

July 2, 2006

To: The SSSP Board of Directors
From: Phoebe Morgan and James Gruber, 2005-06 Program Committee Chairs
Re: Final Committee Report

We are excited about this year's program and confident of its success. Michele Koontz did an outstanding job facilitating communication between the SSSP Office, the Program Committee, the President and the many session organizers and individuals seeking information. In addition, her behind-the-scenes council kept us on task and on schedule.

Everyone on our committee contributed considerable time and energy. We would like to take this moment to highlight some of the unique contributions they made. Through the organization of three special sessions of invited guests, Michele Paludi successfully integrated a "mini" ICASH conference into the SSSP Program. Madelaine Adelman brainstormed the "Want to Get Married?" guide to Same-Sex Marriage in Quebec. Stephani Williams is the genius behind the Film Festival and Midnight Madness 'film-arama.' Steve Barkan takes credit for envisioning and organizing the Speed Mentoring Session.

Program Highlights.

Of the 125 sessions listed in the preliminary program, the Program Committee sponsored 22 of them. About 60 proposals were sent directly to the program committee and we placed all of them by either creating new sessions or adding them to existing ones. There were 17 special sessions, 8 of them were either organized or invited by the Program Committee. Two of them, "Speed Mentoring" and the "Midnight Madness" are new events.

Last year there were 128 sessions with 439 papers, 26 panelists, 6 workshop facilitators, 12 critics, 4 performers, 5 authors, 2 plenary speakers, 1 film commentator, 1 art exhibitor, and 1 photograph exhibitor. This year's conference had 717 participants in 125 sessions. There were 488 papers, 31 panelists, 3 authors and 12 critics, 1 workshop presenter, 1 photography exhibitor, 1 plenary speaker, and 13 speed mentors.

This year the location of the 2006 meetings was not confirmed after the program committee's 2005 meeting. When we learned that the meetings would be held outside the US, the program committee worked with the President to revise the CFP language to better integrate the interests of Canadian scholars and attract international presentations. The committee also made an extra effort to create special sessions that would achieve this end. Two examples are a sexual harassment panel that includes Constance Backhouse, the pioneer of Canada's anti-sexual harassment policy; and a "How to Get Married" guide for same-sex couples because marriage is legal across Canada.

Issues and Recommendations. Based on our experience and consultation with Michele Koontz, we bring the following to the Board's attention.

1. Online Coversheets and Panel Organizer Forms. Last year's Program Committee recommended the requirement of online submission be a top priority. While in the past SSSP members have been encouraged to submit their proposals online, this was the first year that online submission was the only option. At least from the program committee's standpoint, the CFP online coversheet works well and should be used next year.

2. Sponsored Session Forms. Last year's Program Committee recommended clarifying the procedures for submission of division sponsored sessions. This year a detailed instruction sheet was sent via email to every division organizer and the program chairs. Yet, confusion persists. In addition, there is no form for those not division organizers to submit session proposals. For these two reasons, *we recommend that the SSSP Executive Office web base the current panel submission form and use the online coversheet page be used as a model.*
3. Guest Speakers and Expert Panelists. In keeping with the mission of the SSSP to foster relationships with grass roots activists, we approved financial support for three guests from the AAUP, ACLU Lesbian and Gay Rights and AIDS projects (Tom Guild, Jameel Jaffer and Diane Schroer). But due to budgetary constraints, we unable to provide support to all that requested it. In addition, budgetary constraints thwarted our efforts to invite renowned experts. We requests speakers from the Rockridge Institute and Poets Against War, but were declined because we could not support their travel. *We recommend that the Board consider creating a budgetary line for an honorarium.*
4. International Research and Foreign Participants. There are numerous sessions regarding globalization, and a number of papers presenting comparative findings at an international level. In addition, the number of non-US citizen participants is growing. The program committee recommends that the SSSP dedicate ourselves to fostering these trends. However, doing so requires more thoughtful planning regarding the procedures for accepting papers and travel support application. We were "spammed" by several scholars from developing countries for whom the acceptance of a paper by a program committee plays a significant role in their hire and promotion. As a consequence, the goal of their submission is to document that their papers have been peer reviewed and determined that they are worthy of conference presentation. Few have intention of presenting them. The question arises, is there a way to meet a foreign scholar's need for documentation of the quality of their paper without jeopardizing the integrity of the program? *We recommend that a stronger disclaimer be added to the CFP that more clearly states acceptance of papers is contingent upon registration.*
5. "Orphan" Papers & Session Size. This year the composition of the sessions was a salient issue. First, numerous division chairs disregarded the instructions and submitted sessions with less than four papers. Second, the Program Committee had to place 59 papers that did not address the program theme or division foci. The number of meeting rooms constrained the number of sessions we could add, so we were forced to add about 75% of these 59 "orphans" to sessions that had been organized by divisions. We received numerous protests from division organizers and presenters regarding this decision. *We recommend that next year's program committee add disclaimers to the CFP and panel proposal form that reserves the right of the program committee to add participants to sessions with less than five presentations.*
6. Co-Sponsorship. Given our proximity to the ASA conference, it is quite feasible that we could attract a number of ASA attendees to our conference. Co-sponsorship is one means of creating "traffic" between the conferences. However, developing work relationship between ASA groups and SSSP is usually a low priority because of the pressing issues of organizing a conference (creating a call for papers, interacting with program chairs, etc.). *We recommend that next year's program committee designate one member to develop a working relationships with relevant ASA groups (e.g., SWS, ABS) shortly after the conferences so as to enhance the possibility of co-sponsorship.*