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Summer Retreat

The ASIS&T Board recently held its annual summer retreat, this time on the campus of the University of North Carolina, in lovely Chapel Hill. The location had much to recommend it, as four of the members, including the incoming President Gary Marchionini, are Tar Heels; it made the logistics for the meeting – which is more typically held near Washington, D.C. – much simpler.

Now North Carolina may lead the nation in creepy place names – think Great Dismal Swamp, Kill Devil Hills and Cape Fear – but it is unfailing in its welcome to visitors, even if they are Yankees or other foreigners. We were shown real southern hospitality and all the grits we could eat. We were even blessed with mild weather, rather than the usual humidity that hangs like kudzu over the southeast during mid summer.

But, back to the meeting itself. I must say that it is really nice having a Board with so many good ideas. In this, and an earlier, meeting we discussed a number of ways in which we might do more for the membership, including (but not limited to) the following initiatives:

- Increasing the rate for funding for regional chapters on a member-by-member basis. Under this scheme, active chapters will receive at least five times as much per regular member, an average increase of several hundred dollars per chapter. [Approved]
- Doubling the amount of money given to student chapters at the start of their year. [Approved]
- Responding to the recession by defining a “hardship”

category so that more low-income members can renew at a special \$40 rate. [Approved]

- Improving and publicizing the placement service at the Annual Meeting. [In process]
- Holding a new summit related to scientific data collection and management during 2010. [In planning stages]
- Creating additional scholarships for students to attend the Annual Meeting; seven scholarships would be competitive on a regional basis and provide an additional incentive for students to become involved in local activities. [Under discussion]
- Making more effective use of social media, such as blogs, wikis and Second Life, to keep in touch with members. [Under discussion]
- Hiring a part-time “interaction manager” devoted to accomplishing the previous goal. [Under discussion]
- Finding ways to make Annual Meeting presentations more interactive and involving through changes in scheduling and format and through use of technologies. [Under discussion]
- Devising a mechanism to solicit real-world information problems and have design teams compete for a solution. [Under discussion]

As indicated above, several of these changes are already in effect, while others await a financial analysis or further tweaking. The remainder of the initiatives will take a few months to flesh out, but we expect them to be in place sometime in 2010.

I left the University of North Carolina encouraged by our discussions, and certain that North Carolina deserves a better official motto than “We’re the state north of South Carolina.” With four Board members, not to mention three LIS programs, maybe its motto ought to be “The State of Information Science.” ■