

Ten Steps to Promote Your Discipline

AAG presidents have frequently dedicated a column to outlining the benefits of membership in the organization and a description of the services that the AAG provides for its members. For recent examples, see Vicky Lawson's January 2005 column titled "We Are All the AAG," Alec Murphy's April 2004 column titled "What If There Were No AAG," or Duane Nellis' July 2002 column "Why the AAG? Its Value as a Professional Organization." To this group I have added my January 2006 column titled "The AAG: Expanding Who We Are." In my last opportunity to address you as AAG President, I would like to turn this around and present ten actions that you can undertake to enhance the AAG and the discipline of geography in general.

Generate positive publicity for geography. When you have an interesting or newsworthy item, generate a press release or contact your local media outlet. If you have extra spaces at a company training course, field trip, short course, or seminar, invite local educators and elected officials to participate. Offer to speak to local community organizations such as the Lions Club or Kiwanis Club. You will reap good will and publicity. Keep up-to-date on public policy issues related to geography. Read the policy news items in *Science* and other journals. Look for opportunities to strengthen linkages between academic geography and the users of our research in business, industry, and government.

Be mindful of the upswing in geography in recent decades. In a forthcoming article in the *Journal of Geography in Higher Education*, Alec Murphy documents the surging interest in geography in American higher education. Over the period 1999-2005, American geography departments have experienced double-digit increases in the number of undergraduate majors, masters students, doctoral students, and faculty. The number of departments offering PhD degrees in geography has

increased from fifty-two in 1995 to sixty-eight in 2006. Still, the 200 new PhDs produced by American geography programs annually remains insufficient to meet the demand in business, industry, government, and academia. The U.S. Department of Labor has identified geospatial technology as one of the three most important emerging and evolving fields, along with nanotechnology and biotechnology (see *Nature*, January 22, 2004), with a worldwide market growing to \$30 billion in 2005. Beyond the numbers, the influence of geographers continue to grow in the arenas of public policy (see my December 2005 column), non-governmental organizations (see my February 2006 column), and in collaborative scholarship with other disciplines (see my October 2005 column). Harvard has returned to geography, opening the Center for Geographic Analysis, with an academic program in geography foreseen in the near future (see Doug Richardson's column in this issue).

Acknowledge that the strength of our discipline lies in its diversity of approaches. As humans, we cannot know if the world really is simple, ordered, unified, and harmonious, but geographers create objects of understanding that have these characteristics. Methods of study and the presentation of results differ between humanistic and scientific geographers. Neither group has a lock on the truth.

Be an activist. Volunteer for work on AAG committees. Stand for election to an AAG office, or nominate qualified colleagues for the same. Offer to organize a regional AAG meeting. Participate in your state Geographic Alliance. Make connections with the Meridian Place staff to volunteer to work on one or more of the AAG projects described in the *AAG Newsletter* or on the AAG website. Donate geographic materials and your time to worthy endeavors

in our discipline. Volunteer to serve on a local government committee, advisory or school board, or other position where your training, expertise, and experience will contribute to effective policy making. Geographers are especially qualified to improve K-12 education, municipal zoning, land-use planning, park management, natural hazard assessment and mitigation, cultural/historical preservation, and environmental policy. The only thing that truly fills you up is giving to others.

Follow a path that is moral and ethical. Engage your students in open discussions about ethical concerns in academia, business, industry, and government. Employers in business, industry, and government seek new hires committed to

honesty and integrity. Professional organizations in geography may one day offer a professional certification process equivalent to that used by the American Institute of Hydrology which asks the references for each candidate to describe a situation in which the candidate was placed in a potentially compromising position ethically but made the "right choice."

Contribute a donation to a geography related fund. The AAG Advancing Geography Fund includes a suite of named funds, which supports a wide range of AAG projects in outreach, education, and professional development. Support students by establishing a scholarship or award. Even a small donation is appreciated by recipients.

Nominate deserving colleagues for awards and honors bestowed by your own organization, community, or professional organization. Every fall, the AAG solicits nominations for awards in the *AAG Newsletter*. Pledge to nominate someone each year for an award from the AAG or one of its specialty groups. It is a



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AAUP Report on Faculty Salaries: The Devaluing of Higher Education

For the second consecutive year, the increase in overall average salaries for college and university professors failed to keep up with the rate of inflation. That is one of the central findings of "The Devaluing of Higher Education: The Annual Report on the Economic Status of the Profession, 2005-06," recently released by the American Association of University Professors (AAUP).

The report's findings call into question assertions contained in an issue paper on college costs prepared recently for the U.S. Secretary of Education's Commission on the Future of Higher Education. The issue paper, by commission consultant Robert C. Dickeson, claims that "faculty salaries are especially expensive," and that "the time-honored practice of tenure is costly." AAUP data however, indicate that overall average faculty salaries remain depressed as a result of a long-term pattern of insufficient investment in faculty.

The report compares faculty salaries to other higher education indicators, including presidential salaries and institutional returns on endowment investment. The concluding section explores an issue of

continuing concern to those committed to maintaining the quality of U.S. higher education: the low pay rates of part-time faculty, who now make up nearly half of all college and university teachers. Highlights of this year's report include the following:

- Overall average salaries for all ranks of full-time faculty across all types of institutions rose 3.1 percent between 2004-05 and 2005-06. When adjusted for inflation, however, average salaries declined by 0.3 percent, following a 0.5 percent decrease in 2004-05. The last time inflation-adjusted salaries declined for two consecutive years was from 1978-79 to 1980-81.

- Full-time faculty who continued from the previous year at the same institution did not fare much better. Their 1.1 percent inflation-adjusted salary increase is the lowest since 1996-97.

- The salary gap between full-time faculty at public colleges and universities and their counterparts at private (non-church-related) institutions continued to widen in 2005-06. This disparity seriously disadvantages public institutions in trying to attract and retain the most qualified faculty.

- Over time, a significant lag in compensation has developed between faculty and those with graduate degrees in other professions. Although most faculty members do not choose a career in academe for the paycheck, this increasing disparity makes it more difficult to recruit the best students into academic careers.

- Although both public and private institutions are recovering from the economic difficulties of the past few years, college and university presidents are reaping significantly greater rewards from the recovery than faculty. Between 1995 and 2005, median salaries for presidents rose 29 percent, while salaries for full-time faculty increased only 9 percent.

- The increasing costs of benefits, particularly medical insurance, represent a continuing strain on college and university budgets.

- The number of faculty employed only part time continues to increase. This year's report gives an indication of how low the pay for part-time faculty really is.

The complete AAUP report, along with supporting tables, is available at www.aap.org/research/index.htm. ■

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wonderful feeling watching a colleague for whom you prepared the nomination receive the recognition of peers.

Form collaborative teams for research, teaching, and outreach activities. Geographers have increased collaborative research faster than any discipline over the past sixteen years. Other disciplines are seeking geographic expertise in conceptual and technical matters. Be able to articulate the geographic advantage in explaining the spatial dimensions of biophysical and human phenomenon and the links between them. Take advantage of opportunities to

"cross the great divide" between human and physical geography.

Support your colleagues. Agree to review manuscripts for journals, research proposals, and applications for tenure and promotion. Edit a journal where you can assist scholars in communicating their ideas in print. Offer to mentor early career geographers in your organization. Take measurable actions to reaffirm your commitment to improving diversity in the discipline.

Be a lifelong learner in geography by remaining skilled, efficient, energetic, and earnest in your profession. Life is about

experiences, not acquisitions. Pledge to visit someplace new every year and share your insights with colleagues, the general public, and students. Decide to participate in the AAG Annual Meeting and a regional meeting each year. Attend interdisciplinary meetings (e.g., AAAS) and international conferences (e.g., IGC).

Our passion for geography is our greatest resource. ■

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