

Message From The Chair: Where Do My Registration Fees Go?

With the Pasadena DPS/EPSC meeting forthcoming in just a month now, I thought that I might throw out some numbers with respect to where your money goes when you register for a DPS meeting. The Full Member, early registration this year was \$588. It was \$478 for the previous Pasadena DPS, in 2010. That's a bit above inflation (which would have sent it at \$536), but not too far off. However registration at the 2006 Pasadena meeting was just \$225! What happened between 2006 and 2010?

We grew. It used to be that a DPS meeting was small enough that a volunteer Local Organizing Committee (LOC) Chair could run the whole meeting. The LOC Chair used to negotiate contracts with venues, hotels, and such. As the DPS attendance has grown, the LOC Chair job became too big. It is just too much to ask for a scientist to volunteer a year of their time to keep registration costs down.

Since then we have professionalized DPS meeting planning. Our parent organization, the American Astronomical Society (AAS), now has a team of people whose job it is to run meetings. They take care of us here at the DPS as well as the AAS Summer and Winter meetings. This professionalization comes at a price, of course: just under a quarter of the total meeting allocation (\$144,000, or \$156 per person) goes to the AAS in exchange for running the meeting (staff time, travel, and overhead).

I think that this cost is money well spent: I want meeting professionals bearing the brunt of the burden for planning the DPS meeting, and I want our scientists doing as much science as they can with their time. We get significant value from the AAS' organizational skills, too, including a huge increase in the amount of sponsorships to over \$95,000 this year that we receive from our generous sponsors but also due in large part to the diligence of Debbie Kovalsky, the Sponsorship Coordinator up at the AAS.

The single biggest meeting expense that we have is food. You wouldn't believe how much planetary scientists eat! We have budgeted over \$192,000 (\$207 per person) this year for catering alone -- itself almost as much as the entire 2006 meeting cost us (\$199,390). Catering is where meeting spaces make their money; technically the facility rental was just \$35,000 for the Pasadena Convention Center, provided we spent enough on food.

The rest of our estimated \$650,000 meeting budget this year derives from 'small' charges: \$25,000 for internet; \$62,500 for A/V; \$35,000 for the exhibition setup contractor. Security, program books, credit card processing fees. It all adds up.

As the vast majority of our revenue comes from your registration fees, the DPS Committee will be making a minor change to our fees policy moving forward. We have started adding in an on-site registration surcharge as insurance. The idea is to offset the possibility that all of you NASA folks who don't get travel approval until 2 days before the meeting end up having to cancel your plans due to a government shutdown (at least 5% probability I think).

Thanks to Kelly Clark, the AAS CFO, for her help providing the budget numbers for this Fall's meeting and for inspiring this Message. I look forward to seeing you all in Pasadena.

Jason W. Barnes
DPS Chair



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