The ISI Executive Committee (EC) and Council meetings were held at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, Cambridge, MA, just before the 2014 Joint Statistical Meetings in Boston, USA. I want to use this column to give an update from the discussions.

The topics that took most of our attention were `membership acquisition’ and `value and benefits of membership’. In addition to improving the financial state of the ISI, the goal is increase our footprint in the international statistical community and do more outreach activities to promote the profession.

The EC and Council discussed the need to undertake a systematic membership drive and possible strategies to accomplish this. We had a breakout session at the Council meeting with groups at each table focusing on different aspects of the strategy. The discussion was very fruitful, and we will be developing targeted plans in the next few months. The EC and Council realize the importance of involving members in these efforts, and we will be writing to get your help.

In terms of values and benefits, we reviewed efforts to improve the WSC scientific programme and to provide better networking opportunities to participants. As you may know, we have introduced many networking opportunities at the WSC: receptions and meetings for ISI members, Young Statisticians, Women in Statistics, and representatives from National Statistical Societies and Offices. The scientific committees of the WSC have been working to improve the quality of the technical programme, keeping in mind the unique nature of our WSC compared to other conferences. For the 2015 WSC in Rio, we will have more expository presentations, Association Presidents’ Invited sessions, and Journal Paper sessions. There will also be a new feature: Roundtable Lunch Discussions where participants can come together in small groups to discuss topics of general interest and develop longer-term connections.

You would have seen the news about ISI regional conferences, a new concept with the first one to be held this November in Malaysia. The goal is to mimic ISI WSCs at a regional level.

The ISI and the Associations collectively publish or sponsor a broad range of journals. However, most of us read only journals in our specific areas of interest, so we do not appreciate the full breadth of ISI journals. Nevertheless, there are still gaps within the portfolio of our publications: journals in emerging areas (such as Big Data), tutorials and best practices aimed at statisticians in developing countries, etc. The Publications Committee will explore ways to address these needs, in cooperation with Associations.

Our benefits must go beyond conferences and publications if we are to attract and retain members, especially younger members. The EC and Council discussed the need to develop more networking opportunities, promoting the careers of women and young statisticians, and identifying ways to involve more established members in ISI activities through capacity building, leadership opportunities, etc. These ideas will be developed over the coming year.

The need to redesign our website is a top priority item for the next year. This has become urgent as we need mechanisms for effective communication and to better serve our members and the community. Plans for the ISI webshop (for online membership renewal and updating of membership information) had been delayed due to problems with the vendor. The EC reviewed and approved plans to work with a new vendor. Part of the challenge is the complexity of our current membership fee structure, and the EC discussed tentative plans to streamline the structure. More information on this will be circulated soon.

Other important items on the agenda included updates on the 2015 WSC, Statistical Capacity Building (SCB) activities, and the need for more collaboration within the ISI family. The first information bulletin on
the 2015 WSC has been sent out, and all of us will be receiving it in the near future. You will be hearing more about SCB activities and plans for more collaboration in future monthly columns.

Until then, with my best wishes .......................................... Vijay