

Engaging 2YC Students and Faculty in the AAG

Joy Adams, Association of American Geographers

1. From your perspective, what are the two things that your disciplinary professional organization or discipline-based NSF-funded project does particularly well in support of your work as an educator? Please be specific about how this activity works and why it is effective. Add web links if available.

The AAG has been involved with several recent grant-funded projects that I personally benefited from in my previous job as a faculty members and that I am confident have benefited many other educators during the two years I have been on the AAG staff. I discuss two examples below.

The **Geography Faculty Development Alliance** annual summer workshop [www.aag.org/gfda] provides early-career faculty with professional development that focuses on all aspects of an academic career (teaching, research/publication, service, work-life balance, networking, etc). It is effective because it allows new faculty to focus intensively on these topics, which are rarely explicitly addressed during one's graduate training. It also provides opportunities to collaborate with, learn from, and network with both peers and accomplished senior faculty who are committed to mentoring and supporting junior scholars. GFDA sponsors sessions at the AAG's Annual Meeting to help disseminate information and ideas to non-participants as well as to continue to engage participants beyond the duration of the workshop.

Enhancing Departments and Graduate Education (EDGE) [www.aag.org/edge] is an NSF-funded research and action project that seeks to improve geographers' preparation for careers in the academic, business, government, and nonprofit sectors. Our research suggests that students and employers alike feel that graduate students do not receive sufficient training to prepare them for the workplace. Our materials and outreach activities are helping to fill this gap, particularly for BGN employment, which receives scant attention, if any, in most graduate programs in geography. A great example is our new book *Practicing Geography: Careers for Enhancing Society and the Environment* [<http://www.pearsonhighered.com/educator/product/Practicing-Geography/9780321811158.page>]. EDGE helps educators, many of whom do not have extensive experience in non-academic employment, bring ideas and information about careers and professional development into their classes. The grant has also supported expansion and enhancement of our careers outreach, including our website (www.aag.org/careers), and has enabled us to collaborate with projects and programs beyond geography (such as this SERC workshop!) to gain new insights and develop/adopt best practices.

2. If you could propose (and obtain funding for) one new activity to engage community college instructors in professional associations and other discipline-based projects related to teaching and learning, what would it be? Describe the activity, explain why it is needed and why it is not currently available.

Currently, the AAG has great programs in place for K-12 education and graduate education. However, we have identified a gap when it comes to undergraduate programming, especially at two-year institutions. While we do have a Community College Affinity group within our association, participation by 2YC students and faculty in the AAG (as measured by memberships and participation in the AAG Annual Meeting) is very low overall. This situation is somewhat self-perpetuating because without 2YC involvement, issues and activities relevant to 2YC constituencies are not emphasized at our Annual Meeting nor in other association activities and programs to a large extent. Furthermore, existing resources and programs that are relevant to 2YCs might not be reaching these audiences.

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Based on my experiences as a college professor, I feel that a major barrier to participation by 2YCs in the AAG is the cost and size of our Annual Meeting. Many people become members and maintain their memberships because of their conference participation. While not as large as some professional meetings, our conference typically draws 8000 attendees each year and features 6000 presentations. The size and scope of the meeting can be very intimidating to undergraduate students and even to many faculty, particularly those from smaller campuses. In addition, the meeting registration and membership dues can themselves be cost-prohibitive, not to mention travel and lodging expenses.

To engage 2YC students and faculty in the AAG and its Annual Meeting, I would propose a that 2YC "pre-conference" be held the day before the start of the "regular" AAG meeting. The pre-conference would feature a combination of in-person and virtual presentations and sessions that are geared specifically toward 2YC audiences. For example, participants could deliver poster and oral presentations using technology such as Skype or other video conferencing technology. Because they would be presenting alongside and to other 2YC students and faculty, the sessions would provide an especially welcoming and supportive venue. While a participation fee would probably be necessary (particularly after any grant support has been expended), registration costs could be much lower and travel costs would be eliminated for participants who cannot afford to travel. For those attending the regular meeting, attendance at the pre-conference would be included in the registration fee. For them, the pre-conference would also provide opportunities to meet and network with others in advance of the larger conference to provide peer support and an opportunity to "acclimate" to the meeting. This model could also be extended to annual meetings of the AAG's regional subdivisions, which are held each fall and typically include more 2YC students and faculty. Participation in the regional 2YC pre-conference could be a precursor to participation in the Annual Meeting and its 2YC pre-conference the following spring.

In addition to sessions featuring student presentations, other sessions such as panels, paper sessions, plenary talks, and workshops held during the pre-conference would focus specifically on issues relevant to 2YCs. The AAG's very successful career mentoring and outreach activities could also be extended into the pre-conference. Some of the pre-conference activities could be delivered in a virtual format and/or broadcast as streaming video to allow participation for a nominal fee without necessitating travel to the conference venue. Arrangements could be made to offer education credits for meeting participation to encourage faculty involvement [see <http://www.ncge.org/graduate-credit> for a model]. The pre-conference proceedings could be published in a printed or electronic format to help disseminate the information and ideas presented and to provide publication opportunities for participating students and faculty.