

**MINUTES OF USUCGER BOARD MEETING
CONFERENCE CALL
JANUARY 20, 2009**

BOARD MEMBERS PRESENT: Anand Puppala-President, Ali Maher-President Elect, Chris Baxter-Secretary, John Bowders, and Marte Gutierrez

BOARD MEMBERS ABSENT: Jim Hanson-Treasurer

ADDITIONAL PARTICIPANTS: Matt Evans-Webmaster

MEETING COMMENCED AT 1:30 P.M. EDT.

AGENDA:

1. Election Update (Chris)
2. USUCGER Board membership (Anand)
3. New Funding Initiatives (Chris and Matt)
4. Any Other Business

1. ELECTION UPDATE

Chris Baxter has asked all the candidates for a short written statement describing themselves for the election. He has received two, and will hold the election as soon as the others are received. The election should be completed in early February.

2. UBOARD MEMBERSHIP

President Anand Puppala spoke with former president Susan Burns about having more than six board members at any time. It seems that this has occurred in the past and was not considered to be a significant issue with respect to the bylaws. It was suggested that the bylaws be changed to allow for "at least" six board members at any time, and that the bylaws be updated in general to better reflect how USUCGER currently operates. A committee of USUCGER members (3) will be formed with Matt Evans as the liaison with the UBoard. Anand will help to find members interested in serving on the committee.

3. NEW FUNDING INITIATIVES

Both Chris and Matt presented proposals (attached to the minutes) for use of USUCGER funds. Chris proposed providing travel funds for faculty members to meet with program managers at agencies such as NSF and FHWA. After discussion, it was proposed that \$5,000 be used for small grants up to \$1,000 until the funds are spent. The grants will be available to faculty members from all types of Universities (PUI to Research I) and regardless of rank (Assistant to Full Professor). A short report documenting the results of the visit (feedback from agency, proposal submitted, etc.) will be required of all who receive the grants. A member can receive only one travel grant.

Matt proposed providing funds for one student to attend the ASCE-GI GeoCongress conference each year. The award would be restricted to students who are a co-author on a paper and will make the presentation at the conference. It was suggested that a sub-committee of board members can be formed after applications are received to choose a winner and avoid potential conflicts of interest. It was also suggested that Anand contact either Carol Bowers or Jean-Louis Briaud at ASCE-GI to ask if they would waive the registration fees for students who receive this award. If so, it could be possible to offer funding to more than one student each year.

Both ideas (with the above modifications) were well-received. Anand asked that the Uboard members email him directly about support for these proposals.

4. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

John Bowders compiled a list of schools in the U.S. with at least one geotechnical faculty member, and will send the list to Anand. Anand will invite those on the list that are not currently members to join USUCGER.

Ali was asked to attend the May 18-20 Geo-Coalition meeting on behalf of USUCGER. He will check his schedule and let Anand know of his availability.

There was also a short discussion on the role of the research and education committee chairs in the Board meetings. It was suggested that the chairs of the committees be invited to the next Board meeting. Chris informed the UBoard that Russell Green will no longer serve as the Chair of the Research Committee. Anand asked that the UBoard suggest names of people to be the new Chair of the Research Committee.

5. ACTION ITEMS

1. Chris will conduct the elections as soon as he has received written statements from all the candidates.
2. Anand will form a committee of three USUCGER members to update the bylaws. Matt Evans will serve as liaison between the committee and the UBoard.
3. UBoard Committee members will provide feedback to Anand about Chris and Matt's funding initiatives.
4. Anand will invite those on the John's new list of schools that are not currently members to join USUCGER.
5. Ali will let Anand know if he can attend the Geo-Coalition meeting on behalf of USUCGER.
6. Anand asked that the UBoard suggest names of people to be the new Chair of the Research Committee.
7. Anand will contact either Carol Bowers or Jean-Louis Briaud at ASCE-GI to ask if they would waive the registration fees for students who receive a proposed travel award.

MEETING ADJOURNED AT APPROXIMATELY 2:30 P.M. EST.

Proposal for Faculty Travel Grants

The objective of this proposal is to provide travel funds for researchers to meet with program managers or other representatives of funding agencies to discuss their ideas and strengthen their proposals. Motivation for this idea came from repeated comments made by Rick Fragaszy (the most recent being a December 17, 2008 budget update email to the USUCGER listserv) in which he expressed concern over the relative lack of proposals being submitted to the two geotechnical programs at NSF. Although USUCGER is not in the business of doing research, facilitating better access to funding agencies through travel grants may help to improve both the number and success rate of these proposals.

It is proposed that these travel grants be awarded on a “first-come, first-served” basis until the funds are exhausted. The grants should be available to faculty members from all types of Universities (PUI to Research I) and regardless of rank (Assistant to Full Professor). The latter point is important to encourage mid- and senior-level faculty to stay engaged in research long after start-up funds are spent and tenure decisions have been made. The grants should also be available encourage mid- and senior-level faculty to stay engaged in research long after start-up funds are spent and tenure decisions have been made. The grants should also be available for a variety of agencies (NSF, FHWA, USGS, etc.) that could either be agreed upon initially or decided on a case-by-case basis.

A total of \$5,000 would be made available for this program, and individual grants would be limited to up to \$1,000. A short report documenting the results of the visit (feedback from agency, proposal submitted, etc.) will be required of all who receive the grants. A member can receive only one travel grant.

USUCGER Student Sponsorship, ASCE-GI Conference

The goal is for USUCGER to sponsor one student (graduate or undergraduate) to attend the annual ASCE-GI GeoCongress and present his or her work. The award will include student registration, airfare, hotel, and a small per diem for meals and incidentals¹. The requirements to apply for the award would be simple:

- Student must have a paper accepted to the conference; and
- Student must present the paper.

To apply for the award, the student would submit a copy of the paper and a short (1-page) essay on why he or she would like to attend the conference and what the expected benefits of attendance would be. Clearly, the ASCE-GI deadlines would be used to inform our selection of a deadline each year (i.e., we would need to be after the acceptance of papers and prior to early bird registration).

The selection committee should be small (three members, to be appointed annually by the chair of the education committee) and should have broad leeway to act. This will (hopefully) make for a relatively nimble decision-making infrastructure. To this end, evaluation would be based on:

- The quality of the research paper;
- Essay; and
- Intangibles (e.g., perhaps the award should not be given to students from the same university two years in a row, a paper with a single student author and no co-authors might carry more weight).

The award would be based on the actual cost of attending the conference. For the 2009 IFCEE, these costs would be approximately \$1,500 broken down as follows:

- Student registration: \$195
- Hotel (4 nights) \$900
- Airfare \$300
- Per diem (4 days) \$100

Given the relatively small amount of the award, it would likely be possible to make this an annual competition and, in rare and exceptional cases, perhaps two awards could be given in a year.

¹ Student registration typically does not include the banquet meals or proceedings, but many of the other meals are included. It would be nice if we could get ASCE-GI to provide all conference meals and proceedings to the awardee free of charge.