events include programs on “The Future of ___ (topic of the month),” and internationally prominent speakers are invited to a yearly conference. A recent conference speaker was Arthur C. Clarke, a well-known science fiction writer. Another major activity is the national university contest, which the chapter sponsors in collaboration with the Millennium Project of the ACUNU.

The Venezuela Chapter’s achievements are all the more remarkable considering their challenging financial and political environment. The chapter relies primarily on member dues for its revenues, and exchange controls make it difficult for members to maintain membership in the parent WFS. For this reason, the chapter is interested in attracting corporate sponsorship. An additional interest is obtaining funds to bring students to the annual WFS convention, although Mr. Cordeiro was able to bring three students to WFS 2006 and introduced them at CAS2006.



Left to right: José Cordeiro (at podium), Ken Harris, Youngsook Park.

BAYSIDE CHAPTER (USA)

Christy Dugger, President of the Northern California (Bayside) Chapter, discussed the student futurist clubs situation – specifically, the challenges in linking her students with other students around the globe who are interested in the future, even the students from Mexico and South Korea who have contacted her chapter. Noting that US chapters receive no government support, she proposed that an umbrella 501 (C) (3) organization with its own board of directors be established that would enable all US chapters to receive funding that is tax deductible to the donors. She said that it is prohibitively expensive for individual chapters to get this 501 (C) (3) status. Russell Wooten, President of the US National Capital Chapter, said that his chapter was only one signature away from incorporation and will seek its own 501 (C) (3) status once incorporation is complete. To this end, Christy further proposed that we pursue pro bono legal services. [This is a brilliant and long-needed idea for the US chapters! Let's identify similar measures that can help chapters in other nations. – Dave]

OTHER SUGGESTIONS

Arthur Shostak, Emeritus Professor of Sociology, said that High School of the Future in Philadelphia, USA, would welcome speakers from WFS chapters.

Another suggestion was partnering between chapters in affluent nations and chapters in nations that are less affluent, such partnering to include limited financial support where possible.

Julio Millán, coordinator of the Mexico chapter, distributed copies of an 11-point proposal for strengthening local WFS chapters.

ADDITIONAL AREAS FOR FURTHER DIALOG AMONG CHAPTERS

Both during and prior to the session, several other topics for constructive dialog among chapters were proposed:

1. Web linkage and other viable alternatives to physical meetings, for chapters whose members are geographically dispersed (proposed by **Mohan K. Tikku**, India),
2. ways for chapters to pursue corporate sponsorship (proposed by **Tonia McDonald**, Los Angeles, USA),
3. ways to make chapter activity participation and membership a high priority in large metropolitan areas, where many other activities compete for people's time (proposed by **Dave Stein**),
4. ways to maximize "chapter appeal" to members and prospective members who do not have cross-cutting interests – that is, who may be interested in this month's topic but not next month's topic (proposed by **Dave Stein**).

NEXT STEPS

As several participants acknowledged, this constructive dialog among all chapters needs to continue throughout the year. It is too important to defer to CAS2007! Group e-mail was identified as the fastest available means for now. Let's help one another so that all chapters win!

Your chapter has its own success story and winning ideas to share with other chapters! Or perhaps your chapter is facing challenges and can benefit from the wisdom of other chapters that have successfully met these challenges. Let's continue this exchange of ideas that can benefit all WFS chapters! Write to "Chapters' Corner" at chapterscorner@futuretakes.org.