

SWAAG

THE NEWSLETTER OF THE SOUTHWESTERN DIVISION OF THE ASSOCIATION OF AMERICAN GEOGRAPHERS

August, 2005

Editor, John Tiefenbacher

In this Issue:

- Letter from the SWAAG Chair
 - SWAAG Welcomes the New Editors of *The Southwestern Geographer*
 - Call for Papers for the Annual SWAAG Meeting, 2005
 - Minutes from SWAAG Business Meeting, 2004
 - Treasurer's Report, 2004
 - Call for Donations: SWAAG Purchase of AAG Birthday Brick
 - Ballot for SWAAG Treasurer
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Letter from the Chair

While participating in the 11th Annual International Sustainable Development Conference in Helsinki, Finland, I was thinking about what to write about for this year's Letter from the Chair. At the final plenary session everyone gathered to discuss "The Future Challenges of Sustainable Development." Pretty quickly the discussion cleaved along a number of predicable positions. Is sustainable development about environmental or social justice? Can sustainable development be achieved via the market place or by government intervention?

U.K. Geographer Pauline Deutz argued that the essence of Sustainable Development is about sustaining capitalism (albeit, an environmentally benign capitalism) but since

capitalism is inherently unjust (creating winners and losers) she argued for movement toward global socialism. On the other side of that fence, Geographer Pierre Desrochers argued that capitalism allocates resources efficiently and therefore we should look to the market place to solve environmental problems. For Pierre, the issue is not market failure but government failure.

Cleaving in other directions were arguments about how to raise the economic and social quality of life for the world's poor without decreasing their environmental quality. Still others argued about differences between equity/equality and "quality of life", the need for global leadership or a global crisis to wake-up the planet to the potentially

devastating impacts of environmental degradation.

Such weighty questions are important for sure, but as some of the delegates pointed out, they were the same issues that were discussed at the 1st Annual International Sustainable Development Conference and it didn't seem like much had been accomplished in the intervening years. The problem, I think, is that everyone is correct. For example, capitalism does produce social injustice but it is also very effective at allocating many resources (perhaps more so those related to wants rather than needs!). Greater social and environmental equity and increasing quality of life are relative to your current condition, making it difficult to assess progress.

By focusing on the specific places with which we are familiar, rather than trying to change the world through rhetorical debate, I think we can bypass these, albeit important arguments and get more accomplished on the ground. Thomas Seager, a civil engineer from Purdue University, demonstrated this strategy most clearly. For Tom, sustainability is the *ethical concept* that things should be better in the future than the present.

Using practical examples, he demonstrated "a sustainable decision-making, policy and design model" that can be used to develop sustainable management plans that protect both the environment and the needs of the various stakeholders. At its heart, the model seeks to clearly identify the various stakeholder roles (including that of the scientist), and works to develop trust and compromise between the various parties.

Of course, for many geographers this is little more than business as usual as much of our research and policy contributions are grounded in specific places. My point, however, is that it may be much easier to resolve macro-level arguments about the role of capitalism, governance and the environment, in our local contexts rather than at the rhetorical level. By focusing upon the issues in the places where we live, and bringing our geographic expertise to the table, perhaps we can accomplish concrete

improvements in the everyday life of our places, without having to agree philosophically with either the conservative business person or the left-wing deep ecologist or the socialist sitting around the table with us.

SWAAG Welcomes the New Editors of *The Southwestern Geographer*

Beginning this fall, with Volume 9 (2005), the editorship of *The Southwestern Geographer* (the journal of the Southwestern Division of the Association of American Geographers (SWAAG)) passes into the hands of new co-editors Jeff Lash (Ph.D. Texas State University-San Marcos) and Jennifer Speights-Binet (Ph.D. Louisiana State University) of the Department of Geography at the University of Houston-Clear Lake. Jeff and Jennifer begin a four-year term as editors.

The mission of the journal remains the same and continues the two-pronged goals established in 1997: to provide an outlet for excellent research by faculty, students, and practitioners from within the SWAAG region, about the SWAAG region, and of interest to the SWAAG membership; and to provide an institutional memory by publishing histories of the people and degree programs within the region. Jeff and Jennifer will continue to develop and strengthen the journal through future innovations.

New, original research manuscripts (and revisions of previously submitted manuscripts) should be sent to the editors at: Geography Program, The University of Houston-Clear Lake, Box 246, 2700 Bay Area Blvd., Houston, Texas 77058-1098. Their email addresses are: lash@cl.uh.edu (Jeff Lash) and SpeightsBinet@uhcl.edu (Jennifer Speights-Binet). They should be contacted regarding manuscript inquiries and subscriptions to and back issues of *The Southwestern Geographer*. Please join us in thanking Drs. Lash and Speights-Binet for their contributions and commitments to *The Southwestern Geographer* and to SWAAG.

CALL FOR PAPERS

SWAAG 2006 - Fayetteville AR
November 9th-12th



Abstract Deadline – **October 1st**

Student Paper Competition Deadline – **October 1st**

[Student Paper Competition Form](#)

Pre-Registration Deadline – **November 1st**

(Registration after this date does not guarantee banquet ticket)

[Pre-registration Form](#)

[Preliminary Program](#)

Coming soon

Field Trip Details

Hotels and Directions

Fayetteville Information

Watch for Updates!

<http://www.uark.edu/campus-resources/imachar/SWAAG.mht>

[Note: Not compatible with Netscape browsers.]

Student Paper/Poster Competition Form

Name _____

Institution (affiliation) _____

Address _____

Telephone _____ Email: _____

Paper Presenter _____

Poster Presenter _____

In multiple author submission **all the authors must be students**. In the case of a multiple authored paper/poster win the prize money will be split amongst the authors.

Please submit a 500 word abstract in the standard AAG format: Name(s), affiliation(s), Paper/poster Title; abstract body; key words, **as an attachment to an email** to myoder@tamiu.edu by **October 1st**

Abstracts should be compatible with Microsoft Word and the Subject line of the email should be **SWAAG Student Paper: Your Name**.

The abstracts will be sent to a committee of five judges who will rank the papers and determine the ten best (based on abstracts) papers. Those ten papers will go forward to the two student paper competition sessions on Thursday November 10th where they will under go further judging for content and presentation. All the papers that do not make it into the two student competition sessions will be distributed among the remaining paper sessions.

All poster submissions will be judged at the end of the poster session on Thursday – there is no limit to the number of student posters that can be in the competition.

Prizes

1st Place Paper & Poster \$100

2nd place Paper & Poster \$50

3rd place Paper & Poster \$25

Any questions? Email: myoder@tamiu.edu

Minutes from SWAAG Business Meeting, Nacogdoches, Texas

November 12, 2004

John Tiefenbacher, SWAAG Secretary

1. **Don Lyons**, SWAAG president, convened the business meeting at 4:00.
2. Lyons expressed SWAAG's gratitude to **Darrel McDonald** and all faculty, staff and students of the Department of Political Science and Geography and at Stephen F. Austin State University for hosting this year's SWAAG meeting.
3. Lyons welcomed **Victoria Lawson**, the President of the AAG, and **Richard Marston**, President-elect of the AAG, to this year's SWAAG meeting.
4. The minutes from the 2003 business meeting were approved.
5. Report from the Regional Councilor: **Paul Matthews**, SWAAG's regional representative to the AAG provided a report of the issues before the AAG.
 - a. The AAG has offered to handle the treasury and bookkeeping for SWAAG. The AAG central office is extending this service to AAG's regional organizations. They already handle the treasuries of many of the AAG's specialty groups. Lawson provided details of the AAG's rationale and position regarding this offer of services.
 - b. AAG is encouraging the recruitment of faculty from junior colleges for membership in the AAG. Junior colleges are important and are underrepresented in AAG membership. Blinn College was spotlighted in this discussion.
6. Report from the AAG President: Lawson provided a report of her views of the state of affairs and the president's initiatives.
 - a. Lawson reports that professional geography is doing well in the U.S. There have been many new programs established in the last couple of years. There are many opportunities for employment in the private and public sectors.
 - b. President's initiatives:
 - i. "Healthy Departments Initiative": keeping departments strong and AAG intervention on behalf of departments
 - ii. "Diversity Initiative": working toward recruiting and serving minority students, recruiting and mentoring minority faculty, and developing minority membership in the AAG.
 - c. Lawson emphasized the importance of these initiatives and expressed her appreciation to Stephen F. Austin State University for their hosting of this meeting.
7. Treasurer's Report: **Michael Yoder**, SWAAG treasurer provided the following accounting of SWAAG funds. This report is attached and follows the business meeting minutes.
8. Report from Conference Organizers: McDonald reported that 198 people were registered and attended this year's meeting, a joint SWAAG-American Society for Photogrammetry and Remote Sensing meeting. Approximately two-thirds of the attendees were SWAAG members. McDonald reported on the balance of the activities scheduled for the SWAAG meeting.

9. Lyons reported that the 2005 SWAAG meeting will be held in Fayetteville, Arkansas and will be hosted by the Department of Geosciences at the University of Arkansas-Fayetteville. The dates for this meeting are November 10 through 13, 2005.
10. A motion was moved (and passed) to hold the 2006 SWAAG in Norman, Oklahoma. This meeting will be hosted by the Department of Geography at the University of Oklahoma.
11. Future meeting sites and potential hosts were discussed.
12. Lyons opened the floor for nominations for treasurer of SWAAG. The officers for 2005-2007 (two-year terms start following this year's SWAAG meeting) will be: **John Tiefenbacher**, SWAAG president, and Michael Yoder, SWAAG secretary. The treasurer's position will be open. Lyons established a procedure for this election. He would establish a Nominations Committee. Nominations to be submitted to Lyons. And a ballot appears in this issue of the newsletter (see previous page in this newsletter).
13. The purchase of an AAG Birthday Brick by SWAAG was proposed by Lyons. The cost of the brick would be \$1500. Individual members should submit their donations to: **Juana Ibanez**, Department of Geography, University of New Orleans. See form in this newsletter for further details. Ibanez has volunteered to collect this money and purchase the brick.
14. Motion to transfer SWAAG's treasury to the AAG was voted on and passed.
15. Discussion of strategies for community college outreach.
 - a. Marston suggested a special poster session for community colleges at the next SWAAG meeting. Commented that there have been commitments from some 50 community colleges to participate.
 - b. **Kent Mathewson** suggested that perhaps there could be a focus on community colleges within states where meetings were to be held.
 - c. **Sarah Bednarz** suggested that community college courses need to be "certified" as taught by geographers with geography degrees.
16. Other Business:
 - a. **Bill Doolittle** noted that the University of Houston – Victoria now has a president **Tim Hudson**, who is a geographer (Ph.D. Geography, Clark University).
 - b. **Lawrence Estaville** reemphasized the diversity task force goals. Stated that the discipline has successfully attracted an increasing number of women, however, there has been little success in recruitment of minorities. Motion to redouble our efforts at minority recruitment.
 - c. **Teresa Howard** encouraged SWAAG to strive to include and value the participation of non-academic geographers.
17. Meeting adjourned at 5:30.

Call for Donations: SWAAG Purchase of AAG Birthday Brick

Juana Ibanez of the Department of Geography at the University of New Orleans has spearheaded the campaign to make donations on behalf of SWAAG to the AAG's Advancing Geography Endowment, one element of the AAG's centennial celebration: "A central purpose of the campaign is to establish a long-term endowed funding base from which to support critical needs of the discipline and the association" (*AAG Newsletter* 38(9): 5) such as to help "the AAG and geography move forward on numerous fronts, including special efforts and events to enhance geography in the media, workshops on thriving geography programs, successful efforts to enhance diversity in our discipline, membership enhancements, and a stronger presence of geography in Washington, DC and beyond..." (*AAG Newsletter* 40(7): 11). Donations from SWAAG membership would go to the "purchase" of a \$1500.00 brick (with "SWAAG" written on it) that would be placed in the courtyard of the Meridian Place office in Washington, D.C.

SWAAG will also issue a challenge to all of the other AAG regional organizations to accrue the donations needed to acquire similar bricks and to support the endowment. We need not stop our campaign with a single brick; we can shoot for \$3000 or \$4500... We'll leave our mark on Meridian Place with our contributions.

Craig Colten of Louisiana State University has made good on his SWAAG 2004 meeting pledge of his first commission check from the publication of his book "An Unnatural Metropolis." We, thus, are already past the "century mark" in donations. Join us in thanking Craig for his generosity... Thanks, Craig! Let's keep the ball rolling and donate to this campaign

Checks payable to "SWAAG-UNO" should be mailed to: Juana Ibanez, Department of Geography, Liberal Arts 265, University of New Orleans, New Orleans, LA 70148. Please mark "SWAAG Brick" on the envelope to ensure that your contribution is received.

Ballot for SWAAG Treasurer (2005-2007 Term)

_____ **Sarah Bednarz**

_____ **Other (Write-in Candidate)**

Return to: John Tiefenbacher

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