

Putting People First

An Interview with Greg Francis, Vice President, Underwriting Center Manager, CNA

EDITORS' NOTE Greg Francis is the manager of CNA's Commercial Lines Underwriting Center, which he helped design and build. In this role, he is responsible for leading and growing the underwriting team that currently supports all of CNA's U.S. branches with respect to the Middle Market, Construction, and Inland Marine Segments. Francis also serves on the company's DEI Council and is the Executive Sponsor of the Empowering Black Professionals ERG. He also represents CNA on the IIABA's Diversity Council. Prior to this role, Francis served in multiple commercial underwriting leadership roles dating back to 2012. He was a Commercial Underwriting Officer for the branches in Texas, Oklahoma and Arkansas; Zone CUO for the Central Zone; Zone CUO for the Southern Zone; and West Territory CUO. Francis started his insurance career as a Casualty Underwriter Trainee in CNA's Syracuse Branch. He then spent more than 20 years between Chubb and The Hartford in various commercial underwriting and underwriting leadership roles. Francis holds a BA degree from Dartmouth College where he majored in English and was a member of the men's tennis team.



Greg Francis

COMPANY BRIEF CNA (cna.com) is one of the largest U.S. commercial property and casualty insurance companies. Backed by more than 120 years of experience, CNA provides a broad range of standard and specialized insurance products and services for businesses and professionals in the U.S., Canada and Europe.

Will you highlight your role and areas of focus?

I've spent more than 30 years in various commercial underwriting and underwriting leadership roles. I am currently a Vice President of Underwriting for CNA and help manage our Commercial Lines Underwriting Center, which I helped to design and build. In this role, I am responsible for leading and growing the underwriting team that currently supports all of our U.S. branches with respect to the Middle Market, Construction, and Inland Marine segments. I also proudly serve on CNA's Diversity, Equity & Inclusion (DEI) Council, am the Executive Sponsor of our Empowering Black Professionals Employee Resource Group, and represent CNA on the IIABA's Diversity Council.

How do you describe CNA's culture and values?

CNA has a welcoming culture of inclusion. As a company, we are striving for excellence across all aspects of the organization, continually evolving and improving, with a goal of consistently being a top quartile carrier. CNA puts people first – whether it's the people and businesses we insure, the agencies and brokers with whom we work, or the employees who make us the great company we are. What creates an excellent environment and makes me so proud to work for CNA is our unwavering commitment to conducting the business ethically, with honesty, integrity, and fairness.

What have been the keys to CNA's strength and leadership in the industry?

CNA has leaders and employees that care, respect, and value each other, work hard to grow and improve, and share the vision of making differences small and large each day to deliver innovative solutions and services that will merit being the carrier of choice. The leaders at CNA actively listen to the employees and to our agents and do their best to respond effectively to raised needs, concerns, requests, and suggestions. Whether it's industry designations, pertinent higher education courses or degrees, continuing education, subject matter training or leadership training, CNA supports and invests in the training and education of our employees.

“CNA puts people first – whether it's the people and businesses we insure, the agencies and brokers with whom we work, or the employees who make us the great company we are. What creates an excellent environment and makes me so proud to work for CNA is our unwavering commitment to conducting the business ethically, with honesty, integrity, and fairness.”

“CNA has a welcoming culture of inclusion. As a company, we are striving for excellence across all aspects of the organization, continually evolving and improving, with a goal of consistently being a top quartile carrier.”

Will you discuss CNA’s commitment to build a diverse and inclusive workforce?

CNA has been committed to DEI for a long time. The company has been focused on DEI education, recruitment, talent development, partnerships, as well as a continued evolution of our policies and benefits with inclusion and equity in mind. All across CNA, we encourage deeper and more open conversations at work, which ultimately helps all employees bring their authentic selves to the workplace each and every day. Also, together as a global organization, we experienced a year-long learning journey on allyship in which we learned about and practiced four specific allyship habits: Explore different perspectives; Diversify your network; Practice engaged listening; Speak up and stand up for others. Now we are institutionalizing allyship through an elevated focus on equity.

As the old adage goes, the proof is in the pudding. In our DEI employee survey, an overwhelming majority of our employees agree that CNA makes DEI a priority, feel they are treated with respect and dignity at work, and agree that the company is headed in the right direction on our DEI efforts.

How important is it to have diverse perspectives and experiences at the table when making business decisions?

It’s been proven time and time again that a team of people with diverse backgrounds,

experiences and perspectives nearly always outperforms a more homogenous team when it comes to problem-solving, creative thinking, idea generation and performance. As the world continues to evolve and business continues to be increasingly global, the importance of having teams of people with diverse perspectives and experiences becomes more and more critical. One example of this is our DEI Council, which is made up of leaders with diverse backgrounds, perspectives, and experiences from different business areas of the organization, such as Underwriting Shared Services, Claims, Risk Control, HR, Talent Management, Legal, and Analytics, to name a few.

How is CNA working to attract more diverse candidates to the industry?

CNA clearly understands the importance of attracting diverse candidates to the industry. There are so many career opportunities that need skills from all different backgrounds. We, as an industry, need to do a better job of communicating that to prospective candidates. At CNA, we take accountability, collaborating across the organization instead of making this solely an objective for Talent Acquisition, HR or the DEI Council. The programs we build and the initiatives that we execute are all in support of creating an environment where those with various skill sets, education and diverse

backgrounds can thrive. For example, we work with various nonprofits to educate and expose more people in the diverse communities they serve about the excellent career opportunities that exist in our industry, as well as provide internship and employment opportunities. CNA proudly sponsors and supports participation, including speaker roles, at major events like Out & Equal. And, in partnership with our Veterans Employee Resource Group, our Risk Control organization designed an all-new program to hire veterans into key positions within our Risk Control business, working with organizations like Hiring our Heroes, P3 and Recruit Military.

What do you tell young people about the type or career the insurance industry offers?

There are excellent careers, not just jobs, in the insurance industry – and they exist for people with diverse experiences, backgrounds, education levels, and interests. Roles are expansive from Claims, Operations, Legal, HR, and Accounting to Loss Prevention, and Sales. There are careers if you have a medical background, a law enforcement background, or an education background. There are roles for people with a high school education, Associates degree, Bachelor’s degree, Law degree, and a Master’s degree. It’s a noble and dynamic industry that is critical to business and society. ●

“Also, together as a global organization, we experienced a year-long learning journey on allyship in which we learned about and practiced four specific allyship habits: Explore different perspectives; Diversify your network; Practice engaged listening; Speak up and stand up for others. Now we are institutionalizing allyship through an elevated focus on equity.”