

Musings About the Future
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October 2015

I've been wondering about the "parallel process" I've experienced in preparing for, organizing, and facilitating this meeting in North Charleston. I've been frustrated by your ambivalence in registration, overwhelmed by the details, demands and financial constraints of a system beyond my control (i.e., Embassy Suites), and the assurance that no matter what I did, we would be facing a deficit. So, I've wondered if my experience isn't much like your experience in the places where you are responsible. Is my perception of a "parallel process" close to accurate; or, am I projecting my own junk?

For many years now I have been aware of the fact that Region is entrusted with your "fees" so that the region can support "our work" (primarily of certification and accreditation, but also of other standing committees) at least twice a year in "regional meetings" and at other times in "consortiums." So far your "fees" have covered "our expenses," and we have enjoyed a positive "end of the year" balance for thirty-two consecutive years. Our "cash reserves" and our "endowment funds" have slowly, but steadily increased. We have been good "stewards" by keeping our expenses at a minimum. Thanks for your cooperation and collaboration in well-doing! The future doesn't look to be as healthy.

This year we will show a deficit in our annual budget, a reduction in our EOY checking account, and a diminishing of our cash reserves and endowment fund (some of which is due to the "market" slide rather than to our "misuse" of funds). In thirty-two years this is a new experience for me. So, I'm second guessing my leadership. Is the reality of region's fiscal status all that different from your "shop" and/or your personal portfolio? It isn't so far as the Keith family is concerned; but I wonder.....

Going forward, we have contracts for the next three years in venues similar to North Charleston for our fall meetings. We must raise the registration fee, and we must contain the cost of the continuing education event. We've offered the C.E. event, a banquet and a luncheon for \$150 for many years, but that fee has to be increased. My concern is: if we increase the registration fee (that once upon a time was paid by centers, but no longer is universally paid by centers), will that increased fee reduce the number of participants (especially those who are involved in the certification process)? It feels like a "catch 22!"

Across the decades this region has been more supportive financially and otherwise to the REM Invitational than has any other region. I am proud of that fact! All of our support has come from income from our Endowment Fund (much reduced by the present market). In recent and in years to come, the M & D has to make choices about how to distribute the income from Endowment (some \$15,000 annually). Never before have we had such a multi-cultural representation of SESs being supported by four consortiums in our region. Herein lies our future. Blessings and peace, Jap