

Debrief Report from the Co-Chairs of AMS 2009 Annual Meeting
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Planning for 2009 AMS meeting

Planning for the 2009 meetings began in February 2007. The incoming AMS President, Walt Dabberdt, had a clear vision of how he wanted to conduct the Presidential Forum and of the main over-arching themes he wanted to emphasize during the meetings. Walt conveyed his ideas to his co-chairs early on in the planning process, which helped to make the initial planning for 2009 meetings very straightforward for the co-chairs. Adhering closely to the AMS timelines for task deliverables provided by Claudia Gorski enabled us to stay on top of the planning process throughout most of the 2 years of planning and we encountered no major glitches.

The STAC and Board program chairs were contacted well in advance for their participation in the annual meetings with emails and attached letter sent from the AMS President and co-chairs with details of the six overarching themes of the meetings. Follow-on emails and phone calls to confirm STAC involvement were sent later by the STAC Commissioner, by Claudia, and by the co-chairs. The preference was not to have each specialty conference and board schedule sessions within their conference to address the six themes individually (as plenary or joint specialty sessions), rather to have only six themed sessions during the annual meetings with presentations from invited speakers and/or a selection of the topic-related abstract submissions from the relevant STAC conferences and boards.

This was perhaps the greatest challenge we faced as co-chairs, to work with all of the specialty conferences and boards to facilitate the formation of these themed sessions, ensure they had maximum visibility in the schedule, and minimal conflict with the themes of parallel sessions of the specialty conferences/boards.

The STAC and board program chairs were asked to fill in the spreadsheets set up by Sue on the Doodle web page, identifying the subset of the 6 themed areas that their specialty conference would most likely receive and contribute papers, and then working with volunteer (program) leads for each theme to coordinate the selection and schedule of papers for the six themed sessions. Doodle.com was an excellent tool for providing online interactive capabilities and rapid updates of input received from multiple users. It was an effective tool for the President and co-chairs during the planning stages and during teleconference calls with the program chairs.

Considerable effort and collaboration occurred between specific STAC program chairs and the volunteer lead for each theme in selection of key abstracts (and/or invited speakers) for the six themed sessions. Volunteer leads for the six themes were composed

of teams of the following program chairs: Bruce Baker, Petra Klein, Darko Koracin, Genevieve Maricle, Joe Schaefer, Dave Schultz, and Stephen Weiss. A substantial part of the success of this effort is attributable to Petra Klein who was on all of the six teams and who played a major coordinating role.

A known, potential bottleneck in the planning process is the critical stage of reviewing the layout of the whole meeting schedule (presentations), after the specialty conferences and boards have provided their “completed” schedule of sessions to the AMS. This activity occurs in the early Fall before the AMS meetings. Difficulties can arise when working with various program chairs over a very short time frame of a couple of weeks to adjust their programs to minimize conflicts or similarity in themes between sessions. Because of the approach taken this year to have 6 special themed sessions and resulting coordination that had to occur between program chairs to identify the interdisciplinary papers among their sets of received abstracts for these special sessions, conflicts in session scheduling between conferences was mostly minimal.

The AMS is receptive to new ideas brought “to the table” in coordinating and planning for the AMS annual meetings. These included the scheduling of special sessions, including the Presidential Forum and themed sessions, exploring potential tours and volunteer activities related to the overall themes of the meeting, involving local community (Phoenix and surrounding areas) in the meetings in some capacity (e.g. Town Hall meeting: Climate Change, Indigenous Communities in the United States, and AMS: Needs and Opportunities). The Co-chairs worked closely with the AMS (Claudia and Cara) and with the program chairs of the Symposium on Policy and Socio-Economic Research (Julie Demuth, Genevieve Maricle, Mark Shafer and Sheldon Drobot) in identifying and arranging tours (e.g. the Tonopah Desert Recharge Project Tour). Several volunteer/community outreach activities were explored and organizations contacted (e.g., Sonoran Institute – volunteers revegetate the banks of Arizona’s Santa Cruz River; Saguaro Lake Ranch, Udall Foundation and Habitat for Humanity). For a variety of reasons, we were not able to set up AMS pre-arranged volunteer activities for the AMS community, with the exception of the Habitat for Humanity. Low sign up by the AMS community for the latter resulted in the AMS having to cancel the offering.

While it may seem that there ended up being a lack of local community involvement in the AMS meeting in Phoenix (excluding Weather Fest and the other more standard AMS public programs), it was not for a lack of concerted effort on the part of the AMS, the co-chairs and other program chairs to try to identify connections. But one can say there is always room for improvement. Feedback from the AMOC meeting on 1/15/09 indicated that some of the above efforts have led to some fruitful exchange and potential activities in Atlanta in 2010.

Impressions from the Meetings

It is important to stress that overall the meeting went very well.

The majority of comments received regarding the Phoenix convention center facilities was very positive. Aside from a small number of issues early on with microphones, and

the lighting system, the AMS had everything working very smoothly. There were many positive comments on the ease of loading up presentations and the ready availability of the AMS staff and the smoothness in running presentations during the sessions because of the students running the workstation in each session room. More importantly, it is the LACK of complaints that indicates that these meetings went very smoothly.

Student conference: Impressive attendance of 400+ students and support of their conference by the AMS. Some feedback received was that there should be more coordination between the invited speakers (scientists) to remove redundancy/repetition of some of the subject matter presented in some of the talks given on Saturday.

Themed joint sessions: Good attendance in general. In hindsight, it would have been nice to highlight these special sessions on the daily cards, perhaps in bold or in a different color, with a footnote about these sessions.

Green Meeting: What about having a special workstation at registration desk with a sign to registrants encouraging them to go online and commit to offset their carbon footprints?

Native American Town Hall: A good first step in creating dialogue between the Native American geoscientists and the AMS.

A few selected sessions (the ARAM symposium and STAC joint sessions) and a couple of the town hall meetings were somewhat overcrowded. Although the AMS solicits estimate from the organizers, this does raise questions about whether a 10% extra allowance of seating be incorporated for these one-time specialty sessions, symposiums, and selected town hall meetings? We need more information on how often this problem arises. It might be advisable for the AMS to contact the session chairs from each conference and to get a better estimate of session attendance, or next time during the meeting to get a student volunteer to make an estimate of attendance/problems of under/over-capacity.

Program Chairs to remind session chairs to have a plan for missing papers/speakers. Need to try to stick to the session schedule if possible. Ideally many of these are filled before the actual meeting (some Program chairs were very pro-active; encourage all to plan for this eventuality)

Received feedback that it would be great if the AMS could add a search tool for use as an add-on to the daily planner capability. For example, a tool that would allow one to list online, only those speakers who will be giving talks at 2:45 pm on Wednesday, with their topic title and the room location.

During coffee breaks during poster viewing, coffee lines were long and slow; there were not enough coffee stations and also not enough tea bags provided. Also, coffee ran out too early. Waiting in line for coffee took a lot of time away from being able to view posters and people were frustrated by this.

On Monday during the break, ice cream was provided. Many found this a special treat. Perhaps the AMS could arrange this for Atlanta; something special like this once during the week.

In terms of the Awards event, this could be streamlined and attention from the audience maintained by taking photographs of recipients before or after the event. Possibly have the awardees lined up so that reduces the time between people.

In terms of accommodation, concerns were raised about the Wyndham hotel and the 'paper-thin' walls.