

## 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.

### Special meeting – Membership Group

Notes taken by Emma Wensing

“Membership, retention and outreach effort including promotion of diversity, recruitment of graduate students and conference climate”

#### 1. Recruitment

How does NASSS promote its conference? (academic/disciplinary diversity)

- Is there formal exposure and advertising of the conference, or do only members know about it?
- Is there exposure to non-sport sociology departments? (emails to these departments) Could this be a way of drawing in new members?
- Is, or should the Conference posted on generic conference-finding websites (sport or non-sport related).

Many members in the group were here because their supervisor had brought them to/introduced them to NASSS when they were a grad student. (→ recruitment of grads is important because there is continuity into the full membership)

Is it possible to have Take a student to lunch earlier – like on the first day → get to meet people earlier, breaks down some social barriers sooner

OR, could we perhaps have a roundtable-type lunch on the first day as part of the conference to facilitate discussion/intermingling between faculty and grads. This would probably mean an increased fee, but people seemed ok with that (If people have paid for it, they will likely come). But, we need to keep in mind accessibility in terms of cost – this is important.

Nametag identifier – for people at their first conference (anyone, not just grad students). Intent not to single out, but so people know they are new and so perhaps experienced NASSS-goers can make an effort to include these people.

#### 2. Diversity

How to encourage/retain diversity within the membership?

Variation in social activities – the two functions are pretty similar. General positive response to this is group. Also, often hard in this type of social situation for non-native English speakers to participate in conversation due to low lighting, noise, and alcohol. DEBATE (contentious issue – NASSS is a time for socialising/catching up amongst faculty, how much alcohol should there be, it shouldn't just be experienced NASSS-goers that try to include new people, new people have to make an effort to introduce themselves, say hi etc – if you do that most people are pretty friendly). Resistance to the idea of no-alcohol.

No suggestions for alternatives social activities generated.

(EW observation: It appeared most exclusionary practices/problems are related to social functions, not academic part of conference)

(not sure who/where this idea came from, but perhaps a 'tips for NASSS'/'making the most of NASSS' section on web page).

Keeping it conscious: we have to be aware of our own exclusionary practices. As established members it is partly our responsibility to approach new people (if they have dots on their name tags, then we know who they are!).

Also, Disciplinary Inclusively → Good to have people from other areas, but, we are a sociology conference. All people attending conference should be able to defend their theory/method/results. (e.g. if you are doing a psych paper, be ready to answer soc-driven questions). Asking challenging questions should not be seen as academic exclusion, but critique and interest.

We could consider changing the name from 'Sport' to be more inclusive of the academic diversity already apparent within NASSS – perhaps Sport, PE and Health?

Good to keep the Wednesday address related to the are/issues of the region.