



# Member Spotlight for August 2022- Jake Akstins



## Where do you work and what is your position?

Manager, Inclusion & Diversity Analytics at Visa.

## Why did you decide to become an actuary?

Growing up, I was always talented in Math, but I had an affinity for other subject areas as well. One of my favorite teachers at the Illinois Mathematics and Science Academy often said that understanding difficult concepts was important; however, he stressed that the most important skill for folks my age would be synthesizing complex information and explaining to non-technical audiences. He was right! I believe the most important skill as an actuary centers on relationship building and knowing how to provide key insights to your business partners accurately, clearly, and concisely.

## What aspects of the field do you love?

I love considering real-world events and possibilities, including those that have not yet occurred. When writing large & complex accounts, I often facilitated brainstorming sessions with our underwriting team; for example, if we're only providing insurance coverage for events that cost over \$300 million dollars, what are some things that can happen that would result in a payout that large? How frequent and how severe could these events be? Then, when extreme events do happen, and we see them on the news – is this something that would affect our book of business from past, present, or future?

I find the skills from my actuarial training to be transferrable to my new, non-traditional role as well. When considering diversity data, there are trends in hiring, attrition, data management, external factors, and more that can be considered in similar frameworks that actuaries utilize on insurance data.



## **What is the best career advice you have ever received?**

Focus on your individual skill-building and development. Identify what you are passionate in and where you would like to grow your career. If you disagree with something or have any questions, don't be afraid to ask – diverse perspectives drive us to be better.

## **Do you have any advice for those just starting out?**

When selecting an organization, keep company culture and how it relates to you and your goals front-of-mind. Some companies encourage (and facilitate) passing exams quickly, which can be helpful in your career – but can also activate imposter syndrome if that is not your immediate goal. If you're looking to try out new things, there are rotational programs where you can try out a few different areas of the company in your most formative years. Additionally, there are companies who operate predominately in-person while others are remote. If you're interested in opportunities to improve an organization through employee resource groups, recruiting committees, and more, some companies provide leadership development in this way as well. Think about what best suits you!

## **What is your favorite CAS memory?**

In 2017, I was selected as a winner of a CAS Trust Scholarship. I had the honor of flying out to the CAS Annual Meeting in Anaheim to receive a giant check on stage. In that moment, I felt like I had proved naysayers (both peer-level and superior) wrong in that I was “showing up and showing out” as an LGBTQ+ individual.

## **What is a fun fact about yourself that many people don't know about?**

I absolutely love baseball and softball – the first credentials I ever received were actually as an umpire from the Baseball Players Association, not mine from the CAS. I



play in many local and national softball leagues and tournaments; I am excited to represent Austin, TX in the Gay Softball World Series this year!