

SWAAG

NEWSLETTER

**Serving members of the Association of American Geographers in
Arkansas, Louisiana, New Mexico, Oklahoma and Texas.**

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May 2003

Letter from the Chair

It may seem a little trite for the first woman Chair of SWAAG in a while to be the one to bring up the subject of the status of women in geography in the region. But, as someone who has been active in SWAAG for a little over a decade now, and has watched the changes take place over that time I feel it's time for a little backslapping and congratulation – as well as a warning or two about the future. My interest in the subject was piqued at this year's business meeting when a comment was made about how much the departments that constitute SWAAG had done to promote the welfare, academic and professional, of women in the region over the last few years.

Intrigued, as to the accuracy of that statement I did a little investigating and, while much of what I have to say is anecdotal, the research will allow me to sow the next few paragraphs with at least a few facts here and there.

Any cursory visit to the banquet or the bar at a recent SWAAG meeting will certainly confirm that there are a growing number of young women at the regional meeting. Over the last decade the number of female presenters has increased dramatically and the chances of a female student winning one of the

paper/poster awards seems to be at parity with the young men of the region. This reflects, of course, the growing number of women, both undergraduate and graduate students that are choosing geography as their primary degree program. At the undergraduate level this seems to be true across the region, although for graduate programs the anecdotal evidence is that departments with SWIG (Supporting Women in Geography (or Geosciences)) chapters seem to have the highest proportions of women in their programs. SWT and UT-Austin are particularly noted for their active SWIG chapters and high levels of female participation not just in their programs, but also in regional and national meetings.

However, a glance at the faculty situation is not quite as encouraging. In the 1993-1994 academic year there were 21 female faculty in the departments of SWAAG, making up 17.3% of the total*. Of those 21, 10 were in adjunct or temporary positions (47.6%). By 2001-2002 the number of women had increased to 50, but with the increase in faculty lines, increased to only 18% of the total, and the proportion of temporary/adjunct female faculty had increased to 52%. The number of female full professors in the region had actually declined from 5 to 1, while the number

of assistant and associate professors rose in line with total hires. There are still numerous departments in the region that employ no women in full time faculty positions and several states in which there are only a token one or two women in full time positions in geography anywhere in the state. Despite this discouraging view there has been significant progress in some of the larger departments, most notably Southwest Texas State and University of Texas-Austin where recent hiring decisions have resulted in departments with relatively high proportions of full time faculty that are women.

The question that is begged by all of this statistical pre-ambling is, of course, so what? Why does it matter the gender of the teacher (researcher, mentor) as long as the quality of the teaching (research, mentoring) is of the highest quality. It matters because, there is a huge untapped resource of bright students out there who might just be attracted to our somewhat invisible discipline if they see that it is an accepted and welcoming place for them. We aren't the most visible discipline in the academic catalogue and we need every recruiting advantage we can lay our hands on. It is no surprise that the departments with SWIG chapters tend to have a good track record of recruiting female students or of encouraging them to go on to graduate school. Not that it requires female faculty for that kind of encouragement to occur, one of the most successful SWIG chapters is mentored by a male faculty member – but the presence of female faculty in a department is the most direct evidence (regardless of whether they personally support increasing female participation in geography) to any onlooker (or potential student) that the discipline is

making the first strides towards the kind of diversity that reflects the world that we live in. Only by increasing our efforts to include a group that represents half the population, are we going to have any chance of reaching out to the groups that are less accessible and less integrated. As geographers, as people who are intimately interested in the world around us and its differences, it seems obvious that our professional environment should go some way towards reflecting that diversity.

* All statistics from the AAG “Guide to Programs in Geography” 1993-1994 and 2001-2002

Fiona M. Davidson
Chair

**SWAAG Business Meeting Minutes,
2002, November 8th, Laredo, Texas**

Chair Fiona Davidson called the meeting to order at 5.15. Davidson extended thanks and recognition to Michael Yoder, Rod Squires and Texas A&M International University for an excellent meeting at which 116 people attended. Minutes of the 2001 business meeting as published in the 2001 newsletter were approved with no changes.

The Chair welcomed and introduced President of the AAG, Duane Nellis, who discussed a number of the activities taking place at the national office. He began by recognizing the hard work of Fred Shelley our regional AAG councilor and SWAAG members Kent Mathewson and Sarah Bednarz who are national AAG councilors. Nellis praised past executive director, Ron Abler and talked about how membership and budgets had increased under Ron'

guidance. Abler's replacement, Doug Richardson has a Ph.D from Michigan State and a professional background in private industry. A number of new initiatives are underway, including moves to strengthen our policy position partnerships, (see AAG newsletter, Nov. 2002). He also pointed out that while finances have improved, membership has declined—mostly due to decreases in student membership. A committee, including SWAAG member Kent Mathewson, has been formed to examine the issue. One suggestion is for a regional competition to bring in the greatest membership growth. Nellis also announced that an initiative to develop a permanent endowment that will be linked to the 2004 centennial year celebrations.

Officer's Reports

Treasurer John Tiefenbacher reported upon the state of SWAAG and *The Southwestern Geographer* finances. We are in healthy economic shape. As of February 15th 2002, SWAAG' balance was \$2,636, rising to \$3,972 by October 19th, 2002. Similarly, John reported that *The Southwestern Geographer's* was in healthy economic condition, increasing from \$29 to \$584 between August 2001 and September 2002. In response to a query on dues for our journal John stated that registration for the meeting includes registration for *The Southwestern Geographer* although members not attending the regional meeting may send dues directly to him.

Fred Shelley presented the SWAAG Regional Division Councilor's Report. He reiterated Dr. Nellis's points on membership recruitment, retention and visibility in the public arena and stressed the efforts of the central office to increase our international visibility.

Future national meetings of the AAG are to be held in Philadelphia (March 15-21, 2004), Denver (2005), and Chicago (2006). The Philadelphia meeting will be the centennial meeting for the Association. A ceremony will be held on the University of Pennsylvania campus, where the first meeting was held, and because of numerous centennial events, the 2004 meetings will be a day longer than usual. He concluded by stating it had been a privilege and an honor to serve SWAAG as its Regional Division Councilor over the previous three years.

Discussion

Lawrence Estaville made a motion to thank Fred Shelley for his hard work. The motion was carried unanimously. Estaville proposed a second motion, that the SWAAG executive committee "come up with suitable words" to thank Ron Abler from the SWAAG division. The motion was also carried unanimously. The membership then turned to consideration of our journal, *The Southwestern Geographer*. John Tiefenbacher called for more manuscripts, stating that 1 article had been accepted and 1 departmental history was ready, but he was hoping for more submissions for the next issue. Lawrence Estaville took this opportunity to make a motion to thank John Tiefenbacher for his work as editor thus far. The motion was carried unanimously. Two other issues emerged. First, what constituted a "term of editorship" and second, who should determine who, and how long, an editor should serve. After some discussion, Bill Doolittle made a motion to set the term of editorship for four years. The motion was carried by the Ayes. Lawrence Estaville made a motion that

the Executive Committee, on the basis of applications received, offer a recommendation to the SWAAG membership at the SWAAG business meeting. The motion was carried by the Ayes.

A number of additional issues relating to student papers were discussed at some length. First, the issue of faculty co-authorship of papers competing in the student paper competition. After some discussion, Lawrence Estaville made a motion that there be no co-authorship by faculty on papers entered for the student paper competition. The motion was carried by the Ayes. A second issue related to the general placement of student papers at the meeting. The discussion revolved around the identification of student papers. On the one hand, it is easier to judge student papers if they are concentrated in one or two sessions. On the other hand, the identification of student papers as such may be unfair and it may be better to have students in sessions that suit their focus. An additional point that the student paper competition be separated into undergraduate and graduate competitions was also raised. Following some lively discussion, Sarah Bednarz proposed a motion to form a committee to study the placement and organization of student papers. The motion was carried by the Ayes. Lawrence Estaville made a motion to have separate competitions for undergraduate papers and graduate papers. This motion was carried by the Ayes, also. Finally, a discussion of minority students in undergraduate programs and the possibility of a mini-session on minority representation in undergraduate geography education at the 2003 Stillwater meeting was discussed. Shortly thereafter a motion to adjourn

was carried and the meeting adjourned around 6.30.

STUDENT PAPER COMPETITION WINNERS

1st Place: Muhammed T. Rahman, Southwest Texas State University

2nd Place: David Stinchcomb, Southwest Texas State University

3rd Place: Michael Pease, University of New Mexico.

Honorable Mention: Rachel V. Geyster. University of Texas, San Antonio.

Poster Winner: René R. Colditz. University of Texas at Austin.

SWAAG NEWS

SWAAG TEAM WINS GEOBOWL ON FIRST EFFORT!

At this year's World Geography Bowl, our SWAAG team, consisting of Sumanth Reddy and Peter Osei-Adjei from University of North Texas, Muhammad Rahman from Southwest Texas State University, Paul Benson from University of Texas, Austin, and Suzzane Struve of Texas A&M took first place. Don Lyons and Joseph Oppong acted as Coordinators. Congratulations to the team!!

NEW GEOGRAPHY MAJOR AT TEXAS CHRISTIAN UNIVERSITY

At the May 5th, 2003 meeting of the University Council, the Major in Geography was passed and the name of the department will change to History

and Geography. Congratulations to Jeff Roet.

FUTURE SWAAG MEETINGS
2004 Stephen F. Austin Univeristy

SWAAG 2003 MEETING

2005 ?

Stillwater, OK—Oct. 23-25th Contact
Brad Bays, 405-744-6250 or
bbays@okstate.edu

2006 University of Arkansas,
Fayetteville

SWAAG ELECTIONS

SWAAG REGIONAL COUNCILOR TO THE AAG

SWAAG TREASURER

Nominations:

Jack Wright,
Dan Sui, Texas A&M, College Station.
Olen (Paul) Matthews, University of New Mexico, Albuquerque.

Nominations:

Mike Yoder, Texas A&M International, Laredo.
Brad Bays, Oklahoma State University, Stillwater, Ok.

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BALLOT

SWAAG REGIONAL COUNCILOR

SWAAG TREASURER

Vote for one candidate:

Olen (Paul) Matthews _____
Dan Sui _____
Jack Wright _____
Write in candidate _____

Brad Bays _____
Mike Yoder _____
Write in candidate _____

Must be postmarked before June 20th

return to:

Donald Lyons
SWAAG Secretary
Department of Geography
University of North Texas
P.O. Box 305279
Denton,
Texas, 76203-5279

SWAAG Secretary
Department of Geography
University of North Texas
P.O. Box 305279
Denton, TX, 76203-5279

Please Post
The Southwestern Geographer

A CALL FOR PAPERS

Journal of the Southwest Division of the Association of American Geographers

The Southwestern Geographer is the flagship journal of the Southwest Division of the Association of American Geographers (SWAAG). SWAAG is composed of geography departments and AAG members residing in the states of Arkansas, Louisiana, New Mexico, Oklahoma, and Texas. SWAAG's journal highlights geographic research by geographers in the region, research about the region, and research presented at meetings held within the region.

The journal editor is presently seeking research manuscripts that fit one of the following criteria: articles written by geographers and members of SWAAG and AAG, articles on topics germane to the southwestern United States and northern Mexico, and articles based on research presented at SWAAG meetings. In particular, submissions by emerging scholars (recently-appointed faculty and/or students) are strongly encouraged, but others will not be excluded.

All research manuscripts will be peer reviewed. To be included in the next volume (Volume 7) of this annual publication, manuscripts must be submitted by September 31, 2003.

Manuscripts should not exceed 8000 words and should be submitted to the editors in hard-copy form. Please provide three copies of your manuscript for review. The style of the journal follows the style guidelines of the *Annals of the Association of American Geographers*. Please remove name and address from title pages, abstracts, and notes of submitted manuscripts and please do not include acknowledgements or "authors" on maps or figures in the manuscript for review. Please consult either the most recent issue of the *Southwestern Geographer* or the *Annals* for citation, cartographic, and manuscript style. If accepted for publication, final, revised manuscripts and illustrations should be submitted in electronic form.

For further information please contact the editor at: John Tiefenbacher, Editor of *The Southwestern Geographer*, Department of Geography, Southwest Texas State University, San Marcos, TX 78666. E-mail: JT04@swt.edu, Phone: (512) 245-8327.