

## AAG's EDGE Project Activities

The AAG's Enhancing Departments and Graduate Education (EDGE) project enhances geographers' preparation for professional careers in education, business, government, and non-profit sectors. Outreach activities promote awareness of career opportunities for geographers working in the public and private sectors. Below, we summarize some of the activities that recently took place at the 2011 AAG Annual Meeting in Seattle, and then look ahead to upcoming careers-related outreach and mentoring activities that will be led by the AAG's EDGE project later this year and throughout 2012.

### EDGE Sessions in Seattle

At the 2011 AAG Annual Meeting in Seattle, EDGE sponsored two panels to discuss improving geographers' professional preparation for careers in business, government, and nonprofit organizations. Representing a diverse range of industries and academic programs<sup>1</sup>, panelists talked about key trends and issues affecting career opportunities for geographers, while highlighting some of the ways geography programs are designing curricula and providing internships and other professional development experiences to enhance students' employability. Moderated by EDGE co-investigators Michael Solem and Beth Schlemper, the sessions welcomed audience participation and produced lively conversations.

Most on the panel agreed that opportunities in the private sector will continue to grow relative to those in the public sector, as public revenue streams decline and more government agencies become reliant on private subcontractors. New frontiers in computing also promise to open additional pathways to employment, as demand for location-based services grows with the proliferation of mobile devices and other technologies capable of retrieving spatial data to support a dizzying array of applications and services. Still, much of the projected job growth in geography-related occupations will be in the public sector, as local, state, and federal agencies con-

tinue to need geographic expertise in areas ranging from transportation planning and environmental management to housing and health services. In addition, the changing demographics of America's population and workforce will shape career opportunities in many ways. As the U.S. population ages, more opportunities for geographers will arise in healthcare and related industries where GIS and other geographic approaches have recently made significant inroads in improving social services. Moreover, a wave of impending retirements in federal agencies will result in vacancies in the scientific workforce over the coming decade.

Panelists agreed that students need a broader range of writing and communication experiences that reflect the expectations and cultures of work in different sectors. Internships were cited as one of the most effective ways of helping students gain experience in translating and applying their geographical knowledge and abilities in professional settings. Panelists noted that many private sector employers now desire graduates who have completed two to four internship placements.

Panelists also discussed the need for academic programs to help geography students "market" their abilities to an employer who may have little knowledge of geography, but would stand to benefit from hiring a geographer. Effectively marketing one's background in geography requires an understanding of an employer's needs as well as its organizational culture, two areas that some geography programs address by involving alumni or local industry professionals as adjunct instructors and career advisors. Professional conferences and trade meetings also offer opportunities for students to begin developing professional networks and to gain firsthand knowledge of industry trends.

### Upcoming EDGE Workshops and Sessions

Similar panels and a variety of other outreach activities are being organized by the AAG's EDGE project for AAG regional meetings, the Applied Geography Conference in Redlands, California, and the 2012 AAG Annual Meeting in New York, where "careers in geography" will be a major theme (see sidebar). Among the many careers-related sessions and events

### EDGE Careers Activities 2012 AAG Annual Meeting

The upcoming AAG Annual Meeting in New York will feature a variety of new and returning activities related to geography careers and professional development. Many of these will highlight the release of *Practicing Geography: Careers for Enhancing Society and the Environment* (Pearson Prentice Hall 2012).

Events will reflect four major themes:

- careers in the public sector
- careers in the private sector
- careers with nonprofits and NGOs
- academic careers

Events will include workshops on career preparation skills, special events for students and early-career geographers, continued involvement by the Diversity Ambassadors, the launch of the revised and expanded Jobs and Careers area of the AAG website ([www.aag.org/careers](http://www.aag.org/careers)), and panel discussions about the job markets for geographers within various sectors of the economy. Since the career mentoring sessions held in Seattle last spring proved to be such a great success, longer sessions spread over multiple days for greater accessibility and convenience will be held in New York.

Geography faculty and professional geographers who are interested in participating as a panelist, career mentor, workshop facilitator, or session organizer for one or more careers-related activities are encouraged to contact Joy Adams, AAG Senior Researcher, via email at [jadams@aag.org](mailto:jadams@aag.org).

For further information about these events, watch for updates in forthcoming issues of the *AAG Newsletter*, *GeoGrams*, and *SmartBriefs*. We look forward to seeing you in New York!

*Continued on page 10*

Special Session Tracks from page 8

sessions, please make sure to include either "Humanities" or "Arts" in the keywords field when using the abstract submission console. Once you receive your confirmation email for a successful abstract submission, please forward it to Jim Ketchum at [jketchum@aag.org](mailto:jketchum@aag.org) with "Humanities Sessions" or "Arts Sessions" as the subject line.

### The United Nations

With headquarters in midtown Manhattan, the United Nations is one of the world's most important international organizations. This special track of sessions will address the UN's multifaceted work around the world, including its efforts to promote development, provide peacekeeping, and address humanitarian needs. Geographies pertaining to sustainable development, environmental stewardship, adaptation to climate change, humanitarian aid, poverty reduction, and response to anthropogenic and natural disasters are of great interest and importance to geographers, development workers, governmental and non-governmental agency representatives, among many others.

The AAG welcomes paper abstracts on these topics and others: the use of geospatial technologies and cartography in development work, humanitarian emergency, and aid operations; climate change and adaptation; environment, emissions, and sustainable development; food security, innovative and sustainable agricultural practices; human rights and the role of UNESCO; international labor movements;

demographic data in support of development projects; the Millennium Development Goals and Rio+20.

If you are interested in participating in these sessions, please submit a 250-word abstract no later than **September 28**. Earlier submission is encouraged. To be added to these sessions, please add the keyword "United Nations" in the Keywords field on the abstract submission console. When you receive the confirmation email for a successful abstract submission, please forward it to Megan Overbey at [moverbey@aag.org](mailto:moverbey@aag.org).

### GIScience, Cyberinfrastructure, and Social Media

At the 2012 Annual Meeting, the AAG will feature a special track of sessions on cyberinfrastructure and GIScience research focused on developments and applications in social media. Fast-paced developments in social media are being expressed in many ways – from social movements for political change (Middle East), to disaster response (Japan, Haiti) and innovations in education (collaborative distance learning). Advances in cyberinfrastructure and GIScience and the popularization of social media sites coupled with geo-enabled cameras, cell phones, and other devices are playing a major role in the creation, delivery, mash-up, and analysis of geographic information and profoundly influence how virtual communities form, intersect, interact and share information. Organizers and participants in large-scale international efforts, such

as *Rio+20: the United Nation's Conference on Sustainable Development*, recognize the power and importance of using social media and geographic technologies to engage local communities in charting their future. The AAG encourages participants to organize sessions addressing the geographic dimensions of social media and the democratization of information.

### The Contributions of Physical Geography to Sustainable Development

This track will feature sessions on the contributions of physical geography to the advancement of sustainable development. We encourage sessions focusing on how geographic inquiry among the diverse subfields of physical geography is being applied to interdisciplinary challenges across the spectrum of sustainable development. Example themes include the development of green economies; relationships between climate change prediction and adaptation and community resilience and sustainability; the future of renewable energy and of carbon-based energy development; modeling multi-scale drivers of land use and land cover change and biodiversity loss; and transformations in hydrologic systems and their impacts on future water supply.

For more on the 2012 AAG Annual Meeting, to be held February 24-28 in New York, visit [www.aag.org/annualmeeting](http://www.aag.org/annualmeeting). ■

EDGE Project from page 9

in New York will be an expanded presence of career mentors throughout the duration of the Jobs in Geography exhibition, offering students and job seekers more chances to interact with and gain advice from geographers in an informal, friendly setting. The 2012 AAG Annual Meeting will also feature professional development sessions based on the forthcoming AAG book, *Practicing Geography: Careers for Enhancing Society and the Environment* (forthcoming in

February 2012, Pearson Prentice Hall). Additional careers resources are also currently in development for the AAG Careers in Geography website ([www.aag.org/careers](http://www.aag.org/careers)), recently updated with a database tracking trends in employment for scores of geography-related occupations.

For more information about the EDGE project, visit [www.aag.org/edge](http://www.aag.org/edge). ■

Mark Revell, Sarah Siegel,  
and Michael Solem

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## Early Deadlines for Eight AAG Grants/Awards

Due to the early calendar date of the 2012 AAG Annual Meeting, the deadlines for eight AAG grant or award programs have been moved up to **November 1**. Please see the full calendar of grant and award deadlines on page 46 or visit [www.aag.org/grantsawards](http://www.aag.org/grantsawards).