INFORMS Regional Chapter Best Practices

General Suggestions
• Support inter-disciplinary interaction among different industries
• Include retired and student members as well as regular members
• Adapt the amount of your activities to the size of your chapter

Organizing and Networking
• Building a team of volunteers
• Strive for continuity of leadership from one year to the next
• Encouraging Diversity among Chapter Officers
• Recognizing Good Efforts
• Maintaining a Calendar of Tasks
• Plan Events such as Coffee Hour, Quarterly Socials, Potluck Party, Bowling, Hiking, Ski Trip, Movie Night
• Generating funds for chapter activities
• Maintaining a Webpage
• Interacting with officers of other chapters through web-blogs etc

Providing INFORMS Professional Skills Training, Education
• Tutorials on Using INFORMS technologies
• Organizing Regional Conferences

Promoting Research and Practice
• Organizing Research Presentations
• Organizing Speaker Seminar Series
• Organizing Field Trips
• Inviting Alumni to Speak

Promoting Participation and Interaction with INFORMS Communities
• Membership of INFORMS Sections and Societies
• Participation in Fora and Special Interest Groups
• Taking leadership roles within INFORMS
• INFORMS Speaker Program

Promotion and Nomination for Various INFORMS Awards
• Familiarize Chapter Members with INFORMS Awards

Social Service
• Fundraising Events
• Introduction of OR/MS in Local Schools
**General Suggestions**
Strive for a wider audience by supporting inter-disciplinary participation and including academic members as well as practitioners. Invite participants from local universities and organizations to your activities. To involve them, encourage members from a variety of organizations to become officers. In addition, promote INFORMS meetings with the help of sister society chapters and subdivisions. Try to offer activities that will benefit and are of interest to both academic members and practitioners.

We all have a busy schedule so adapt the amount and type of your activities to your chapter.

**Organizing and Networking**
Work with a team of volunteers on various issues related to maintaining a chapter such as membership (recruit and retain) and program ideas. Make different teams to work on different activities and clearly specify their responsibilities.

Continuity of leadership from one year to the next will help strengthen your chapter. One way to ensure this is in properly setting up your officer positions and/or election terms. Ideally, you will always have some overlap of officers from one year to the next, so that a certain level of experience and awareness of the chapter’s history is carried with it. Be sure to check your chapter bylaws to see what the current set-up is, and modify the bylaws if necessary to promote chapter continuity. Once you have done this important step, you might want to consider whether your chapter would benefit from implementing of the following recommendations to encourage continuity of leadership:

1. The vice president position could also be "president-elect" so that the same person serves for two years (1st year as vice president and 2nd year as president)
2. Every board of officers could include the position of "past president" so that the same person serves for two years (1st year as president and 2nd year as past-president)
3. President and vice president could both be two year terms, with alternating election years

Encourage diversity among chapter officers. Diversified groups bring a variety of ideas to the table. Maintain a list of members to facilitate timely communication among your members about your events and ideas. INFORMS can provide a chapter listserv, or you can use Google or Yahoo groups. Recognize volunteers, staff and faculty for their good efforts. It does not have to be a monetary award, often just a certificate works.

Make a plan of activities that you want to have in a year. Further break the plan into quarters and months. Do not forget to pass the sign up sheet during these events to get a few more members for your chapter. Some of the activities that you might plan are industry seminars, technical workshops, semester newsletter, mini-colloquium, social events, farewell banquets, and welcome parties.

- A welcome and orientation party at the beginning of the year for new members is a good idea. Invite all members, new or old. Old members are the ones who welcome and help new members. Identify key areas where new members would need help, give them an orientation about the INFORMS chapter and invite them to join as participants or as officers.
- Field trips provide learning/fun/socializing value. They also provide an opportunity for the chapter to network with local organizations. Field trips generally tend to take anywhere from 2 months to 6 months from initial idea to actual realization, so keep trying but never get disappointed if it does not work sooner. Seek help from chapter members also in deciding a suitable place.
• Ending the year with a farewell party provides an opportunity to give officer awards, take photo of the chapter and enjoy a food banquet. It also helps the new members to learn about the various work the other members are doing.

• Activities such as coffee hour, potluck party, sports tournaments, hiking, golfing etc are also great socializing events.

• Invite graduate students to present their work to their peers and other chapter members. These seminars provide a good platform for graduate student to hone their presentation skills and boost their confidence for upcoming national conferences. It is helpful to invite local undergraduates who can also benefit from it by learning about the various exciting research areas in the field.

• Invite representatives of local universities to present their graduate programs.

Money is very important for any chapter, and there are many ways to generate funds. The list given below provides some of these:

• Approach members to provide free meeting space from their organization.

• Contact area INFORMS members who may yet be chapter members. Perhaps they will join the chapter when invited to attend a meeting. The INFORMS headquarters can help you contact names and email addresses.

• Sometimes, a university may provide funding or space for specific events. Contact department of student activities etc.

• Apply to INFORMS for event specific funding such as through the speaker's program.

• When you invite a company for a seminar, you may ask if they would like to provide some food in their seminar. This generally works well, because companies do not mind small expenses.

• Maintain a webpage for your chapter to provide visibility. This will also help to attract participation from nearby towns that do not have an official chapter and are interested in similar activities. Visiting other chapters’ website may give you more ideas about what to put on your website.

Publish regular newsletters to let others know about your activities. Highlighting the activities of your chapter as a Spotlight Chapter in OR/MS Today is a good way to increase visibility of the activities in your chapter. The newsletter may also include announcements of job opportunities, or articles on local educational programs.

The INFORMS website (http://www.informs.org/) provides information about various chapters and their contact email and phone numbers. On the INFORMS website (http://www.informs.org/) follow the communities link and then the chapters link. The INFORMS website also provides information on how to maintain your chapter in the “Chapter Officers Handbook”. Participate in discussion type web blogs (for example, http://beinformeded.blogspot.com/) or start a new blog for initiating discussion among officers of various chapters to share experiences, ideas of fund-raising, documents etc.

Providing INFORMS Professional Skills Training, Education
Conduct workshops to help the chapter members familiarize with different software, and possibly with the help of software vendors. Consider organizing regional conferences with continuing education component, and provide knowledge dissemination through the INFORMS speakers program.

Promoting Research and Practice
A speaker series is a great opportunity for you to learn how to organize a professional event. The speaker series can also help you to get to know members with similar interests. Furthermore, a good speaker series will make your chapter well known.

• Start small by inviting faculty from a local school. It is also a good possibility to start interdisciplinary interaction
• Expand the scope of your invitations as your experience grows
• Don’t hesitate to invite experts. They are generally very happy to speak for a chapter
• Invite speakers from various industries in your area. Industry seminars are always very attractive for members because (1) Many industries also collect resume for internship and co-ops (2) They often provide free food and small gifts. Industry seminars also help faculty members to make new contacts.
• Explore ways to fund your speaker program through a university sponsorship, company sponsorship, INFORMS speaker program etc.
• Before the speaker series starts, be well prepared in understanding all processes involved in inviting and reimbursing speakers (directions, parking tickets, tax forms).
• Think about a small gift for the speaker.
• Create a personal relationship with the administrators involved – you will communicate with them a lot in the months to come
• Facilitate interaction of members with the speaker before or after the talk, for example, by providing a refreshment/networking time period.
• Send invitations to area INFORMS members, faculty, students, and local newspapers
• Make sure your speaker series is announced on the chapter webpage

Taking Leadership Roles within INFORMS
INFORMS has many societies such as the decision science society, optimization society, simulation society etc. Motivate members to join these societies depending on their research interests. Take leadership role within INFORMS by participating in various subdivisions and societies. For example a member can join the INFORMS Chapter/Fora committee as a representative.

Promotion and Nomination for Various INFORMS Awards
There are many different awards available each and every year. Visit the awards page on the INFORMS website for rules and eligibility: www.informs.org/index.php?c=13&kat=AWARDS

Social Service
Social service is a great opportunity to help others in need as well as to increase the visibility of OR/MS in your community. You are not only helping the communities around you but also instilling a sense of cooperation and collaboration among the volunteers. You could start your own fundraising activities or join efforts with other INFORMS communities. Examples of possible activities are:
• Promote mathematics and OR/MS education at local middle and high schools
• Collect food and clothes for activities, such as the Katrina relief effort
• Work with organization such as Habitat for Humanity.
• Make an INFORMS lottery or quiz, where the proceeds go to charity

Promoting OR/MS in local schools will stimulate interest in OR/MS. Children can learn how stimulating and useful math can be. You will also learn how to present your profession in an exciting way.