

NASSS Dialogues: A Discussion of the Future

Our November 2004 meeting in Tucson marked the 25th annual conference of NASSS. In recognition of this important milestone, all NASSS members were invited to participate in a Friday discussion of the future direction of NASSS at a special session. The session featured four groups and members selected joined the discussion in one group addressing one specific topic. These topics were:

- Membership, retention and outreach efforts, including promotion of diversity, recruitment of graduate students, and the conference climate.
- Communication among the NASSS membership about organizational matters.
- Conference structure and content, including interdisciplinarity, accessibility and rigor.
- Administrative structure of NASSS, including terms of office and role delineation.

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Administrative structure of NASSS, including terms of office and role delineation.
(summary by Vicky Paraschak)

We had a small group, but a lively discussion. Key discussions include the following:

- 1) We felt that the terms of office were fine except for the President, who only has one busy year preparing the program before she/he has to step into the role. We agreed that putting together the NASSS program is an onerous task, and thus recommend that our bylaws be changed so that we elect a Vice-President, who assists the President-Elect with the NASSS program. A person coming in at Vice-President would thus be making a four year commitment – VP, President-Elect, President, and Past President. This will provide the President with more experience prior to her/his actual year in office, and provide important assistance and mentoring for those who do the program each year.
- 2) We had a long and varied discussion on the American versus Canadian versus International nature of our members and their role on the Board. Peter Donnelly claimed that the initial intention of the Board (in the late 1980s) was that one of the positions be a Canadian at minimum. We have been operating on the Board under the assumption that one Member at Large must be Canadian. Peter also mentioned that he felt Canadian members have some concerns that could be addressed by the Board. We talked about the idea of having one Member at Large be designated a Canadian position, and one be American, and that each Member at Large actively seeks out issues for their part of the membership – at least for a few years, so that we can ensure that our organization is adequately addressing both Canadian and American concerns. The third Member at Large could then be Canadian, American or an International, in keeping with our Bylaws, which allow International members to be on the Board. This change could be done through a Board decision, and incorporated into our policies and procedures manual.