



# Field Notes

## From the Chair—Edward Garrigan, PLS

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*Where do we go from here?* Most of us have never experienced an economic downturn of the magnitude now faced by our country. Many know someone, (including ourselves) who has been dramatically affected. What's next? How we handle the situation will have a major impact on the survival of our businesses and our profession, now and in the future when the business climate improves. Business management practices are more critical now than ever before. We can't afford to throw good money after bad.

Much like a gambler in Vegas we have to weigh the options, assess the risks and determine if we should place that bet or walk away until the odds appear more favorable. Managing our businesses has similarities to that gambler. How good is that business opportunity you're considering? Is that potential client all he or she says they are? Will that strategic hire really bring your firm more revenue? Should I invest in new technology or equipment or should I stand pat and try to ride it out with what I have until a "Better" time?

Hard choices that cause lots of sleepless nights. Having a plan can help in making those calculated decisions. COPS is here to help. At the Business Practices Committee meeting in Denver in July we outlined a new initiative entitled the "The Seven Baselines of Business Practices". In the coming months the Committee will work towards developing this program to provide our members with the management tools to help us all determine, "Where we go from here."

The COPS Steering Committee welcomes your feedback and participation. Please contact Heather Talbert at [htalbert@acec.org](mailto:htalbert@acec.org) with your comments and/or suggestions.

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## Dues Invoices Now Payable

Dues invoices are now due. We are very optimistic about what COPS can do for its members and we hope you feel the same way and choose to continue your membership.

If you need another copy of your invoice, please contact COPS Executive Director Heather Talbert at [htalbert@acec.org](mailto:htalbert@acec.org) or 202-682-4377.



## ACEC Fall Conference— Engineering America’s Recovery

During the recent ACEC Fall Conference, COPS sponsored a session titled, “Should I Really Sign That Form?” presented by Brian Stewart of Collins, Collins, Muir + Stewart. Some items discussed in the session included:

- The overall purpose to have a contract is to define the scope, establish & clarify relationships and allocate risk/responsibility while confirming mutual understanding;
- Economic conditions impact behaviors; less funds available, decreased demands for projects/services;
- 82% of design professionals are accepting more risk; going into regions and services outside their norm;
- Pressure to sign owner-drafted contracts; keep good risk management practices in place and resist temptation to compromise.



Because of the excellent feedback and popularity of this session at the ACEC Fall Conference, this session has also been submitted for consideration at the upcoming American Congress on Surveying & Mapping conference in April, 2010.

A roundtable session was co-sponsored by both COPS and Land Development Coalition on common issues facing both developers and surveyors. Some topics discussed included the following:

- |                                      |                                  |
|--------------------------------------|----------------------------------|
| Machine Controlled Construction      | FEMA Mapping Modifications       |
| Managing Scope                       | Contract Risk in Different Times |
| Future of Land Development Financing | Affluent Limitations (MS4)       |
| HUD/DOT/EPA Partnership              | Fee Types/Contract Services      |
| Electronic Delivery                  | Wetlands                         |



**“82% of design professionals are accepting more risk.”**

## Seven Baselines of Business Practices

The Seven Baselines of Business Practice will be the basis for future products provided by COPS to assist member firms by providing useful, practical, practice-tested products tailored to the needs of survey professionals. We seek to share what has worked in our practices in a “mentoring” relationship by providing information to surveying firms in the following seven areas of practice:

- |                  |  |
|------------------|--|
| <b>Culture</b>   | <b>Policy &amp; Procedures</b>             |
| <b>Planning</b>  | <b>Communications &amp; Correspondence</b> |
| <b>Education</b> | <b>Technical Tools &amp; Documents</b>     |
| <b>Contracts</b> |  |



## COPS and Small Firm Council Share Winter Meeting Event

Once again, a combined COPS/ACEC Small Firm Council Winter Meeting will take place in New Orleans, LA at the Royal Sonesta Hotel located on Bourbon Street. Mark your calendar for February 19-20, 2010 as the seminar will again feature *David Burstein of PSMJ Resources* for a more in-depth look at issues such as Ownership Transition and Human Resources activities in a small firm. For those of you who didn't attend last year's Bootcamp program, a refresher on key issues like project management and financial management will also be given.

New this year will be a networking dinner taking place immediately following the seminar on Friday night.

Preceding this meeting, the COPS Business Practices Committee and Steering Committee will meet on Thursday Feb. 18th.

Registration is now [available](#) so please mark your calendar for this important seminar and meeting taking place in the Big Easy!



## Steering Committee Update

Highlights of the recent COPS Steering Committee, held during the ACEC Fall Conference, included:

- Report on the financial status of the coalition as well as current membership to date.
- Held strategic discussion on direction coalition should be headed, including how to increase membership and add value to COPS.
- Discussion on potential new products, including more work being done on the "Seven Baselines of Business Practices," possible new "app" for Blackberry users as well as how to enter time, while in the field, right into net books.
- At the ACEC Annual Convention, hold a COPS member meeting instead of Steering Committee meeting; will not do a session. Submitted a session for the ACSM meeting in April. Will explore possibility of co-sponsoring a session with Land Development Coalition at the Annual Convention instead of doing a stand-alone.



Next Steering Committee will take place, Feb. 18th in New Orleans, LA.

## Government Affairs Update

### Student Loan Forgiveness Program for Engineers:

In a recent notice, the Department of Education (DOE) relayed it would not negotiate any student loan issues in the **Higher Education Opportunity Act of 2008 (HEOA)** at this time because Congress is working on unrelated student loan legislation. H.R. 3221, the **Student Aid and Fiscal Responsibility Act of 2009**, was approved by the House of Representatives on September 17<sup>th</sup>. The Senate has not yet acted on this legislation. H.R. 3221 does not change the student loan forgiveness program for engineers, but DOE wants to deal with all student loan issues at the same time. Until Congress has completed its work on H.R. 3221, DOE will not work on the regulations for the student loan forgiveness program.



## Portal for Education & Career Recordkeeping

Gone are the days when professionals kept paper files. With RCEP, everything needed to find courses from quality providers and maintain PDH history is available online at [www.rcep.net](http://www.rcep.net). The Registered Continuing Education Program (RCEP) is a nationwide portal for education and career recordkeeping. It is a merger of quality education providers and engineers, surveyors, and related Architecture/Engineering/Construction industry professionals into one comprehensive education management system. The first of its kind in the industry, RCEP is a one-stop solution for keeping up-to-date with continuing education requirements, finding courses from quality providers, and maintaining a complete education record that simplifies the licensure renewal process.

With RCEP, it's now possible to obtain and track all of your Professional Development Hours (PDHs) and licensing requirements in one, comprehensive, online system. Log into [www.rcep.net](http://www.rcep.net) to get started. Search the Master Calendar of educational courses offered by NCEES-approved Education Providers. Find state licensing and continuing education requirements or be ready in the event you're audited with RCEP's uniformly formatted, state-board-accepted transcripts. Let Registered Education Providers report your PDHs for you or simply self-report PDHs you've earned through other education providers to maintain a complete post-licensure record.

Professionals can register for a free, basic subscription at [www.rcep.net](http://www.rcep.net), and start managing their continuing education activities right away.

For more information, contact Maria Buscemi at 202-682-4323 or [mbuscemi@acec.org](mailto:mbuscemi@acec.org).

**RCEP** is a one-stop solution for keeping up-to-date with continuing education requirements, finding courses from quality providers, and maintaining a complete education record that simplifies the licensure renewal process."



## COUNCIL OF PROFESSIONAL SURVEYORS (COPS)



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Surveying departments or firms comprise over *thirty percent* of the membership of the American Council of Engineering Companies. ACEC's advocacy and information programs address the unique business needs of surveyors, helping firms succeed today and into the future.

COPS, the Council of Professional Surveyors, strengthen the business environment and image of member firms, focusing on quality professional surveying services in a competitive global marketplace.

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### Calendar of Events

**Feb. 18:** COPS Business Practices Committee Meeting &  
COPS Steering Committee Meeting  
New Orleans, LA

**April 25-28:** ACEC Annual Convention  
Washington, DC

**April 24-28:** ACSM Annual Meeting  
Phoenix, AZ



## COPS Steering Committee

The following COPS Steering Committee members are here to serve your needs. Please feel free to contact any of the members at their email addresses shown below.

**Chairman:** Edward F. Garrigan, C.T. Male Associates, P.C. [e.garrigan@ctmale.com](mailto:e.garrigan@ctmale.com)

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