

BULLETIN

Hitting the ground running

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by SUSAN HAGLUND



Joining the ranks of a well-established organization like HSA is like being the new kid in school mid-year. Everyone knows everyone; you know no one. So you polish your shoes, wash behind your ears ... and jump in! It is exhilarating. But it's also scary ... and challenging. However, the entire HSA crew has been universally welcoming and supportive in my first few months. What a fabulous place HSA is and what wonderful members and staff!

In many ways, joining HSA is coming full circle. My roots run deep in the health sector. I spent more than 20 years in the college and university sector in BC as both academic and administrative staff. After starting my working life in earnest as a dental hygienist and assistant, I joined the clinical faculty at Douglas College teaching Dental Assisting. There I went through years of restraint was "downsized" along with many others.

From Douglas College, I went to the Open Learning Institute to start its dental assisting program, and added a number of other health programs. My last 10 years at OLI were as Registrar and Director of Student Services where I became immersed in senior administrative functions. I left OLI to join the fledgling TechBC in Surrey as Associate Vice President of Student and Information Services, where I led the development of non-academic support services, including computer systems, web services, records, FOIPP, student services, libraries. Unfortunately, TechBC did not last in its original incarnation. Many folks, including me, were displaced as it merged into SFU. Most recently, I re-entered the health sector as Director, Regulatory Services at the College of Licensed Practical Nurses of BC.

When the opportunity at HSA arose, I thought about my own experiences as a union member. I was raised by a logger and ardent CCFer, which instilled in me a set of values from early on. I had never been terribly active in my union at the OLI (the BCGEU) except during a two-week strike, where I walked the picket line and did phone duty at strike headquarters.

HSA is at a very exciting and dynamic juncture of its administrative evolution, and I'm excited to be able to make a contribution at this stage. Necessary services and infrastructures are in place. Staffing is stable, and the unions' finances are in good shape. My overall goal is to fine tune the good work that has been done in the past, and to help move us forward.

The challenges and opportunities we face are to provide better member services, including adopting various technological tools for better support for stewards and members. I will also be turning my attention to implementing more formal financial controls to better protect members' assets, and to implementing HSA-wide records practices to conform to new provincial privacy legislation. In addition, we will be reviewing all contracts and suppliers to ensure we're getting the best deals for HSA, and improving disaster recovery plans.

I am delighted to be part of the HSA family. Thanks for making me feel so welcome. 

Susan Haglund is HSAs new Executive Director of Operations.

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