Chapter 100
Applied Geography Education in Focus:
Strategic Panel Session

Nairne Cameron
Algoma University, Canada

Kingsley E. Haynes
George Mason University, USA

Edwin Butterworth
CACI International, USA

Bill Hodge
City of Midland, USA

Dawna L. Cerney
Youngstown State University, USA

Robert B. Honea
KU Transportation Research Institute, USA

William J. Gribb
University of Wyoming, USA

Brandon J. Vogt
University of Colorado Colorado Springs, USA

ABSTRACT

A panel session on "Applied Geography and Education" was held at the 2011 Association of American Geographers Annual Meeting. Each panelist presented their observations and suggestions followed by a roundtable discussion. Potential directions for enhancing applied geography education are grouped by student recruitment and retention, professionalism, career familiarization and networking, career listings, research, strategy, and internationalism.

INTRODUCTION

A panel session on applied geography education took place in Seattle on April 14, 2011. Sponsored by the Applied Geography Specialty Group and the Geography Education Specialty Group of the Association of American Geographers (AAG), it was organized and chaired by Nairne Cameron (Algoma University). A wide range of presenters provided different perspectives included (listed by panel order): Bill Hodge (City of Midland, Texas), Dawna L. Cerney (Youngstown State University), William J. Gribb (University of Wyoming), Edwin Butterworth (CACI International), Brandon J. Vogt (University of Colorado, Colorado Springs), Robert B. Honea (KU Transportation Research Institute), and, Kingsley E. Haynes (George Mason University) (Figure 1).

Figure 1. From Left to Right, Kingsley E. Haynes, Bill Hodge, Robert B. Honea, Brandon J. Vogt, William J. Gribb, Dawna Cerney (Nairne Cameron and Edwin Butterworth not pictured) at the Applied Geography Education Session. April 14, 2011, at the AAG Annual Meeting, Seattle, WA

The question posed to presenters was "How can applied geography education maintain its current status or quality or attain a higher profile or level with:

- Students (traditional, mature, distance, non-major students);
- Potential clients and employers (public, private, and non-governmental sectors);
- Broader geography community; and
- Internationally?"

Each panelist discussed client-driven pedagogical approaches. Nairne Cameron described the Class Exercise Competition launched by the Applied Geography Specialty Group (AGSG) that awards exceptional assignments featuring a real or fictional client. Dawna Cerney observed the increasing role universities play as incubators for students' new careers; the importance of interfacing with the general public; and, the use of media and networking tools. Robert Honea recommended that both faculty and students engage in client-driven work to enhance the teaching of the former, and career preparation for the latter. Bill Hodge sees GIS as a tool to bridge "Town-Gown" relations. William Gribb explained how he engages his classes in actual planning exercises around the State of Wyoming to model a real world experience. Ed Butterworth, coming from a management perspective, suggested that applied geographers can teach other geographers how to "do business," work with clients, and to help students find jobs. He also recommended that we include more social opportunities for working geographers enrolled in classes part-time and mentorship for emerging geographers who recently entered the workforce. As a professor, Brandon Vogt uses a variety of methods to engage students in applied geography by urging his students to contemplate their career plans early, showing them job search websites, exposing students to potential careers through field trips, employing familiar local datasets, and connecting students with work opportunities. Both Brandon and Ed spoke in favour of "fun" entry level courses that build interest in the discipline. Kingsley Haynes recommended that the AGSG engage more on an international level. He emphasized the importance of training in the "Science of Design" in addition to the "Science of Discovery" to equip students with problem-solving skills. He also stressed the value of imparting students with skills in professionalism.

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