



A MESSAGE FROM ACUMA BOARD

Alissa Sykes

ACUMA Provides Opportunities for Professional Development

*Education and Networking in
a Cooperative Atmosphere*

By Alissa Sykes

As an incoming board member, I am honored to share with you my journey with ACUMA. It's been a very positive experience, and one I'd recommend to any mortgage-granting credit union.

I attended my first ACUMA conference in 2006 on a recommendation from CMGMI (now ARCH Mortgage Insurance). Coming from a background in the banking industry, I was blown away by the amount of cooperation I was seeing and hearing. This isn't the way we operated as banks.

At ACUMA, I saw that everyone wanted to help each other. Credit unions were sharing best practices, ideas, struggles—anything, really, that would help grow the market share for ALL credit unions. Like credit unions, ACUMA was (and remains) a cooperative atmosphere.

Prior to ACUMA, I had never attended a conference that was solely focused on mortgage. The speakers—many from credit unions but not all, and some even from outside the mortgage industry—were knowl-

edgeable and shared so many good ideas around originations, process and compliance, for instance.

Well, it really worked for me. I have attended every ACUMA annual conference since except for 2007 when I was

VERY pregnant with my second son.

I learned so many valuable strategies at the conference. Every year that I attended I would take something back to my credit union and implement it—whether it involved a vendor I had met, a process that I was looking to improve, or an overall structure/department change.

EXPANDED NETWORK

ACUMA has also expanded my professional network greatly. Along the way I have met amazing people whom I am able to call friends and colleagues. They are real mentors/experts in the mortgage lending space—ones that I look forward to seeing and catching up with every year.

My credit union, Sunmark FCU, has seen a significant growth in mortgage volume since I have become an ACUMA member, too. That's no coincidence.

When I started with the credit union in 2006 (the year I first attend-



ed an ACUMA conference), Sunmark was closing less than \$20 million in mortgage loans per year, and we had four employees in the mortgage area.

Fast forward 14 years: Now we have more than 30 employees and, at one point, we closed in excess of \$240 million in one year. And we made that number when we were only a \$400 million-asset credit union.

GROWTH AS A LEADER

I also credit ACUMA with helping me grow as a leader. I started with the credit union as the mortgage manager. I have been lucky enough to be promoted many times, most recently to the SVP/CLO role. I now oversee all aspects of lending, business development and card services. So I need ACUMA's help more than ever.

I love that ACUMA added regional

conferences ("deep-dive workshops") a few years ago. The smaller group forum allows attendees to dig in deeper into the many challenges we all face and allows that conversations to be more market-specific.

I am happy that with Sunmark's mortgage growth, I am able to share my ACUMA experience with other team members. I try to bring two or three Sunmark employees (not limited to our mortgage shop) to the conferences every year. For example, our EVP/CFO has attended and found it very valuable.

I have had the pleasure of sharing some of

Sunmark's successes at the ACUMA events, too, by speaking at both the annual conference and regional workshops.

That experience has allowed me to



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give back to my peers and ACUMA members with shared knowledge on strategies and tactics to help members and grow credit union lending programs.

Now, as a member of the governing ACUMA board, I look forward to helping make our non-profit association even more beneficial for our members.



Alissa Sykes is Senior Vice President & Chief Lending Officer of Sunmark Federal Credit Union, where she oversees all aspects of lending including mortgage, home equity, consumer and business lending, loan servicing and collections. She has worked in financial services for nearly 20 years and has been with Sunmark for 12 years. Sykes regularly mentors smaller credit unions who need assistance keeping up with the swift pace of regulation changes, or ideas to expand impact. Recently, she has worked to offer Sunmark's back-office home equity services to credit unions who, due to their size, cannot afford the processing expense.

■ WHAT DOES THE ACCUMA BOARD DO?

It Provides Guidance for the Non-Profit Association

ACUMA is a non-profit association dedicated to advancing mortgage lending within the credit union space. The ACUMA Board of Directors sets governance for the association and provides guidance to the ACUMA President.

A Board Member serves a three-year term. Terms are staggered. The current Board has seven members. The Board Members are volunteers who have a strong desire to give back to the Credit Union industry and receive no compensation.

Officers of the Board (Chair, Vice Chair, Treasurer and Secretary) are selected by the entire Board at the Organizational Meeting following the Annual Meeting of the membership, normally held in September of each year in conjunction with the annual Fall Conference.

The time commit-

ment for a Board Member includes conference calls as needed and two in-person meetings each year, including a planning session and the Organizational Meeting, and attending ACUMA conferences. In addition they may also serve on standing or ad-hoc committees, and participate in occasional special projects.



WHO IS ELIGIBLE FOR A BOARD SEAT?

To be eligible for a Board position, you must:

- Be a member of ACUMA's Primary Member Organizations (CUs and CUSOs).
- Serve as an employee of a Primary Member Organization.
- Accept ACUMA's policies and rules of governance.
- Have the support of your own credit union for serving on the board.

When openings for the Board of Directors become available, ACUMA would welcome interested candidates. Openings will be communicated to ACUMA members through our website and the *Pipeline* magazine.