

## Consolidation of Regional Bylaws

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The SGIM regional organizations are an integral part of the core benefits of SGIM membership. Regional activities have brought added value to SGIM members and have helped expand the mission of SGIM. Today there are seven regions—CA/HI, Mid-Atlantic, Midwest, Mountain West, New England, Northwest, and Southern. These regional organizations grew out of grassroots efforts from members interested in local networking, mentorship, and presenting work beyond the national annual meeting. Although the organic development of the regional organizations flourished without initial coordination from the national organization, it also led to regional organizations that differed widely in both geographic size and membership density. Due to the uncoordinated growth, each region designed its own set of bylaws, leadership infrastructure, and governance practices. As the regional organizations have grown they have required increasing support and resources from the national SGIM staff.

In 2014, under the direction of SGIM President William Moran and SGIM Council, the workgroup on regional development was formed. The purpose of this workgroup was to review the organization and structure of the SGIM regions to determine whether the current structure was meeting the needs of the members and aligning the goals of the national and regional organizations. The workgroup was chaired by Council member Dr. Marilyn Schapira and co-chaired by Board of Regional Leaders (BRL) Chair Dr. Dan Tobin. The workgroup members represented a range of differing career stages, regional affiliations, and academic roles. The members included Drs. Jean Kutner, Bruce Landon, Michael Steinman, Margaret Lo, and William Moran;

SGIM Executive Director David Carlson; SGIM Chief Operating Officer Kay Ovington; and Regional Meeting Director Tracey Pierce. In June 2015, the regional workgroup presented its findings to SGIM Council.

The workgroup identified variation in region-to-region member experience likely due to the regional differences in structure and organization that had evolved over the years. The workgroup also noted that the diversity in structure and regional bylaws created a logistical challenge for SGIM staff who support all seven regions in their efforts to plan meetings, hold elections, and comply with regional bylaws from year to year.

In order to help improve the ability of the national SGIM organization to coordinate and support the seven regions and to standardize member experiences and governance practices, Drs. Marilyn Schapira and Dan Tobin along with the current BRL Chair Dr. Bennett Lee and Council Member/Mid-Atlantic Region President Dr. April Fitzgerald worked on a unified version of the regional bylaws. Input and approval of the members of the BRL, which includes the presidents of all SGIM regions, helped inform and shape the unified bylaws into a cohesive document. Over the next year, each region will ask its members to review the unified bylaws and to vote for or against adoption at the regional level. Since each region is currently operating under its own specific bylaws with differing processes for approval of bylaw amendments, each regional leadership council will adhere to its current regional bylaws' approval process when asking members to review and vote on the proposed changes.

The new regional bylaws will address several issues. Highlights include:

1. *Membership.* International members will be able to join the region that is most geographically accessible to them in order to participate in regional activities. Regional elected membership chairs will be invited to participate on the National Membership Committee.
2. *Elections.* Standardization of the regional leadership election process and length of elected terms will be planned.
3. *Finance.* Improved definition of regional financial plans will be coordinated with the National Finance Committee.
4. *Bylaw Amendment Process.* Amendments to the bylaws will first be submitted to the BRL leadership for review; recommendations will then be submitted to SGIM Council for approval.

The hope is that the new set of common regional bylaws will simplify and improve the national support of the regions and allow for a standardized practice that will bring consistency to election and governance procedures across the membership. At the same time as they bring standardization, these new bylaws will allow for regional variation and flexibility in order to continue to promote innovative practice at the regional level. The process of preparing a unified regional bylaw amendment was truly the work of many—more than can be named in this article. To the members and staff at all levels who were involved in this important endeavor, a heartfelt thank you!

For more information, please visit: <http://tinyurl.com/SGIMRegionalBylaws>.