

Message from the Chair
By John C. Macaulay, CMA



The Value of Diversity

We live in a global world, and we want to make sure our association reflects the positive aspects that come from a diverse group of accounting and financial professionals.

As IMA® continues to become more global, we need to make sure that all facets of the organization reflect this development. I recently returned from the IMA Nominating Committee meeting in Atlanta, Ga., where we considered individuals to serve two-year terms on the IMA Global Board of Directors. As a result of that meeting, I started thinking about the value of diversity within our organization and our professional lives.

Some background on the Board: About half of its 53 members are nominated by the U.S. councils. The majority are long-time IMA members who have served in active leadership roles within the organization for many years. The diversity of these individuals is reflected in their professional backgrounds: Some are from large public companies; others are from small businesses. They also hold a variety of titles, certifications, and job responsibilities, and they differ with respect to education, ethnicity, and gender.

The remaining Board members are selected by the Nominating

Committee, which has the opportunity to complete the Board's diversity. Last month we selected 12 individuals, each of whom in some way helps reflect an element of our worldwide membership. This year, as in prior years, we aimed for geographic diversity with selections from the Middle East, China, and Europe, where our membership base is growing dramatically because of certification, as well as from other parts of the globe, including the United States. In addition, we considered a diverse variety of members—from young professionals working in industry to educators who may never have performed a year-end close.

Why all the effort to ensure that our Board mirrors the diversity of our membership? For one thing, it's only fair that the decisions made at the highest level of our organization reflect, as best we can, the unique needs, challenges, and perspectives of our various membership groups. We believe that variety of thought, background, and ideas will result in better decisions and a better understanding of those decisions by the organization. This diversity and our process are elements that have enabled us to accomplish so much to advance the management

accounting profession.

Another reason why diversity is important is the intrinsic benefit we gain from having different voices involved in our decisions. It has been my experience that although reconciling conflicting needs and perspectives can be challenging, it often leads to better results. Looking back on my own career, I can find numerous illustrations of this. At one point, for example, my company was involved in a joint venture with a much larger company based in another country. Among my job responsibilities, I served as cochair of 12 task forces in management accounting and finance that were composed of members of both our organizations. It was no small feat to resolve many of the conflicts that arose because of our vastly different cultures and perspectives on how to do business. But resolve them we did, often through learning when to acquiesce, when to stand firm, and when to compromise. As a result, we ended up with better decisions and a united organization going forward.

And let's not forget that a diversity of ideas will help fuel innovation at IMA. As a member-driven organization, we're committed to

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creating and valuing diversity among our entire range of members as well as our leadership at both the Board and local levels. As part of that commitment, we're working on a formal initiative that will enable all members to submit their suggestions for ways to improve our organization. This initiative is being run through an Innovation Council at our Montvale, N.J., headquarters. The Council is now taking suggestions from IMA staff and is considering several proposals. Stay tuned for more information about this exciting new opportunity to reflect the wonderful diversity of our organization.

I invite you to share your thoughts with me on this or any other subject at jmacaulay@imanet.org. **SF**