

ASA AND THE ROAD TO EDUCATIONAL EXPANSION

BY KATE SHIRLEY

Founded in 1936, the American Society of Appraisers (ASA) is not only the largest organizations representing all disciplines of appraisal specialists, it is also the oldest. Its members are involved in appraisal review and management, business valuation, machinery and technical specialties, as well as the appraisal of gems and jewelry, personal property and real property. The ASA offers accreditation in all of these various disciplines, and seeks to set a standard of professional excellence among its membership through ethical standards, cutting-edge educational programs and seminars, premiere accreditation opportunities, informative publications and many more important member services. With 70 chapters located all over the United States, Canada, Mexico and Asia, the ASA has recently set its sights on expanding to additional foreign countries, most notably in Latin America.

The process for expanding to Latin America began about 15 years ago in Mexico, where ASA currently has a chapter. ASA has reached out to other Latin American countries such as Puerto Rico, Colombia, Cuba, Argentina and Brazil, where it holds courses and has plans for expansion through chapter growth. To date, ASA has taught courses in machinery and technical specialties, real property, business value and appraisal review and management in most of these countries. In an effort to cross the language barrier, most of these classes are now held in English with a Spanish translator. In addition, ASA is currently in the process of training two instructors to present machinery and technical specialties courses in Spanish.

And the interest is definitely there. The appraisal profession is currently experiencing major growth all over Latin America, and ASA course attendance is booming as a result. One course, scheduled to be held in Brazil

in November, is being attended by employees of the prestigious public accounting firm Ernst and Young. The 50 available spots filled up quickly, and with interested participants coming from all over Latin America to attend the event, the course may have to expand to accommodate the additional students wanting to participate.

The ASA recognized early on that holding these courses and developing relationships with Latin American firms is the first step toward greater expansion of the association throughout Latin America. Although ASA's only current Latin American chapter is in Mexico, the organization anticipates that within five years it will add chapters in Puerto Rico, Brazil and Argentina. The ASA sees this partnership as a chance to not only strengthen the appraisal profession in Latin America, where infrastructure development is on the rise, but also as an opportunity for prolific membership growth.

Rick Berkemeier, the International Education Chair for ASA, is excited about the opportunities for the organization in Latin America. "We currently provide education programs in Western and Eastern Europe, Russia, Japan, China, South Africa, Canada and Australia in addition to Latin America. Offering more courses in Latin America is a natural extension for our educational programs and represents a huge growth opportunity for the American Society of Appraisers," said Rick. "We hope to significantly increase our membership by reaching out to these important partners."

IRWA has recently been looking to develop similar relationships in Latin



America. There has been much interest from Mexico in particular. That country is currently experiencing an increased need for qualified right of way professionals, as it builds up essential infrastructure. IRWA was recently contacted by the Mexican Ministry of Energy about offering courses to its employees in appraisal and eminent domain issues to better prepare them for this increased work load.

International President-Elect Randy Williams, SR/WA, MAI, FRICS and Oscar Franck, FRICS, an IRWA member from Mexico, have also been in talks with the ASA in the United States and ASA's Mexico Chapter President Ildefonso Acevedo, ASA, about pursuing cross-certification opportunities with Mexican ASA members and offering IRWA courses and certifications in Mexico.

"Working with the ASA and opening up a pathway to expanding IRWA courses and certifications into Mexico and Latin America could be a major boon to IRWA, and we intend to explore every opportunity," said Randy. "This relationship has the potential to not only increase our membership, but would also add to our mounting reputation as a growing and thriving worldwide organization."