

Welcome to Column 9 of Hey Jane! This is a project of the SWS Career Development Committee. Questions and answers are generated by the committee and SWS members. Answers are compiled from several anonymous sources. All columns are archived on our committee's page on the SWS website <http://newmedia.colorado.edu/~socwomen/about/career.html>

Due to the nature of this month's question, Carla Howery, ASA Deputy Executive Officer agreed to be identified as one of the primary sources of advice.

February 27, 2006

HEY JANE!

"I would like to get involved ASA governance and leadership. How do I get started?"

JANE SAYS:

While ASA may seem like a big bureaucracy, there are many ways to participate. The organization depends on volunteers for expertise, energy, and follow through on many projects. If people don't know who you are, they obviously can't recommend or nominate you. Keep in mind that "a little visibility goes a long way." So, you don't have to be famous to be involved.

Get involved in one ASA's 42 sections

Attend a section business meeting and volunteer to do some of the work of the section. This could include things like: organizing a session, serving on section award selection committees, writing articles for the section newsletter, and more. If you perform your tasks competently, you will develop a reputation and people will ask you to take on increasingly greater responsibility. Each section has officers, committees and lots of roles to play. Most sections also have designated positions or roles for students. When there is a call for nominations, nominate yourself. Stick around for the reception and introduce yourself to people. Many ASA members are happy to meet and encourage newcomers who share professional interests. Being involved in section activities serves the dual purpose of getting to know people in your specialty area and getting your foot in the door to be more involved in the larger organization.

If attending the business meeting or reception seems intimidating to you, look for other SWS'ers who can often be identified by a ribbon attached to their name tag. Also, this year, the SWS career development committee is planning to coordinate groups of SWS'ers who are interested in attending the section meetings together. Stay tuned to the listserv for more information. Graduate students may want to ask their advisor to help them get connected to the various sections or team up with other graduate students (including those on SWS-grad) to go to the section meeting together.

Get involved in regional and specialty associations (like SWS)

If you served on the North Central Sociological Association Publications Committee, or the Awards committee of SWS, and enjoyed the work, volunteer for similar work in

ASA. If you were on the Council of the Southern Sociological Society or the Rural Sociological Society, you might want to consider running for national office.

Nominate yourself

This sometimes feels awkward, but ASA wants members to offer to serve. You might offer your qualifications as a gender scholar (for example) for the Jessie Bernard Award Committee. There are frequently task forces that have a very specific focus and need people interested (if not expert) on that topic. For example, right now there is a task force on the professional MA and one on sociology and general education. Perhaps you've served on your campus general education committee; you could volunteer to help ASA based on what you learned! Every summer, in FOOTNOTES, you'll see a call for nominations for ASA offices and for ASA committee nominations. The former go to the Committee on Nominations and the latter to the Committee on Committees. The names of those committee members are on the ASA website (See links at the end of this column). You don't have to lobby to get nominated, but if you know someone on those committees, send them a note. Remind them that you met "four years ago on a panel at the criminology meetings" and that now you are offering to run for an ASA office or committee. Usually the "strength of a weak tie" is enough to get your name advanced.

Keep in touch with the ASA sociology staff

One or more of the following staff members is present at all the regional meetings, some of the state meetings, and certainly SWS: Sally T. Hillsman, Jean Shin, Roberta Spalter-Roth, and Carla Howery. They are paid to be the full time eyes and ears for sociology, and that assignment includes "searching for talent." They are eager to meet people who are committed to the initiatives and goals of ASA.

Some things to consider:

* ASA has a diversity statement that says: "Much of the vitality of ASA flows from its diverse membership. With this in mind, it is the policy of the ASA to include people of color, women, sociologists from smaller institutions or who work in government, business, or other applied settings, and international scholars in all of its programmatic activities and in the business of the Association." In particular, there is often a shortage of nominations from colleagues in undergraduate colleges and in sociological practice. So, self-nomination helps the committees to avoid the pitfall of "we don't know any XYZ."

* You will be expected to attend ASA meetings, so be sure you are prepared to make the time and financial commitment.

* It is an honor for colleagues to come and ask you to work on another project or run for office. You don't always have to say yes, but if you need to say "no" then perhaps you can suggest someone ELSE who is qualified and interested. The committees often jump at those recommendations and appreciate the chance to get more people involved.

Now write on your calendar that in June you will look in FOOTNOTES for the call for nominations and be ready with your name and those of others whom you admire!

Websites:

Regional Organizations:

<http://www.asanet.org/page.wv?section=Future+Meetings&name=Regional+Sociological+Societies>

ASA Sections:

<http://www.asanet.org/page.wv?section=Sections&name=Overview>

ASA Governance:

<http://www.asanet.org/page.wv?section=Governance&name=Overview>

ASA Committees:

<http://www.asanet.org/page.wv?section=Committees&name=Committees>

ASA Committee on Committees:

<http://www.asanet.org/page.wv?section=Committees&name=Committee+on+Committees>

ASA Committee on Nominations:

<http://www.asanet.org/page.wv?section=Committees&name=Committee+on+Nominations>

CAVEAT to all professional advice: Always check with your departmental colleagues, chair, dean, etc. to find out what the norms and expectations are in your institution.

I hope this helps! Stay tuned next month for Question 10: “How do I negotiate a partner/spousal hire?”

-- Jane