

August 13, 2005

TO: SSSP Board of Directors
FROM: 2005 Program Committee Co-Chairs
RE: Graduate Student Report

Graduate Student Board Representatives present: Luis Fernandez, Aimee Van Wagenen, and Ingar P. Johnson.

First, we would like to thank the Board of Directors for graciously providing money to hold a graduate student happy hour. We are delighted to report the success of this year's graduate student event, which was attended by over 30 graduate students. This year's attendance doubled from the previous year. The students met for about one and a half hours to discuss various issues, including registration fee hikes, how to make the meetings more welcoming, holding SSSP meetings separate from ASA, and race issues within the association.

The graduate students met at the Crowne Plaza Hotel Restaurant on Friday night. We were able to provide food and beverages, which increased the likelihood of graduate student participation. Unfortunately, the location of the meeting made discussion difficult due to the awkward arrangement of the restaurant, the noise level, and the number of graduate students who attended the meeting. For these reasons, **we recommend that next year the graduate student happy hour be scheduled in a more accommodating space, one which facilitates discussion.**

The meeting began with a discussion of the potential hike for graduate student registration fee from \$20 to \$30. Overall, the graduate students reported that a gradual hike in fees would not ultimately hurt their budgets. After much discussion, **the graduate students recommend that the society raise the fee in two \$5 phases (i.e., \$5 in 2006 and \$5 in 2007).** However, some students did express a concern with a fee increase when added to the total expenses of attending the banquet.

Next, the students discussed the impact of separating the meeting from ASA. The general feeling was that while SSSP had value separate and distinct from ASA (with many students primarily attending the SSSP meeting), students believed that separating from ASA could result in unintended consequences. In the end, the students concluded that they would support the Board of Directors in doing what was necessary to resolve the hotel problems for the coming year. Yet, they would like SSSP to keep meeting in a nearby location from ASA.

The discussion then moved to last year's award banquet. None of the students at the meeting were present during the event. Yet, most of those present had heard about what happen. One student stated that several students of color from her university are no longer members of SSSP due to the incident. Aimee and Luis reassured the students that the society was doing all that it could to ensure that a similar incident would not occur in

the future. Several students supported the continuation of a general dialogue within the society on issues of race, class, and gender, focusing specifically on privilege and power.

The students also discussed how to improve the SSSP meetings and make them more welcoming to graduate students. One student mentioned having problems contacting their assigned mentor. Another graduate student suggested having more social events for graduate students, perhaps earlier in the program so that students can meet each other soon after their arrival. Some encouraged graduate students to develop their own social events, scheduling impromptu gatherings whenever possible. There was overwhelmingly positive feedback on the session dealing publishing, job searches, and on developing mentoring relationships. One student said they had never seen such care at another organization and they were grateful for the consideration. At least one student described feeling somewhat disoriented at the meeting, not knowing anybody, and feeling isolated. She proposed that the society might consider putting together a “getting involved” pamphlet or an orientation for graduate students so that they know how to participate at the meetings. Several students mentioned the paper competition and suggested that perhaps the society might consider adding an honorable mention to recognize those students that did not win but whose work was outstanding.

Finally, the graduate students would like to publicly recognize Aimee Van Wagenen for all she has done to increase student participation. Without her, these graduate student meetings would not be possible. We hope that her efforts will lead to stronger student involvement in the coming years.

Respectfully submitted,

Luis Fernandez