Faculty and Teacher Professional Development at the AAG

Geographers work in a variety of settings in higher education, government, and the private sector. The progression from student to accomplished professional is one that the AAG now supports through a host of broad-based initiatives for individuals at different career stages. This column discusses current AAG professional development programs for geographers in teaching fields; a future column will report on the efforts the AAG is leading to improve the preparation of geographers for careers outside of universities and these schools.

Enhancing professional development of early career faculty in higher education is foundational to the health of every academic department. The AAG’s approach to faculty professional development focuses especially on programs for graduate students and new faculty, but also views the efforts of more experienced faculty and department chairs as vital for achieving long-term change that enhances the quality of geography teaching and learning at all levels of education. At the core of the AAG’s educational programs is a focus on developing the pedagogical skills of future educators while situating that information within the context of geography. The idea here is to marry general concepts in education with the discipline-based issues that geography educators need to know, making it easier for them to understand and align relationships between teaching methods and learning outcomes.

A good example of this approach is the highly successful Geography Faculty Development Alliance (GFDA) workshops, directed since 2002 by Ken Foote at the University of Colorado. GFDA workshops provide doctoral students and untenured faculty with theoretical and practical preparation on the key issues of time management, career planning, writing grant proposals, academic publishing, course design, and many other topics that, although central to faculty work, are often not discussed systematically in graduate curricula. In 2008, JW Harrington joined Ken as co-director of the GFDA workshops, which drew a full cohort of participants under a new fee-based model following the end of NSF support. The AAG now helps to administer and support this important program to ensure its sustainability in future years.

The AAG, through the NSF-funded EDGE program, is also sponsoring workshops at 2008 regional meetings, based on the books Aspiring Academics and Teaching College Geography. EDGE workshops will also be conducted at the 2009 Annual Meeting in Las Vegas. These books and a companion website offer research-informed advice as well as substantial content for use in graduate seminars, workshops, and mentoring programs for graduate students and new faculty. Indeed, participants in GFDA and EDGE workshops are also using Aspiring Academics and Teaching College Geography to support professional development in several academic departments during the 2008-2009 academic year.

Professional development does not end once faculty earn tenure. It is a life-long, career spanning process that recognizes how faculty expectations evolve into mid-career and later stages. This is one of the reasons why the AAG established the Healthy Departments initiative in 2002 and subsequent annual workshops for strengthening departmental leadership. Through regular and sustained communications with department chairs, the Healthy Departments initiative and workshops support important departmental goals such as strategic planning, growing student enrollments, securing external funding and other financial resources, establishing effective working relationships with other departments, and documenting student learning outcomes.

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ics, in the 40-year history of the award, and is perhaps one of the most widely-recognized recipients of a Nobel Prize ever.

Krugman received his PhD in economics in 1977 from the Massachusetts Institute of Technology. In 1979 and 1980, he proposed a new theory of international trade in two seminal papers by building on the 19th century economic framework of David Ricardo and 20th century theories by Swedish economists Eli Heckscher and Bertil Ohlin.

While several researchers in the 1970s had been working to explain observable global trade patterns in ways that would improve on previous models, it was “Krugman who most clearly and forcefully articulated the revolutionary nature of this new approach for the theory of international trade” according to a report released by the Prize Committee of the Swedish Academy of Sciences, which accompanied the announcement of the award. The report cited the elegance of Krugman’s mathematical model which, “due to its simplicity…illustrates the key mechanisms in a particularly clear way.”

In addition to economic geography and international trade theory, the report also cites Krugman’s contributions to strategic trade policy.

Paul Krugman is professor of economics in the Woodrow Wilson School of Public and International Affairs at Princeton University. He is the author of Geography and Trade (1991), Development, Geography, and Economic Theory (1995), and many other books.

The full announcement of the award and related documents are available at http://nobelprize.org.

References


Outreach and learning materials developed in nine languages are provided free of charge through an online library that emphasizes hands-on, project-based, and inquiry-driven pedagogy. In 2008 alone, the AAG conducted MyCOE workshops for teacher and faculty professional development for educators from 18 countries, with three regional events held in Panama, Tunisia, and the Philippines.

For more information about these and other AAG professional development programs and publications, please visit www.aag.org/education/aag/education_main.cfm. We welcome your feedback and comments on the research, materials, and programs undertaken by the AAG in these areas.

Doug Richardson, Susan Gallagher, Patricia Solis, Michael Solem

AAG Disability Fund
In Memory of Todd Reynolds

The AAG has established the AAG Disability Fund in memory of Todd Reynolds. The purpose of the fund is to expand support to geographers with disabilities to participate in the AAG and its Annual Meetings. Examples of the kinds of activities that the fund will support include but are not limited to: providing financial assistance with travel, accommodations, registration, or related expenses for graduate or undergraduate students with disabilities to participate in professional meetings of the AAG, covering the cost of additional special services at AAG meetings to increase accessibility for attendees with disabilities and/or chronic illnesses, conducting dissemination or other activities around AAG events and activities to expand accessibility more broadly to geographers with special needs.

Donations may be made by check. Checks should be written to the AAG with a note in the memo line designating the AAG Disability Fund/Todd Reynolds. Mailing address: AAG, 1710 16th Street NW, Washington, DC 20009-3198.

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