

Applied Geography Conferences

Board Member Insights 2018

Status of AGC

- Doing OK, but with challenges
- Oct/Nov time of year is good for conference (multiple board members said this)
- Small size of conference is also good: a human scale of attenders and sessions that allows for networking, even across multiple fields
- Some concern over the sustainability of the conference given a highly competitive conference environment (many conferences, high expense of attending even one)
- Are we connecting with emerging researchers and research fields?
- Perception of AGC in some broader geography circles as a lesser conference: not as academically rigorous or current

Status of Applied Geography as a Field

- Extensive practitioner communities in many of our largest metropolitan regions
 - o Examples: 200 geographers on US Census staff in Washington DC, vibrant practitioner communities (business/government) in places like Charlotte and Dallas-Fort Worth
 - o Applied Geography as a field of practice is definitely alive and well
- However, Applied Geography still somewhat lost within the larger discipline of academic Geography, as some areas of traditional applied geography strength (e.g. retail geography) are not hot topics in academic research and publishing

Challenges/Questions for AGC Going Forward

- Key Question: What is valuable about conferences (not just AGC)?
 - o What is in it for participants?
 - o Shift in perception about the value/necessity of attending conferences
 - o A communication challenge – communicate with people who do not come, communicate value of attending a small but general meeting
 - o Need to understand what limits people have in attending conferences – number of conferences, cost
- Other issues mentioned by multiple board members
 - o Lack of venues for AGC: need a pool of future hosting possibilities
 - o Lack of board involvement on an individual member level
 - o Lack of a substantial international participant presence
 - o Need for sponsorship: more sponsors, more dollars
 - o Need to communicate the conference's existence to a broader community
 - o Need to positively differentiate the AGC from other geography conferences
 - o Costs of travel and attendance
 - o AGC still dominated by a small number of programs
 - o Need for partnership with AGSG-AAG (what prevents more of this?)

Opportunities for AGC

- Building strong connections with current and potential conference participants
 - o If we can do this, we build commitment and consistency in our community
 - o A “must-do”, but question is how
 - o Idea: possibility of introducing some form of conference membership (mentioned by multiple board members)
 - o But AGC must offer benefits to make such a membership useful (e.g. include a subscription to Papers in Applied Geography, conference registration discount)
- Identify “missing” session themes – develop depth in specific/new fields that are vibrant, partner with associated organizations that have topical strength
 - o Example: Demography – Southern Demographic Association
- Learn from other conferences, assess potential new meeting/session ideas
 - o Example: Western Regional Science Association – every paper presentation has discussant, create time for informal interaction
- Establish new awards/funding opportunities to target students and other groups that are underrepresented in AGC currently
 - o Incentivize people to participate
 - o Student presentation/research grants
 - o Travel grants for small business, local governments, other public officials
 - o Possibility: name awards after key founders/leaders in AGC community (John Frazier, Jay Lee, Burrell Montz, Graham Tobin)
- Offer workshop training in association with conference to encourage attendance
 - o Incentivize attendance for non-academics who need CEUs
 - o GIS Certification
 - o NEPA classes
 - o Other professional training opportunities
- Idea – reach out to Master’s programs that train practitioners
- Tag teaming conference with other meetings is still a good idea
 - o AAG Regional Divisions: SWAAG, MADAAG, SEDAAG, others
 - o Southern Demographic Association
 - o Western Regional Science Association
- Possibilities for partnership with the AGSG-AAG
 - o Promote Applied Geography broadly
 - o Drive creation of more Applied Geography funding opportunities
 - o Initiate more student opportunities for involvement
 - o Interface with practitioner communities (business, local/state/federal government)

Potential Future AGC Venues

- Washington, DC region (possible key partners: US Census, C2ER)
- Charlotte, NC (possible key partners: UNC-Charlotte, UNC-Greensboro, IMPLAN)
- Myrtle Beach, SC (key partner: Coastal Carolina University)
- Las Cruces, NM (key partner: New Mexico State University)
- Other general suggestions
 - o Colorado, New Mexico, Arizona, West Coast
 - o But need balance between these “outreach-oriented” states and AGC’s traditional Midwestern/east coast core
 - o Identify geography programs that self-identify as “applied” in some way