

Strengthen Connections with Graduate Students

By 2006 AECT Interns

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Many discussions occurred at this past convention about the decrease in the number of graduate student proposals and of graduate students attending the convention. As interns at the convention in Dallas, we discussed these issues with AECT members (including graduate student members and AECT Board members). One of the general sentiments that seemed to be expressed by some graduate students in Dallas was the concern that AECT may be unaware of student-related issues/concerns. As a group of interns (and fellow graduate students), we can affirm that nothing could be further from the truth!

Over the past six years a number of graduate student initiatives have been enacted by AECT. We have seen the creation of a Graduate Student Committee that was led by Nathan Lowell, the appointment of a Graduate Student Representative to the AECT board (most recently Shawn Foley), the organization of the Graduate Student Lounge at the annual convention, and even blog space on the [aect-member.org](http://www.aect-member.org) server (see The Program – http://www.aect-members.org/the_program/). In addition to these specific initiatives, graduate students typically have comprised a large number of the participants and have taken on many responsibilities for the annual conventions. Simply put, over the years AECT has been a graduate student-friendly organization.

The problem with many of these initiatives is that they have only been effective and, in some instances, have only been active when a small group of committed graduate students were involved. Unfortunately, when these individuals graduated or moved on to other activities, in many instances, these initiatives ceased to exist or at least ceased to be active. Based upon this reality, and the many conversations that we have had with graduate

students and AECT members, we recognize that there is a need to strengthen connections between graduate student members and the association.

Currently, one of the greatest challenges for graduate student members and AECT is that there is no formal channel for communication to flow in either direction. There are many issues that graduate students seem to be interested in addressing, such as the decreased student participation at the annual convention in Dallas, the cost of student registration for the convention, the reduced rate for and organization of conference volunteers, the organization of the annual Graduate Student Lounge, the possibility of a graduate student hotel and potential for other non-convention volunteering and intern opportunities. In addition to the lack of a formal communication channel there is no official group to discuss these issues. Traditionally, many of the initiatives specific to graduate students are simply assumed by willing volunteers which, at times, can be difficult to find. As the 2006 AECT Convention Interns, we hope to address this challenge.

Over the next three months, we will work with the AECT board to create a Graduate Student Assembly. We have yet to propose how this organization will be structured or what exact responsibilities it will have, but we plan to make it consistent with other organizational structures within AECT so that students will have an opportunity to learn about AECT and the inner workings of its divisions and committees and to participate in leadership development activities. All of these opportunities can serve as a training ground for students to learn the skills they will need to be leaders in the divisions and on the board. It will also provide a great arena for experienced graduate students to mentor unseasoned students into AECT.

As we work with the board toward creation of this body, we will post updates and information regarding our activities on the AECT Intern website (see <http://www.aect-members.org/interns/>). We hope that AECT members, including graduate students, will come to the website to provide us with

feedback on our proposal. The more people who become involved, the stronger the Graduate Student Assembly will be and the greater likelihood it will have to be a permanent part of the AECT organizational structure.

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ISMF Film Festival Celebrated in Dallas

By Deborah Hargroves
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Once again, AECT hosted the International Student Media Festival (ISMF), and celebrated excellence in student produced media. This year's festival was held in conjunction with the AECT International Convention at the Fairmont Hotel in Dallas, October 10–14, 2006. Joining AECT were the students whose creativity was being honored, their teacher sponsors, and their parents. The event featured workshops and viewings of the winning entries in a variety of media categories, shown in a film-festival format.

The program began with an inspiring keynote from Marco Torres, an Apple Distinguished Educator who is well-known for his work at San Fernando High School and for the creation of his free educational website, "Flickschool." As a social studies teacher and technology director, he empowers students to explore their world through the creation of media projects.

After Marco's rousing presentation, ISMF participants enjoyed ice cream treats and Texas line dancing in the ballroom as they met other young media producers from around the nation and other parts of the world.

The second day of the festival included the component of ISMF that