

Recognizing Service

During recent presentations at regional meetings, I spoke about the advances that geography, geographers, and the AAG have made over the last year. Among the AAG's accomplishments were continued growth in membership and revenues, a new 10-year publishing agreement for our journals, the filing of an amicus brief to help halt efforts by MAPPS to restrict federal contracting for GIS and related services, the National Council for Geographic Education's decision to co-locate its headquarters with the AAG, new grants for education programs, new activities aimed at bringing greater diversity to our field and the Association, a record-breaking Annual Meeting in San Francisco, the Geography and the Humanities Symposium, and planning for a new Developing Regions membership program.

In light of these positive developments, many people were surprised when I later stated, "By itself, the AAG does nothing." I elaborated on that comment by contending that no organization actually does anything and that an organization's accomplishments directly reflect the accomplishments of the individuals associated with it.

To understand the success of the AAG, we need to look at the work of the individuals who enable it to function so effectively. The first group of individuals who deserve credit for the AAG's accomplishments are its paid staff members. For five years, Douglas Richardson has done an outstanding job as Executive Director, combining strong intellectual leadership with considerable experience as a successful businessman. Doug will be the first to note that too much emphasis should not be placed on any one individual, however, because the AAG office uses a team approach with matrix management. Those familiar with AAG office operations know about the long hours of highly effective work undertaken by many critical staff members. Patricia Solis is responsible for research and outreach activities, as is Michael Solem for education activities. Robert Andelman oversees membership-related activities, while Oscar Larson is responsible for the conduct of the Annual

Meeting and other conferences. Robin (Friedman) Maier is the managing editor for both the *Annals* and *Professional Geographer*. John Wertman keeps his finger on the pulse of Washington's public policy scene. Teri Martin does an outstanding job of handling financial transactions. Ten other staff members provide valuable support for these and other operational activities.

The success of this team is evident in many ways. The AAG was a finalist for the *Washington Post* award for excellence in non-profit management. Systems installed by the AAG staff enabled more than 5,000 individuals to register for the 2008 Annual Meeting before the end of the initial pre-registration period, including more than 1,000 registrants on a single day. During the hectic days of the Annual Meeting, staff members continue to provide personal service to those who need it despite long hours and hectic conditions. The AAG is blessed to have a very capable and dedicated staff, and their efforts have made the Association a very efficient and effective organization.

Another group that deserves credit for AAG successes are the individuals elected to serve as members of the AAG Council. The individuals devote considerable time to establishing policy and overseeing operations of the AAG. At various times during the Fall 2007 Council meeting, every Council member made positive contributions to the discussion. Councillors also have been recognized for distinctive contributions at their home institutions. Southeast Regional Councillor Tyrel (Tink) Moore was named 2007 North Carolina Geographical Society Educator of the Year, and National Councillor Dawn Wright was named Oregon Professor of the Year by the Council for the Advancement and Support of Education and the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching.

Although the current Council is an excellent one, four of its 18 members will depart

next summer. Three positions will be filled through an election of a new Vice President and two new National Councillors. Excellent candidates for those positions have been selected by the most recent AAG Nominating Committee. Biographical summaries of those candidates and statements from all candidates are included in this issue of the *AAG Newsletter*.

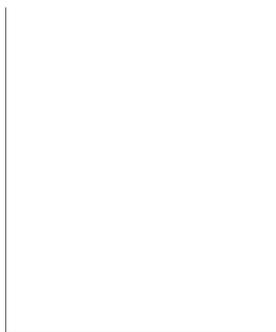
Be sure to review those materials and vote for those candidates you think will best serve the AAG in the future. Southeast Division members also should participate in the upcoming election for Regional Councillor.

Take time also to consider and vote for those individuals you think will best serve on the next Nominating and Honors committees. The Nominating Committee selects the

candidates for our top leadership positions, and the Honors Committee selects those individuals who will receive the AAG's highest honors. The significance of these responsibilities makes it important that you consider the qualifications of these individuals and vote for the candidates you think will serve us most effectively.

Although this column has focused on the AAG's staff and elected leaders, many other opportunities exist to serve the Association through its committees, task groups, specialty groups, and affinity groups. If you have interest in serving on an AAG committee, contact both your regional councillor and AAG Secretary Craig Colten. If you want to become more involved in a specialty group, let the current group leaders know about your interest and volunteer to do some work. By demonstrating your capabilities in committees and specialty groups, you can serve the AAG now and gain the kind of experience that may enable you to be a strong candidate for top leadership positions in the future.

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