

The Intriguing Insurance Industry — A Student's-Eye View

by Stacey Hinterlong

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Stacey Hinterlong is a senior at Illinois State University (ISU), where she is double majoring in insurance and finance. She anticipates graduation in December 2009. At ISU, Hinterlong is an executive officer of the Alpha Kappa Chapter of Gamma Iota Sigma, an international insurance fraternity. She also is president of ISU's Toastmasters Club, an organization to strengthen communication and leadership skills, and president of ISU's Rho Lambda, the National Sorority Leadership Recognition Society.

Editor's note: On scholarships offered by the CPCU Society's Central Illinois Chapter, Illinois State University students Stacey Hinterlong and Susan Lipps attended the CPCU Society's Annual Meeting and Seminars in Denver, Colo. Hinterlong is currently in the process of taking her CPCU exams and hopes to become a CPCU Society member soon. She eagerly awaits active involvement at the local chapter and Society levels.

I had the wonderful opportunity to be one of the first two students majoring in insurance at Illinois State University to attend the CPCU Society's Annual Meeting and Seminars on a scholarship sponsored by the Central Illinois Chapter. I went through an application process and was honored to hear that I was chosen. This was only the beginning of the excitement to come.

I often hear things like, "You're majoring in insurance? Do you realize how boring that is?" This is far from the truth; however, this impression is an unfortunate hurdle that must be overcome to get younger talent interested in the industry. The CPCU Society's Annual Meeting and Seminars is a wonderful starting point. My eyes were opened to an industry full of meaningful educational events, valuable networking and great fun.

My adventures began in Denver by attending the Personal Lines Interest Group Committee meeting with one of my Central Illinois Chapter mentors, **Daniel L. Blodgett, CPCU, AIM, AIS, PMP**. The committee members were innovative and encouraging, and they asked for — and valued — my opinions. They were excited to get a "different generation's point of view."

The value I received out of this meeting is indescribable. I was able to hear the

differing perspectives of educators, underwriters, agents and project managers — and that is to just name a few. The Personal Lines Interest Group is filled with a variety of industry members, and to listen to them interacting together is an education that can be found nowhere else.

My adventures then took me to the Opening General Session and the AICPCU Conferment Ceremony. To see and hear from the newest CPCU Society members encouraged me to obtain my CPCU designation as early as possible. This was followed by the Congratulatory Reception, which was my opportunity to network. There is no better way to figure out which side and what area of the industry I might like to be on than by talking to those with experience.

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I attended Sunday's General Session, where the keynote speaker, General Honoré, put me on the spot (and on camera for the audience) with a question. This session was great in that it really made me think. And it also highlighted some possibilities that I have for my future that I didn't even know existed.

I also was able to attend educational seminars, the meat and potatoes of the Annual Meeting. They gave me an education that a professor couldn't teach me in a classroom. I was able to choose a variety of topics that interested me, such as the Mock Trial, the Women's Forum, sustainability and international insurance. I was able to make valuable connections with industry members that were truly interested in the advancement of my future. And I was encouraged to earn my CPCU designation, become involved in the CPCU Society, take



Illinois State University students Stacey Hinterlong (pictured on left) and Susan Lipps respond to a question posed at Sunday's Annual Meeting General Session in Denver by keynote Lt. General Russel L. Honoré, U.S. Army (Ret.).

committee leadership positions and strive for my newest goal — becoming a CPCU Society president and chairwoman.

The most important takeaway from the CPCU Society's Annual Meeting and Seminars is the mentoring I received. In addition to Dan Blodgett, I had two other mentors assigned to me from the Central Illinois Chapter — **James R. Jones, CPCU, ARM, AIC,** and **Angela M. Blair, CPCU, CLU, ChFC.** All three did a great job of introducing me to important contacts to advance my career. While in Denver, I also obtained a few more mentors, who offered valuable advice and encouraged me to use them as future contacts.

I could speak of my experience for days, but, overall, the value that I obtained in Denver is unique and irreplaceable. I wish every insurance student could have the opportunity to attend a CPCU Society Annual Meeting and Seminars as valuable as the one in Denver. I hope that by reading this, you encourage your chapter to sponsor students to attend a future meeting.

Be sure to become a mentor and encourage interest in this wonderful industry. I look forward to graduation and becoming a member of such a strong and prestigious society. I would like to end by taking one last opportunity to thank the CPCU Society's Central Illinois Chapter for sponsoring the scholarship and for allowing me to have this once-in-a-lifetime experience. ■

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