

ALS: “The Future” of Future Scholars Task Force
Monday, Sept. 8, 2008

Task Force Members: Deb Bialeschki, Linda Caldwell, Dan Dustin, Mark Havitz, Karla Henderson, Doug Kleiber, Jim Murphy, Diane Samdahl

Background:

Concern has been growing over the future of the Future Scholars Program. While the program was started back in the early 90s as an ALS “project” and funded by the Academy, over the years it has evolved into a program that is primarily underwritten by one member (Dan Dustin). During the summer of 2008, Deb and Jim (as President and President-elect) had conversations with representatives of both SPRE (Dale Adkins and Lowell Caneday) and NRPA (Jessica Lytle) about the roles and relationships of the various groups in the Future Scholars Program. We felt the sustainability of the program needed attention. So Deb appointed the Task Force to begin an exploration of the value and sustainability of the Program by the Academy. Once that is determined, we can look at logical next steps (if there are any).

The group began by discussing the intent behind the Future Scholars program and the perceived value of the program. Dan shared his perspectives but raised the issue of whether it is still needed. We quickly realized we had no data from which to work—we don’t know how many FS actually enrolled in Ph.D. programs, who completed the Ph.D., where they worked, and what contributions they went on to make to the field. Diane, Mark, and Doug volunteered to update the current FS list and track down this type of information as well as possibly call some of the FS to see what they thought the value of the experience had been to them personally.

We discussed briefly possible directions once we had the needed information. Diane suggested that maybe the FS program could evolve into a different type of award (ie money for conducting doctoral research) rather than sending them to the conference or maybe we have both. We also discussed how to make the award self-sustaining. Ideas were shared such as having a very small portion of dues (Academy and SPRE) used to annually support the program, exploring partnering with SPRE and NRPA to fund an endowment campaign, or finding a benefactor. We discussed briefly that a model might exist for future collaborative efforts with NRPA/SPRE if we look at the partnering with the Academy for Park and Recreation Administrators and NRPA around the Gold Medal Awards.

We agreed to do the fact-finding in the next several weeks, then have another call before the conference to have recommendations in mind to share at the annual ALS meeting. If we decide to move forward around the idea of partnering for sustainability, we may be able to find time to meet (possibly with SPRE) while at the conference. We want to make sure that we are thoughtful in the process, are clear about the intent for this program in the future, yet not languish in our efforts.

The task force will have a follow-up conference call the last week in September if the sub-group can gather the necessary information by then.