

Big Urban Chapters Unique Concerns Panel Discussion

October 22, 2016

Notes

PARTICIPATING:

- Blackland Prairie – McKinney– Deborah Canterbury
- Capital Area – Austin – Marc Opperman
- Cross Timbers – Ft. Worth – Melinda Pajak
- Galveston Bay – Maureen Nolan-White
- Gulf Coast – Houston – Julie Mintzer
- Hays County – San Marcos – Jane Dunham
- Hill Country – Kerrville – Vern Crawford
- North Texas – Dallas – Bruce Stewart
- South Texas – Corpus Christi – Chad Huckabee
- Moderator – Jim Folger

OPENING REMARKS CONCERNS SHARED:

- Social cohesion
- Lack of diversity of members
- Retention
- Size of the chapter
- Reluctance to use VMS
- Making it easier to volunteer
- Because the area of one chapter served is large, chapter meetings are rotated throughout the region so that the same people do not have to travel the longest distances every time

QUESTIONS:

How do you determine how well the chapter is doing in meeting members' needs?

- Brazos Valley – Surveyed members in January. They use a Google open-ended question process.
- Most - Direct conversation with members. Have not done market research studies.

Do you have an annual planning process?

- Galveston Bay – January retreat
- NT – January retreat
- Lost Pines does a 2 year strategic plan.

What is your annual budget and how much do you have in reserves?

- BP – 8K in reserve
- CAM – 10K budget, 8K in reserve
- GB – 17K budget, 20K in reserve
- GC – 20K in reserve

- Hill – 20K budget, 15K in reserve, no dues
- NT – 25K budget, 45K in reserve, \$30 dues
 - Occasional special conference with Agrilife to raise money
- ST – 2K budget, 15K in reserve
- Hays – 29K

Do you have a grant writing program?

- Hill – Yes
- ST – Yes
- NT – Yes

Do you offer a scholarship program for those who want to attend the training?

- CAM – Yes. Sometimes offer scholarship for half or full tuition scholarship. Sometimes members sponsor others. They have a place on the application asking if financial assistance is needed.
- NT – Yes. Students can apply for a financial support.

Do you have more people apply for your classes than you can accept?

- Most – Yes

About the new class – do you have a mentor program?

- Most – Yes, they find it effective

What information do you gather on the new class? How do you select the students?

- Don't ask about race.
- Hill – Do not use first come/first serve.
- BP – Outreach to schools to find students; i.e. Geology on the Bus
- While several chapters express concern about the diversity of their members, no one has come up with a real solution to attracting more minorities.
- One of the chapters (?) Said each application is reviewed by selection committee to determine how likely they will be to be strong contributors to the chapter.
- South Texas is notable for having 25% Hispanic membership (the population in their area is 55% Hispanic).

Retention is a problem. What are you doing to work on it?

- GB – Emeritus luncheon for those members who were no longer active
 - They provide transportation to members who cannot drive to attend the general meetings.
- CT – If a member hasn't posted any VH for a few months, the membership director contacts them.

How many volunteer projects does your chapter have and how do you get members involved?

- ST – 60+

- CT – Have one session during the new class to pitch all of the projects for the students.
- One chapter has a volunteer opportunity class in June.
- Some – Speakers talk about their favorites at the general meetings.
- Some – Open House on the last day of class to tell the students about all of the ongoing projects.
- Hill – at 3rd class they present VH opportunities.

How well is the State meeting Chapter needs?

- CAM – It is really difficult to collaborate with other chapters. There is no easy way to find the right person to talk to in each chapter.
- GB – It is really frustrating getting to the right people in the other chapters.
- General agreement that the state is not a clearinghouse for information on the chapters, along with a desire to make this happen.
- Concern expressed that the annual meeting does not focus enough on chapter activities, problems, and relationships. It is almost solely devoted to AT opportunities.
- Desire on the part of participants to continue this discussion.