

2009-2010 FEI CHAIRS

Jerry Urich and
Karyn Brooks
Exemplify the
Benefits of Active
Membership



How Can You Not be a Member? Asks FEI's U.S. Chair Jerry Urich

BY ELLEN M. HEFFES

Jerry Urich, FEI chairman of the board for 2009–10, is genuinely perplexed about why a financial executive who is eligible for membership in Financial Executives International would not join. Even if it means reaching into his or her own pocket to pay dues!

Further, he asks: “With all the benefits and services FEI offers, how could a financial executive in today’s world — CFOs, controllers, treasurers and many of their direct reports — not be a member of FEI? How can they not be concerned about what they are missing by not being a member? How can they not be concerned about missing information and ideas that would help them do their jobs more effectively and support their

companies’ best interests?”

Of course, Urich is thinking about his own experiences with FEI — and his experience gives credence to the adage: “You get what you put in.”

Urich got involved with FEI activities as soon as he joined, and he greatly values his membership. He believes he’s been fortunate to have had the opportunity to serve in a number of FEI leadership roles. As a result, he says, “I’ve had the chance to work with so many great people — fellow members — many of whom are now among my closest friends.”

Gerald R. Urich, CPA, known to all as “Jerry,” joined FEI in 1997, at the request of his boss, the main reason being to gain leadership development opportunities with the Central Pennsylvania Chapter. Since then, there has been no turning back.

Urich’s list of FEI leadership positions has grown exponentially: He was president of his chapter in 2001, and starting as area director in 2003, he began serving on the national board of directors in a variety of roles: area vice president, in 2004; treasurer, in 2005; secretary, in 2007; senior vice president at large, in 2008; and now he’s reached the pinnacle as chairman.

Urich has shown threads of consistency throughout his life. He’s worked at the same company since 1980 — practically since earning his MBA with a concentration in accounting in 1977 — and has been married to the same woman, Gail, for 34 years. They have two children: Greg, 26; and Andrea, 28.

At candy-maker Hershey, he’s worked his way up through several

jobs and divisions — Hershey Foods Corp., Hershey Chocolate U.S.A. — and with The Hershey Co., since 1988, he's been serving as director, External Reporting and Compliance, since 2006.

As chair this year, Ulrich says it's an exciting time to be an FEI leader and particularly to work with President and CEO Marie Hollein, adding, "she's the right leader [for FEI] at the right time."

Referring to Hollein's, statement in the March issue of *Financial Executive*: "It's FEI's time to shine," Ulrich says he concurs. He believes the organization is moving in the right direction and that "as we all work together as leaders, we will make FEI's light shine even brighter."

Indeed, taking the analogy a step further, he adds: "Maybe it will shine so brightly that those who are not members will begin to see the light!"

And, Ulrich is set to engage to help make that happen, acknowledging that we're in a "very challenging year." Yet, following a memorable business lesson — to begin with the end in mind — he's thinking ahead. In articulating his goals as chairman, several center on implementing the strategies and tactics that will be developed in FEI's strategic planning initiative, which is expected to be completed and operational during fiscal 2010.

Among these: Identify key member segments and develop strategies for increasing the value proposition for each; increase FEI's international presence; help make FEI a more inclusive, multi-cultural and diverse organization; and develop a strategy for attracting members who are young and upcoming financial executives to revitalize the membership base.

He says he's eagerly looking forward to working with the volunteer leadership and FEI staff in the coming year to begin implementing the plan.

Referring to the current "unprecedented economic times," and FEI's storied nearly 78-year history, Ulrich says FEI has been around for a long time, "supporting our members and their companies through periods of incredible change. FEI continues to be there, providing real-time information on the rapidly changing landscape for finan-

cial executives and their companies."

Recently, he adds, "FEI has been there — from an advocacy standpoint — working with the Obama transition team, making sure our voice was heard with regard to the stimulus package, the proposed budget, proposed changes to tax legislation, regulation reform and more."

In addition, he says, through its technical committees, "FEI is making sure our interests and those of our peers and

their companies are being represented with the standard setters, on key issues such as fair-value measurement, accounting for contingencies and preliminary views on financial statement presentation; and with the regulators, regarding the SEC's IFRS roadmap, XBR and the 3 percent withholding tax for government contractors, among others.

Separately, Ulrich has been chairing FEI's Diversity Committee, and
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Joining FEI Canada more than a decade ago was an easy decision for Karyn Brooks.

The FEI Canada chair's boss at the time was a very active member and believed it was important for financial executives to make the "connections" and gain the intelligence that FEI offers its members.

"I had supported him in his role as a member of the Committee on Corporate reporting (CCR) and had seen firsthand what FEI offered in terms of learning and just being able to pick up the phone and calling a peer to find out how their organization was dealing with a particular issue," Brooks recalls.

In the past dozen years, FEI Canada has given her a wealth of learning as well. Brooks, senior vice president and controller of BCE & Bell Canada — that nation's largest telecommunications company — has been a member of CCR since 1997, chairing it between 2002–05. She has also served on the board of directors since 2004 and has been vice-chair since June 2008.

Brooks says FEI has provided her with a "network of very capable, intelligent people that I can rely on for honest, thoughtful advice on business issues, many of whom I now count as friends. One of the biggest advantages is being in front of changes or issues, including



FEI Canada Chair Karyn Brooks Makes the Right 'Connections'

BY MARIAN RAAB

knowing what the challenges will be, so you can be proactive in your role, rather than reactive."

Currently a member the Quebec Chapter, Brooks started her tenure with FEI as a member of the Calgary Chapter in 1997. She is FEI Canada's representative on the International Financial Reporting Standards Advisory Committee of the Canadian Accounting Standards Board and its representative on the Standards Advisory Council of the International Accounting Standards Board.

Her goals for the next year are to ensure that FEI Canada comes
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says he's "proud of the progress we've made in implementing an increased focus on developing a more inclusive, multicultural and diverse organization across all of our FEI Chapters." More work needs to be done, of course, he comments, and "our continued focus is critical in helping to make FEI an association of choice for financial executives."

In light of the global financial crisis and high-profile accounting scandals of years past, Ulrich believes FEI has a key role to play. "Through the advocacy efforts of FEI's Washington, D.C., staff, many members and the great work of the technical committees, FEI has become a trusted adviser to legislators, standard setters and regulators," says Ulrich.

"FEI's role must continue to be providing comprehensive thought leadership and advice on the many legislative initiatives, on changes to standards for accounting and financial reporting — particularly International Financial Reporting Standards — and on changes in the regulatory environment in response to the credit crisis and difficult economic conditions."

Further, Ulrich believes FEI must continue to "increase awareness and emphasize our position as a trusted adviser." This role, he says, is "imperative, considering the significant changes that are imminent in legislation and regulation proposed by the new Congress and the Obama administration, as well as in accounting and financial reporting standards — and particularly IFRS."

Maybe working at Hershey for so long has given Ulrich a perpetual "chocolate high" — but it's more likely doing exactly what he wants to be doing is the reason for his seemingly ever-present smile. Hopefully, he'll get to accomplish the thing most important to him this year: To increase the value for members, which, in turn, will result in an overall membership increase for FEI for 2009–10. And, with that accomplishment, then we'll all be smiling! 🌀

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through these recessionary economic times with a membership that is "active and engaged." She also wants to help FEI Canada Chief Executive and National President Michael Conway in developing strategy, retaining members and ensuring that the organization maintains its healthy financial position.

Referring to the global financial credit crisis and other high-profile accounting scandals, Brooks says FEI must continue its advocacy role on all fronts, representing the views of financial executives.

"The number of scandals is small relative to the total population and we must ensure that over-regulation to prevent the behavior of a few 'bad apples' does not bury organizations in cost. FEI is a well-respected organization in Canada by both standard setters, government and regulators alike, and it is very important that we continue to influence policy."

If she could accomplish just one thing in her upcoming year as chair, Brooks says it would be to "get more of the membership involved in our activities, particularly the advocacy work. There is much to be gained from being an active member."

Indeed, Brooks is active, especially on the International Financial Reporting Standards front, where she is glad FEI is playing a significant role.

"I also am glad to see some interaction between FEI U.S., FEI Canada and FEI Mexico — everything we do together gives us a 'bigger' voice in accounting standard setting and governance matters. Many of our other activities (tax matters, pension funding issues, government policy) will remain local issues that are best dealt with by the national FEI organizations."

Brook's 30-plus year career has spanned a variety of organizations ranging from KPMG (she left the global accounting firm in 1982); to TransCanada PipeLines (where she worked from 1987–2000, holding various positions including vice-president and controller); to Enbridge Inc., an energy transporta-

tion, distribution and services firm, where she was vice-president and controller between 2000–03, before joining BCE & Bell in July 2003.

A 1976 graduate of Queen's University, Brooks' received her Chartered Accountant designation in 1978. Referring to designations like CA and Chartered Financial Analyst, she advises recent college graduates pursuing a Finance career to get some "letters" early, because such qualifications "can't be taken away from you and they open many, many doors."

In addition: "Work hard and be committed, which doesn't necessarily mean lots of hours; just show some passion for what you do and care about quality output. And have fun doing your job. If you're not, try something else. If you can't have fun at work, it will be a drag on everything else you do."

Besides giving advice, Brooks can take it. The same boss who encouraged her to join FEI all those years ago also taught her that any manager is only as good as the people who work with and for them.

"If you nurture, coach and mentor your staff; support them with conviction; and respect them as human beings, you will be successful, because they will make you so," she notes. "They will never want you to fail. And then they too will be successful."

Brooks has been married for 29 years to Bob Gillies, who is also a CA. They have two children: Ian, 26, who is working as an associate to an equity research analyst and about to write his CFA level 3 exams; and Cameron, 23, who is still figuring out his path in life. "He just knows he doesn't want a job like his mom's!" Brooks quips.

In her spare time, she enjoys playing golf, traveling and reading.

"I enjoy what I do," says Brooks. "I have lots of challenge in my role, and my experience has been that the goals usually present themselves to me rather than me having to go look for them. I will wait — I know they are out there!" 🌀