

## PRESIDENT'S COLUMN

# BUILDING A STRONG PARTNERSHIP

Giselle Corbie-Smith, MD, MSC, President, SGIM, and Kay Ovington, Deputy Chief Executive Officer, SGIM

*I am using this column to keep members updated on how Council is responding to the audit by Pyramid Communications. I want to share with you now the work we're doing to enhance staff and leadership engagement.*



As promised, I am using this column to keep SGIM members updated on how Council is responding to the audit conducted by Pyramid Communications. As you may remember, SGIM Council engaged Pyramid Communications to audit not only our current brand, message, and communications but also our structure, processes, and staff capacity in order to provide strategic recommendations for improving our organization. Pyramid staff interviewed SGIM members, conducted ongoing conversations with staff and Council members, and reviewed results of a member survey on communications. Over the last several months, we have been responding to their very comprehensive and thoughtful audit and recommendations. The audit highlighted several positives of our organization as well as opportunities for growth. I want to share with you now the work we're doing to enhance staff and leadership engagement.

The Pyramid audit identified the following opportunities for improvement:

- ***SGIM has dedicated staff who are eager to do their best work.*** We have an incredibly talented group of staff members who serve as liaisons to our committees and regions, and do an outstanding job organizing our communications and regional and annual meetings. Staff members' professional development should be very important to us, and we need to do more to support our staff in their professional growth.
- ***SGIM's current strategic priorities are not effectively providing direction, structure, and focus for the organization and its staff.*** The absence of an effective strategic plan causes our staff to work overtime to maintain the status quo rather than working

toward clear and measurable strategic goals and objectives that advance SGIM's interests.

The Pyramid group offered several specific recommendations, among them:

- Develop a strategic plan with clear business and programmatic goals and measurable objectives to drive organizational activities;
- Shift the organizational structure so staff are working at the top of their scope to increase collaboration, effectiveness, and impact.

During the Council retreat in June, we set aside time to discuss these issues and recommendations. SGIM staff and Council had two discussions. The first involved separate break-out sessions in which each individual recorded his/her answers to specific questions on a flip chart. The staff session was held the week before the retreat and Council's session was held on Sunday night. Individuals in each group responded to the following questions/statements:

- Describe the relationship between Council and Staff.
- How can Council and Staff work more effectively together in the strategic planning process, considering both Council Member and Council Liaison roles?

In our second discussion, we jointly reviewed all responses. Together, staff members and Council prioritized a draft set of commitments for our joint work and decided these guidelines should be used across the organization to bolster the shared understanding of the importance of our partnership. A smaller work group—Kay Ovington, Shelly-Ann Fluker, Luci Leykum, Erika Baker,

*continued on page 2*



**PRESIDENT’S COLUMN** *(continued from page 1)*

and me—refined the prioritized items into a draft set of specific actions in four areas to improve the effectiveness of our collaborative work.

**Draft Staff and Leadership Engagement Commitments:**

1. *How We Work Together as a Team*

- Staff members and Council Liaisons partner and collaborate in all discussions related to the groups or activities on which they work across the lifespan of their activities.
- Staff members and Council Liaisons regularly check in before committee meetings to assure a coordinated message and united approach to any known issues or obstacles.
- Staff members are involved from the beginning, at Council and committee levels, in the planning, discussion, and decision-making regarding operationalizing the work of the organization.

2. *How We Run Effective Meetings*

- We collaboratively set goals that are Specific, Measurable, Attainable,

Relevant, and Timely (SMART).

- We use effective facilitation skills to ensure our meetings are productive and engaging.
- We create action items, assign accountability, and communicate assignments following meetings in accordance with staff, council, and member roles and responsibilities.
  - a. We proactively plan for and execute regular communication and information exchange throughout the year.

3. *How I Do My Job Most Effectively*

- We participate in the development and revision of guidelines for engagement among SGIM staff members, Council, and committee/group leaders.
- We participate in orientation activities and/or review orientation materials to ensure we understand our roles, responsibilities, and protocols for our position(s).

4. *How We Get Better at What We Do*

- We regularly seek feedback from each other on our roles and on the processes and

systems that support our work.

- We are open to and readily identify and adopt more efficient ways of doing business.

These are still in draft form. We recognize more work and supporting documentation needs to be added to ensure the ideals noted here can be realized to support an authentic, collaborative, and productive working relationship. I wanted to share this draft document to inform how you, as SGIM members and leaders, work with our SGIM staff. In SGIM, we are lucky to have an incredibly talented staff and dedicated passionate members who are excited and committed to the work we do as an organization. We offer these commitments as a supporting structure for our work together.

We hope you will reach out to Kay Ovington or me to provide feedback on how we can improve or add to these commitments to move us forward and strengthen our collaborative working relationship.

**SGIM**