

# **SOMP 2009 – Summary of the 2009 meeting and outcomes**

## **– Providing a “Roadmap” for the Future of our Society**

### **A Preface to the Document**

The Sydney 2009 Annual Meeting utilized a number of break-out sessions and devoted one and a half full days into charting a future Roadmap for the Society. It was enthusiastically re-emphasized by the participants the need for the SOMP to be a vibrant global Society, representing the majority of minerals academics. The main focus in the next few years should be in promoting Mining Engineering as an engineering discipline and facilitating information exchange, research and teaching collaboration and joint action among members.

In order to achieve our mission and objectives, the roadmap stresses that SOMP needs to be more than an informal network that meets once per year, and that we should develop goals and action items that can be pursued by the membership via our Council and Committee structure.

It is with great pleasure that I forward the following summary of the Sydney Roadmap process. Please read carefully and provide me with any comments or suggestions. Many thanks to our Sydney President, Prof. Bruce Hebblewhite and the many colleagues who co-chaired the breakout session (see also the Sydney technical program for details) for compiling the document.

Sincerely,

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# SOMP 2009 – Summary of the 2009 meeting and outcomes

## – Providing a “Roadmap” for the Future of our Society.

### 1. Background

The constitution of the Society defines our objectives as follows:

*The Society of Mining Professors/Societät der Bergbaukunde is designed to be a vibrant global Society, representing the majority of minerals academics. The purpose of the Society is to:*

- *promote Mining Engineering as an engineering discipline,*
- *facilitate information exchange, research and teaching collaboration and joint action among its members.*

More specific functions and objectives are listed as:

- *Ensuring that university based education continues to be available at the highest level in those disciplines concerned with the provision of mineral products from the crust of the earth to those who wish to avail themselves of it.*
- *Ensuring that advancement, through research, of the scientific and engineering knowledge and processes in the areas of relevance to the provision of mineral products continues.*
- *Establishing a network of academics involved in achieving the above goals.*
- *Enhancing the image of the minerals-producing industries, promoting development of educational courses within these disciplines and fostering pride in the disciplines.*
- *Establishing and maintaining ongoing contacts with the global mineral industry players.*
- *Promoting co-operation in educational and research programmes and identifying co-operative research opportunities.*

### 2. The Future

In order for the Society to maintain and expand its relevance and purpose, the 2009 meeting agreed that:

- We need to become an active, and truly international network of mining academics

- Just as the minerals industry is made up of global companies and partnerships; so too, the education sector must go global, and SOMP is the ideal vehicle to achieve this, by
  - Being more than just an informal network that meets once/year
  - Making strategic, global initiatives in our education sector.

### **3. Sydney Roadmap**

#### **– a summary of conclusions and actions arising from SOMP 2009 in Sydney.**

##### 3.1 Introduction Session

It was decided that:

- a) Annual statistics on international mining engineering intake and graduate numbers should continue to be collected (*Action: Education Committee*).
- b) It is desirable to supplement above statistics with a review of “graduate attributes” from different institutions – what do our graduates look like, and how do they differ, across the world? (*Action: Education Committee*).
- c) Mapping of our SOMP graduates would be a useful exercise, though extremely difficult to do on a broad scale (where they work, what type of roles are they in after x years from graduation, etc). (*Action: SOMP Council*).
- d) The above background objectives should be endorsed by SOMP in the future (see section 2)

##### 3.2 Staff Development – attracting and retaining new/young academics

*(Actions: Membership Development Committee)*

It was decided that:

- a) A network of young/new academics should be established within the SOMP framework – this should be led by a young academic, not left to the SOMP Secretary or other officials to run. The network should be a database set up possibly within the SOMP website to enable new and young staff to be identified to each other; and to be able to be in regular informal/social contact with each other, for support and establishment of collaboration opportunities; exchange of ideas, etc. (This network may also be a set up using something like “Facebook”, or “Linked In”, although some concerns about privacy/control issues).
- b) It is desirable for new/young academics to have mentor assigned to them – preferably within their own universities and/or countries, rather than a SOMP role. Cross-disciplinary mentoring is also considered valuable. The suggestion was made that each country assign a senior SOMP member as mentor to develop such a program for

younger academics pursuing research interests in each country; but with links back to SOMP for any common interest issues.

- c) There may be a role for some older SOMP members to be assigned as mentors to academic leaders in developing countries, or where new mining programs are being established – may be specific to particular specialisations.

### 3.3 General Issues

- a) Important role for SOMP to offer commentary and be a discussion forum on broader issues affecting minerals industry, such as climate change, CO2 sequestration, etc.  
*(Action: SOMP Council)*
- b) Establishment of a database of SOMP membership teaching and research interests would be very beneficial, with some form of analysis to identify common areas, gaps, etc. *(Action: Education Committee)*
- c) Workshops held at the Sydney meeting were judged to be very useful and effective, even though some extra meeting time was needed to be assigned to accommodate them in the Program. Future SOMP meetings should continue the practice of holding focussed workshop sessions to continue to pursue particular initiatives, following Sydney workshop themes (Innovations in teaching & learning; international collaboration in education; early career researchers; research partnerships ), but not restricted to these.  
*(Action: SOMP Council, plus future meeting hosts)*

### 3.4 Teaching – Use of new technologies

*(Actions: Education Committee)*

- a) SOMP members could share podcasts or similar recordings of particular keynote lectures (by subject-matter academic experts, or key industry presentations – SOMP could be a clearing-house, or provide storage for such presentations (subject to appropriate approvals, copyright, etc).
- b) All SOMP members who already have classrooms equipped for interactive lecture delivery/receival to exchange information on the technology protocols/specifications should consider assisting with future linkages of lectures around the world and providing help to those establishing new facilities.

### 3.5 International Collaboration

*(Actions: SOMP Council)*

SOMP should play a role in facilitating the development/implementation of new mining education programs in developing regions of the world. It was recommended that SOMP could actually form a “Capacity Building” Sub-Committee. This should comprise a cross section of members from developing regions, plus members with experience in supporting new programs and/or good contacts/access to international aid agencies. Particular regions of interest might include parts of Asia, Mongolia, western Africa, etc.

- a) Consistent with 3.5(a) above, SOMP should consider holding a future meeting in the Asian region.
- b) SOMP should consider potential for international collaboration, especially in postgraduate coursework and research. Options may include: joint international research supervisors; capacity building teaching programs; establishment of international post-graduate degree programs (and collaborative research projects), possibly based around cross-disciplinary themes, rather than disciplines, e.g., carbon capture/sequestration.

### 3.6 Research

*(Actions: Research Committee)*

- a) SOMP members should develop a database of which universities and people are active in which research fields, and a database of major research projects. This should include areas of graduate students research, and provide links for these researchers to communicate informally (through website or Facebook or similar).
- b) It is important given 3.6(a) to identify areas of critical mass, in terms of people and infrastructure; and through this, to also identify where collaborative links across membership can convert a small group into a critical mass when linked with others – the concept being SOMP international research networks in particular fields.
- c) Collaborative projects should be established, as per 3.5(c).
- d) A database of new/young research staff and research interests should be established, as per 3.3(b); with informal networking opportunities available, as described in 3.2(a).
- e) SOMP should develop a study of various collaborative research models around the world – case studies of what works well, and also what has not worked so well.