

Minutes from AAG Specialty Groups Call, August 25, 2020*

Invited participants:

Julian Barr	Gary Langham
Diana Beljaars	Renee Pualani Louis
Madelaine Cahuas	Muriel Marseille
Coline Dony	Chantelle Richmond
Cristina Faiver-Serna	Rae Rosenberg
Daniel Gonzalez	Derek Ruez
Richard Gorman	Edgar Sandoval
Lillie Greiman	Kate Schlott
Jonathan Hall	Deondre Smiles
Camilla Hawthorne	Willie J. Wright
Michelle Kinzer	

I. COVID-19 Internship Support Program (sent by Michelle Kinzer)**

This program was proposed out of concern that a generation of geographers will miss out on gaining real-world geography work experience because organizations (particularly non-profits, NGOs and government agencies) are cancelling their internship offerings amid COVID-19 budget cuts. It was of particular concern that students from underrepresented communities would be disproportionately affected.

The framework of this internship assistance program comes from 1 of [9 programs funded by AAG Council](#) to support geographers during COVID-19. Out of the total budget for this program, ~\$100K will be used towards providing internship stipends to students from underrepresented communities.

Our approach to answer this concern would happen in two phases. First, we need to identify internships that offer real-world experience and where students gain skills and/or knowledge in geography. We think geography faculty are well-positioned to bridge the gap between outside organizations they may know and work with, and the students best suited to fill the opportunities. Second, once a number of internships have been identified, we want to ensure these stipends go to students who are underrepresented in geography.

We are hoping the Specialty Groups invited for this call can:

- **Help us spread the word to get members to submit their internship opportunity** (we will provide template language and a link to the application form). The ideal target audience are faculty that have a connection with an outside organization that can take an intern if AAG funds their stipend. In their application they will check which SG they are applying with, and they will describe the internship opportunity and its merits.
- **Help us review the internship opportunities that were submitted** and select those that provide the most meaningful real-world work experience in geography.

The process would follow this approximate timeline:

- **September:** The SG adapts our message (which will include the application link) and spreads the word to their members.
- **October (2nd week):** Two selected leaders or members of an SG review their set of applications and select opportunities that fit the goals of this program.

- **November:** The faculty (if their opportunity is selected) helps the outside organization fulfill the open internship slot with a student who they feel is representative of the Specialty Group.
- **December:** The faculty notifies the AAG that the chosen student meets the goals of this program and meets the criteria of the outside organization. AAG will complete the administrative work to process the stipend.

Questions from SGs about the program Internship Support Program:

- **What if the faculty checks more than one SG?** Once enough applications are in (late September), and we see that many applicants selected more than one SG, we will consider having SGs select opportunities together to balance the available slots per SG.
- **Can faculty state that the outside organization will take on more than one intern?** Yes, but based on the pool of opportunities, the SGs will make a decision about how many slots will be funded.
- **Can the internship be outside of the U.S.?** Yes, international and U.S. internships will be considered and ranked by the same criteria.
- **Does each SG have the mandate to make sure these spaces are held for specific students?** Yes, we strongly believe SGs are much better positioned than we are to share language about the opportunities and encourage their SG members to select the students we are aiming to support. Everyone can apply, but we trust SG's leaders to rank and select opportunities that offer meaningful experience that reach students that are often overlooked, and we trust the SG members / faculty to select those students accordingly.
- **Are we prioritizing opportunities at outside organizations that truly could not afford to pay an intern?** Or are we also looking for hiring orgs that have the budget, but typically don't pay interns? We trust the SG leaders to make that judgment. It would be fair to prioritize opportunities at organizations that clearly have the need, but keep in mind that the first goal is to provide students with real-world geography experience that will set them up for success.
- **What does a "good" geography internship opportunity look like?** Mainly, a student should gain new and real-world geography experience and should receive supervision and support from their hiring org to feel part of their team. Some organizations will have experience with interns and others won't, but we fully trust SG leaders to be able to take into account the org's ability to host an intern successfully or to clarify this with the applicant if necessary.
- **Can these stipends supplement any "good" opportunities students already have lined up?** To fulfill the original intent of this program, we want these stipends to go to students who otherwise would get no opportunity or pay for their internship. It would not be in the spirit of the program to give the stipend to a student who is already being paid for their work.

II. Task Force (sent on behalf of Gary Langham)

The AAG is launching a "Task Force" to examine where AAG can make a difference in terms of diversity in AAG, in higher education, and society overall. These are only initial thoughts, and we simply want to get your feedback early on, before making more enduring decisions and move ahead. The result of the Task Force would be a Strategic Plan to be drafted by April 2021 ahead of the Annual Meeting (which would look similar to the new [AAG 3-Year Strategic Plan](#), as an example).

- **The Task Force would consist of** the co-chairs of the AAG Diversity and Inclusion Committee (which are already on-boarded), and a number of additional members representative of our community. We think the SGs on this call would be valuable to be represented on the Task Force, but are open to your suggestions.

- **We already contracted with a consultant** that would help guide this process. Any work needed by the Task Force (e.g. surveys, etc.) would be supported by AAG staff.
- **Why a Task Force?** Many suggested that we hire a “diversity officer” as a first step towards making a difference. The reason I have not done so yet, is based on my prior experience at two non-profits in the last 20 year, where we did just that. Even though the staff hired were excellent, the lack of mandate about what to do, set them up for failure and frustration. This is why a Task Force could be an important first step. This idea was further discussed with both AAG Council and with the co-chairs of the AAG Diversity and Inclusion Committee. From these conversations already came a few key areas in which the AAG could or should make a difference (see draft attached).

Main comments from Specialty Groups on the call:

- So many on the leadership of the SGs on this call, which are all fairly recent SG, are non-tenured junior faculty or postdocs (even still students sometimes). Opportunities like these add demands in terms of service time and are usually uncompensated.
- Prior experience or engagements at the AAG meeting on these issues have not been positive, and the result is that we don’t feel heard. For example, several senior participants came across as talking down to SG chairs and members during a session in DC. This adds to the fatigue and is an additional way our effort and work is not being recognized and compensated.
- There are lists of concerns that have been generated in the past. Can discussions start from these prior efforts?

*shared via email to all attendees on August 26, 2020; sent as two emails, split by topic I and II

**based on feedback in this meeting, the AAG opted not to run internships through the SG groups

AAG DIVERSITY TASK FORCE

I. Creating a more inclusive and diverse AAG

AAG Policies and Actions

- Equity audit
- Changes to constitution
- Code of conduct
- Membership data
- Staff
- Council
- Awards
- Annual Meeting
- Journals

II. Creating more inclusive and diverse geography departments in the United States

AAG as driver of change

- US Dept statistics
- US Dept best practices
- Authoritative reports
- Press releases
- Grading Departments
- Federal research funding

III. Creating a more inclusive and diverse geography experience in professional, educational, and societies around the world

AAG as part of a coalition

- Geography K-12 funding
- Federal Funding
- State Funding
- International legal protections
- Human Rights