



**Meet CCA Member:
Felix Okwaning Jr.**

Title: Director - Custom Retirement Solutions

Employer: Prudential Retirement

Location: Hartford, Connecticut

Area of Practice: Retirement

Conference of
Consulting Actuaries

“In Building an Actuarial Career, It’s Clear – You’ve Got to Persevere”

Felix Okwaning Jr. doesn’t believe in the insurmountable. Rather, obstacles are welcomed challenges which he readily accepts. Perhaps this stems from his countless, distinct experiences supporting the notion that perseverance always pays off in the end. Today, he can attest that being successful does not come from being lucky but by working hard and always believing in something greater than one’s self.

It is never easy going the journey alone and Felix knows help – through mentorship or even just in the form of a bit of perspective from a fellow CCA member – can make all the difference. He would say: push the limits, go against the grain, don’t always conform to the norms, and seek out an eclectic assortment of people and points of view – lest you get tunnel vision and miss the scenery on the journey. No one achieves greatness on their own....and who knows that better than a consulting actuary?

Now it is **we** who invite **you** to glean a handful of profound insights straight from the words of CCA’s current Secretary – that’s right, Mr. Okwaning himself!

How did you get into the actuarial profession?

I entered college with the intention of pursuing a degree in electrical engineering. While taking my requisite math class, I was encouraged by my professors to pursue a degree in mathematics. They later encouraged me to pick an internship within the retirement practice of an actuarial consulting firm over an internship with a software engineering company. 18 years later, I find myself working as a consulting actuary.

What is your favorite part about being a CCA member?

Meeting some of the brightest minds in the industry and being able to pick their brain on their approach to problem solving.

Where did you go to school?

I attended the University of Redlands in southern California. I studied mathematics and economics.

Who was a professional mentor of yours and how did he or she impact your career?

I have had several mentors throughout my career thus far and they have all been very instrumental in shaping my thought process and helping me find success. Earlier in my career, I had a mentor who guided me in my approach to taking actuarial exams and how to be successful. He found ways to motivate me when exams felt like an insurmountable hurdle. At the same time, I had another mentor that taught me how to problem-solve work challenges and deliver assignments with an eye for detail. I remember a challenge he gave me was to always anticipate what questions my audience would ask, and if I could do that well, I would be a good actuary. Today, I use this approach in everything I do, and it has served me well. More recently, my mentors have helped me navigate and build a career into leadership roles within my organization.

How do you define yourself as a Consulting Actuary (i.e., what does it mean to be a consultant)?

I enjoy interacting with people and I enjoy problem solving. Some of my best experiences has been bringing a solution to a client with a difficult task and seeing the excitement and relief. That is the measure of how I define myself as a consulting actuary.

How do you define success?

Success is overcoming the hurdles of life whether they are big or small.

Can you tell us about your favorite experience working with the CCA?

My favorite experience has been learning from the experiences of more experienced CCA members and the challenges they've faced in their careers. Encouragement from more experienced consultants and stories about their own difficulties gave perspective to mine.

Is there something about you people would be surprised by if they knew it?

Not sure it would surprise anyone, but I used to have a Suzuki GSXR 750 sports motorbike until very recently and used to race it.

What is the strangest thing someone has told you they assumed about being an actuary or what it means to be an actuary?

The strangest thing I have heard was someone asked if I work in the cemetery. Now, I am not sure if they mistook being an actuary with working in the mortuary or our work with mortality tables to mean I work in the cemetery.

Do you have a favorite book, newspaper, blog, or writer?

Favorite book: *The Kite Runner* by Khaled Hosseini. But I cannot get enough of authors Jeffery Archers and Nelson DeMille.

What would the title of your autobiography be?

Beyond My Wildest Dreams

What do you do in your free time?

Used to ride my motorbike, but now you will find me either coaching soccer or reading.

What advice do you have for future actuaries or actuaries just getting their careers started?

Never to throw in the towel even when the challenge seems insurmountable.

What do you see in terms of the future of the actuarial profession?

I believe the future of the profession is bright and evolving. As long as we don't get stuck in the doldrums and evolve with the changing times.

Do you have strong opinions about calculators?

No.

What is something about you that a lot of people don't know?

I was very rebellious as a kid, so I think people will find it hard reconciling my teenage years with my adult life.

What is the most important thing you've learned in the last five years?

Enjoy family, the relationships and the time because nothing lasts forever.

If you weren't an actuary, what else might you do for work?

General Surgeon.

What does being a member of the CCA mean to you?

Being a member of the CCA is, to me, where I can share in a community, learn from my peers and develop my brand as a consulting actuary.

Thank you, Felix, for taking the time to share this with us and the actuarial community. We are all better for it!