

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



# Lessons Learned

This has been a fantastic year for me as IMA® Chair, and I have enjoyed it immensely. I will cherish the memories; the interactions with members, staff, and others; and the organization for years to come.

I've always believed in lifelong learning, and this past year as IMA Chair has certainly provided me with many valuable lessons. Some of them I expected to learn, but others took me quite by surprise. Since this is my final column, I've had a chance to reflect on this year and believe that reflection is critical to learning. Although I recognize that not all members will go on to take the volunteer helm of this amazing organization (we only appoint one Chair per year, and our membership now tops more than 67,000), I believe my experience as Chair applies to many types of volunteer and professional work.

What have I learned over the past year that could apply to you as well? First and most obvious, I acquired new leadership skills. It's been both a challenge and an honor to work with volunteers and IMA staff to help guide this organization and make decisions that will affect its future. In my role as Chair, I often had to speak out and build consensus for initia-

tives that I believed in, and that experience stretched me.

Similarly, this past year has given me the opportunity to hone my decision-making skills. There were times when I was the ultimate authority on some critical decisions regarding this large membership organization. Making decisions can sometimes involve conflict, and the challenge then becomes how to negotiate this conflict without damaging relationships. Learning how to listen to others' viewpoints and how to respect differences yet lead with a firm hand provided me with skills that I know I'll carry with me into the future.

I also learned many valuable, once-in-a-lifetime lessons by being exposed to different cultures during my travels as IMA's volunteer leader. I know I've written about this in previous columns, but I truly enjoyed the traveling I've done this year and the chance I've had to visit our members throughout the world. Even though I had traveled extensively before assuming this position, I greatly appreciated the privilege of meeting fellow professionals who introduced me to new ways of thinking and made me aware of just how connected our world

has become.

On a more practical level, my term as Chair also helped me improve my verbal and written communication skills. Before I became Chair, I hadn't had much experience speaking in front of very large public gatherings. But if there's one thing that the job of IMA Chair requires, it's speaking: to local chapters, to students and educators, and to fellow professionals at conferences and seminars. They say that public speaking is people's number-one fear (followed by, if you can believe it, death), so I'm pleased to report that I found the experience of public speaking to be not only challenging but invigorating.

I also got to practice and refine my writing skills, whether it was by composing remarks for a presentation or crafting this column. Writing is a skill that often isn't nurtured or cultivated very much by us "math" types, but, as the new emphasis on the CMA® exam attests, it's a valuable craft for leaders, who must be able to communicate clearly and persuasively. (I also want to acknowledge the excellent help that I had drafting this column each month. Lori Parks, a writer, and Kathy Williams, the

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## Perspectives

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editor, each contributed their unique, outstanding skills to develop the final products, and I so appreciated their assistance.)

I leave my term as Chair at a time when IMA can do some pretty impressive boasting: Our membership numbers are the highest in nine years; our student chapters now total more than 100, up from about half that two years ago; more than 40,000 professionals around the world have been awarded our CMA certification, which has earned the reputation as the most rigorous and relevant assessment for accountants and financial professionals in business. As a member of the first CMA class of 1972, I couldn't be more proud of how far we've come.

Looking over this past year, thanks are due to all of the IMA members, volunteers, Board members, and staff (especially Jeff Thomson and Pat Stefanczyk) who have helped me learn these lessons and reaffirm my commitment to this organization. I'd also like to extend my best wishes to Bill Knese, who will become IMA Chair, and Joe Vincent, who will become Chair Elect, as I move into the role of Chair-Emeritus in July. As past chairs of the ICMA<sup>®</sup> Board of Regents and long-time finance professionals, Bill and Joe will bring their own individual expertise and insight into guiding IMA into the future.

Please continue to share your thoughts with me on this or any other subject at [jmacaulay@imanet.org](mailto:jmacaulay@imanet.org). **SF**