

AGC Priorities: A Proposal

Murray Rice

We are in the midst of a challenging time for the discipline of geography. For geography as a whole, we have the central challenge of defining our contribution in a world that does not always understand the relevance of a spatial perspective. Many disciplines are competing for the attention of the academic, governmental, business, and non-profit decision-makers that allocate the scarce resources that are necessary to fuel society's research and teaching initiatives. However, balanced against that, I believe that all of us as AGC directors have a foundational conviction that, among all perspectives, applied geography is uniquely situated to both promise and deliver insights that make a real difference for the future of our world. The AGC, as our applied geography's dedicated annual conference, is centrally positioned to be a primary driver for everything that we do as applied geographers.

However, for us to take up the position and role we all see applied geography as having, our conference must be organized to empower, encourage, and unleash all of the capabilities we have as a research and teaching community. As AGC executive director, I would focus on two priorities that I see as being of central importance to allowing our conference to achieve its potential.

First, I see opportunity for us to renew our conference's commitment to **teamwork**. By working together and encouraging all on the board to be involved and active in setting the conference direction, I believe we can achieve even greater things. More specifically, I see it as important that we empower our board to move beyond decision approval and transition further into active decision making. To this end, I would like to see our board identify key focus areas for conference attention, and establish board subcommittees who are given the authority and responsibility to pursue conference interests in those areas. These focus areas should be defined by the board as a group, but they could include areas such as finance, conference venue identification, practitioner engagement, attendance promotion, and the like. Details on how this should work would clearly need to be formulated by the board as a whole, but I believe that empowerment of our board and distribution of key roles among our members has substantial potential to benefit the conference and applied geography broadly.

Second, I see opportunity for us to collectively increase our **engagement with outside organizations** that share common interests with the AGC. One central example would be the *Applied Geography Specialty Group* of the AAG. AGC interests obviously overlap with those of the AGSG, and there is considerable room for ongoing, consistent collaboration leading to mutual benefit. However, there are more possibilities as well. Other potential partners for increased communication and collaboration could include the AAG, government departments and agencies such as the *US Census* or *FEMA* where we already have existing links, university geography departments across the country where members of our AGC community already work and study, and businesses such as *Esri*, *Pitney Bowes/MapInfo*, *Macy's*, and *Starbucks* that either explicitly focus on geographic analysis or make major use of geographic analysis for their operations. Increased coordination of efforts with these organizations promises to make everyone better and more capable of meeting future challenges.

Beyond any of the brief specifics above, the final thing I would like to emphasize is that as AGC executive director I want to be open to your further priorities as a board. You come across things in your work that no one else encounters, and by sharing the opportunities and threats we collectively see as we do our jobs, we can together build a communication and networking venue in our conference that truly works to build up applied geography as a whole.