The SAA Committee on Education met February 19-21, 2010, at SAA headquarters. In attendance were Committee Chair Katie Salzmann; members Jennifer Johnson, Amy Cooper Cary, Amber Cushing, Julie Graham, Abigail Griner, Susan Irwin, Jeffrey Suchanek, and Helen Wong Smith; SAA Education Director Solveig De Sutter; and SAA Education Coordinator Veronica Parrish.

BACKGROUND

Committee members were apprised of a 20% decrease in education revenues that began in the first quarter of FY 2010 when attendance at pre-conference workshops fell short of projections. Traditionally, pre-conference attendance and revenues made up 25-30% of the education workshop budget.

Pre-conference workshops used to run unopposed on the Sunday, Monday, and Tuesday prior to the start of the Annual Meeting. This changed at the San Francisco 2008 meeting when most committee meetings were shifted to Tuesday to alleviate other scheduling conflicts. Staff received complaints at that time from attendees who registered for two-day workshops, unaware that their committee responsibility interfered with the second day of their workshops.

At the Austin 2009 meeting, committee members were aware of their meeting responsibilities. Workshops that are traditionally filled to capacity were 5-10 seats below capacity, and new workshops were also below budget.

DISCUSSION

Committee discussion included other possible reasons for the decrease, such as the economy and the length of the meeting. Alternative suggestions to bring attendance back up to capacity included offering clusters of workshops in different regions throughout the year instead of pre-conference workshops. Members reached a consensus on the following recommendation to the SAA Council.
RECOMMENDATION

THAT the SAA Council direct staff to return to the previous meeting format that allowed pre-conference workshops to run unopposed on the Monday and Tuesday prior to the beginning of the Annual Meeting, starting with the Chicago meeting in 2011.

Support Statement: Pre-conference workshops provide an excellent opportunity for members to get in-depth continuing education in addition to the meeting sessions without additional travel expense. When the schedule impedes the choice to attend a workshop because a member has volunteered to work on a committee, members and the SAA bottom line suffer.

Fiscal Impact: The financial impact would be positive.

[Staff Note: This recommendation is on the Council discussion agenda because the Council is aware of the many challenges that must be balanced in creating the annual meeting schedule. A directive to change the schedule may require contract changes with the headquarters hotel, a switch to a Wednesday through Sunday meeting schedule, or other implications that should be discussed thoroughly.]