

**Message from the Chair**  
By John C. Macaulay, CMA



# Creativity Amid Chaos

It's been said that the true test of someone's mettle is how they respond to a crisis. If the recent actions of IMA® staff and volunteers are any indication, then our organization has much to celebrate and be thankful for.

**A**s you know, the eastern United States suffered a devastating hurricane at the end of October. Situated in northern New Jersey, IMA's corporate headquarters in Montvale sustained no damage, but it lost phone service, Internet, and e-mail for several days. Many employees, however, did have damage, and some were without power for more than two weeks. This kind of crisis never comes at a good time, and the hurricane occurred only days before five IMA staffers were scheduled to depart from New Jersey for the Annual Student Leadership Conference, which opened in San Antonio, Texas, on November 1.

During a crisis, there are usually two options, best summed up in psychology literature as “fight or flight.” In the case of these IMA staff members, their choice was to creatively fight—with a flight. All local airports were closed, so these folks drove through fallen limbs and downed power wires to Boston, Mass., where the airport was open, and took a late flight to

Texas. As IMA Chair, I want to commend these individuals (and they know who they are) for their creativity amid chaos—for making personal sacrifices (many leaving their homes and families without power) to give service to those attendees at the Student Leadership Conference.

The Conference proved to be a resounding success, attracting nearly 500 attendees from 92 U.S. colleges and universities and from 34 states. Students, faculty members, and even practitioners gathered to network, learn from outstanding keynote speakers and session leaders, and gain insights that, I trust, will shape their entire careers.

The IMA staff members who made that long journey from the New Jersey area to San Antonio deserve our sincere thanks for their innovative solution to their dilemma, their sacrifice in leaving their homes, and their dedication to executing the plan for the Conference. Thanks also go to the many volunteers and the one staff member already at the Conference who stepped forward and filled in until the five others arrived. Despite paper cuts and a slight learning curve, many individuals—including former IMA Chairs—

volunteered to help with organizing the registration materials and other details.

Back in Montvale, other staff members also went into “fight” mode. IMA's IT department implemented the emergency contingency plan that provided a number of computer stations at an offsite location with backup power so that time-sensitive transactions and communications with vendors and IMA members could still be conducted after the New Jersey state of emergency in the area was lifted. Appropriate staff members traveled to that location and performed those duties while others did what work they could from their homes and the office.

I believe these actions, as so many other actions do, demonstrate the dedication and cooperation of our staff and volunteers. IMA is an organization driven by staff and volunteer commitment and our focus on our mission and goals. As a member of other professional associations during the course of my career, I can tell you that not all associations can assert the same claim. IMA, I believe, is unique in our cooperation and focus, and the case from last month is just one more example

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## Perspectives

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of this as well as a true test of our mettle.

I hope that our members and staff who are still experiencing effects of the hurricane will find things back to normal very soon.

And as always, I invite you to share your thoughts with me on this or any other subject at

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