

We Are All the AAG

I have just completed my visits to the regional division meetings of the AAG, which I greatly enjoyed. I have engaged in many conversations about our Association and have heard both your overwhelming appreciation for the many accomplishments of the staff in DC, as well as constructive suggestions about what we can do better. In this column I make two points about our Association: first that the AAG is strong, and second, as Doug Richardson recently pointed out, that *we are all the AAG*. I often hear "...the AAG should do 'X'" and while these are often excellent ideas, we might stop to think how we can take advantage of the initiatives and frameworks for action that the AAG is already providing to help accomplish that "X."

Let me begin by telling you about the strength and accomplishments of our Association in this past year. In short, the AAG is thriving. We now have over 9,000 individual members at the end of 2004, a growth of over 2,000 members from our 1990s average. We have over 3,400 abstracts submitted to our annual meeting in Denver, which is in line with the strong registration we had for our centennial meeting in Philadelphia. The finances of the AAG are robust, thanks both to careful management and to concerted efforts to bring in new grants and contracts, and gifts for the Advancing Geography Fund. Indeed, thanks to your generosity, and the tireless efforts of our Executive Director Doug Richardson to reach beyond our membership, the Advancing Geography Fund is nearing \$1 million, and we will continue to build towards a second million. This fund will put our Association on a strong footing into the future, and will allow us to provide a broad range of services to our membership. Primary among these is ensuring the health and vitality of the full range of work in our discipline.

How are these resources being used? Part of the answer to this question, is to note that we have an excellent and dedicated staff at Meridian Place in DC who are making a broad range of contributions to geography. Specifically as we begin 2005,

the scope of our AAG extends beyond the specific services we often think of, such as publishing journals and hosting our annual meeting. The AAG also continues its longstanding emphasis on supporting K-12 education and there are new efforts to strengthen post-secondary education through initiatives building from the Geography Faculty Development Alliance led by Ken Foote and Michael Solem. So for example, recent AAG education proposals aim to support geography departments in preparing successful future faculty members. In addition to these invaluable services, the AAG is deeply involved in representing and advocating for geography in a range of arenas. For example, officers and executive staff of the Association work with administrators in our colleges and universities, with other disciplinary societies, with the National Science Foundation, National Research Council, and with countless government agencies such as the Departments of Education and Labor and the USGS.

A great example of this emphasis on public policy outreach and advocacy is the "AAG Washington Monitor" column in our newsletter, which reports on the work of the AAG's new Office of Public Policy, headed by John Wertman. This office informs us of federal legislative activity of importance to geography in the arenas of science and education policy. This work raises our awareness of federal policy debates on issues such as funding for the National Science Foundation and reauthorization of the Higher Education Act so that we are informed and can take an active role in advocating for our interests. This is just one example of the ways in which our Association is working to both advocate directly for geography, and also to provide information and a network through which we, as the embodiment of the AAG, can also be actively involved.

Another series of outreach initiatives serve both to unite constituencies within

geography, and also to position us in institutions and audiences beyond our discipline. For example, the Race/Ethnicity and Place Conference in September 2004 brought together over 300 scholars from a range of disciplines to discuss geographies of race/ethnicity (see Doug Richardson's column, November 2004). At the same time, this conference showcased geographical research to faculty and administrators at Howard University in Washington, DC, and brought together the AAG Diversity Task Force to learn from colleagues at Howard about the role that geography might play in historically minority institutions across the U.S. In addition, the AAG has sponsored two Mapping the News Conferences which showcased for journalists the power of geographical analysis and well-executed



Lawson

maps for achieving greater depth and sophistication in news reporting. These conferences contribute to Alec Murphy's goal of more fully integrating geographical analysis into public debate. In all these efforts, the AAG is working to reach out across the full range of intellectual work in the discipline. Other examples of include the AAG collaboration with NCGIA, UCGIS, and AGILE to mount the GIScience conference; the work of incoming Vice President Dick Marston to form a working group to consider how the AAG can better serve colleagues in physical geography; and Doug Richardson's current efforts to develop and secure funding for a "Geography and the Humanities" symposium.

When we talk about what the AAG can do better, I would argue that in many respects we are talking about what we ourselves can do. I say again, we are all the AAG, literally our Association is as strong as we make it. The Association is making great strides for geography, and has demonstrated clearly a commitment to

Continued on page 8

AAG to Hold 2005 Healthy Departments Workshop in Freeport, Maine

You are invited to participate in the second AAG Healthy Departments Workshop, scheduled for the week-end of June 25-26, 2005, near Freeport, Maine. As you probably know, one of the initiatives of current AAG President Vicky Lawson is to strengthen the position of departments in colleges and universities. Toward that end, Vicky organized the first AAG Healthy Departments Workshop last June in Seattle. Geared toward department chairs (or other current or prospective department leaders), the workshop provides a forum for exchanging ideas and insights on the challenges that departments are facing. Last year's workshop was a great success, so we have decided to do it again. This workshop will generate specific examples of successful strategies and plans, comparable data for different departments, and templates for annual reports. With an emphasis on idea-sharing, there will be both formal work sessions and informal networking sessions.

Alec Murphy and I are taking the lead this time, and are planning the

workshop for a different part of the country in the hope of attracting folks who couldn't come last year. The meeting will be held at a facility known as the "Stone House," which belongs to the University of Southern Maine (Provost Joe Wood will be our host). The Stone House is located at the end of a peninsula on the Maine coast, with the Casco Bay on one side and the Harraseeket River on the other (more information about the meeting site is available at www.usm.maine.edu/stonehouse).

Panelists will include geographers with considerable administrative experience at the department, college, as well as upper administration levels: Joe Wood (Provost, University of Southern Maine), Susan Hanson (Clark University), John Frazier (Binghamton University), Nancy Wilkinson (San Francisco State University), Alec Murphy (AAG Past President), Rod Erickson (Provost, Pennsylvania State University), and Vicky Lawson (AAG President). We would simply be looking for you to come prepared to share some informal thoughts on

aligning department goals with the broader mission of colleges/universities; the importance of understanding the current political and budgetary climate; ways of leading departments through evaluation of their mission and making changes necessary to succeed; and the challenge of engaging in outreach to schools, the state, and local communities.

Registration includes workshop program and panelists, two receptions, a welcome banquet, breakfast and lunch during the meetings, and transportation to and from hotel to the meeting site. Space is limited to thirty applicants, so please register early (registration cost \$295). If accepted, a formal letter of selection will be provided to assist you in getting financial support from your dean. Please send a note indicating your desire to attend to: Richard Marston, Workshop Organizer, School of Geology, 105 NRC, Oklahoma State University, Stillwater, OK 74048-3031.

Richard Marston
marstor@okstate.edu

We Are All the AAG from page 3

openness across the full range of the discipline. It can undoubtedly improve, and it is our responsibility as members to point out the need for improvement. But it is also our responsibility to contribute to the work of the Association. As my colleague Alec Murphy noted a year ago, "The AAG is vital to the health of our discipline, and every member who joins or renews makes it possible for the AAG to do more." To this I would add that we can influence

both the directions and effectiveness of the Association by working on committees, by participating in conferences, by submitting our research to our journals, and by using the networks of the Association (e.g., chair's listserves, AAG meetings, newsletter, specialty groups, and so on) to achieve our goals for geography.

Victoria A. Lawson
lawson@u.washington.edu

Women in Geographic Education Calendar

The National Council for Geographic Education (NCGE) Special Interest Network for Women in Geographic Education has published a "Historic Women in Geography Education 2005 Calendar." The 2005 calendar is intended to recognize the accomplishments of our foremothers and, to inspire young women today to pursue careers in geography and geography education. Proceeds from the sale of the calendar benefit the NCGE Women in Geographic Education Scholarship Fund.

Calendars are \$10 each. For more information please visit www.personal.psu.edu/jav106/geodwomen.

As you make travel plans, please note that the AAG Denver Annual Meeting begins at 2:00 pm on April 5, and concludes at 4:00 pm on April 9.

See www.aag.org/annualmeetings/index.cfm for schedule details.