

DATE: September 1, 2008
TO: TCCTA Convention Section Chairs
FROM: Carole Hawkins, Assistant to the Executive Director
SUBJECT: Suggestions for Planning Section Meetings

1. Begin now! You undoubtedly have given a great deal of thought to the kind of programs you would like to arrange for your section meetings. After you have read the TCCTA Policies Regarding Convention Section Meetings, begin to finalize definite plans for your programs. Because information about your programs will be published on the TCCTA Web site soon after it is submitted, the sooner you submit your programs, the sooner members can make plans to attend!
2. Consult with colleagues. It is not intended that a single individual assume the sole responsibility for planning the programs, selecting the topics, and choosing the speakers. Sharing these responsibilities may require some additional planning, but should result in broadening interest in the program and improving the quality of the section meetings overall.
3. Establish objectives. An effective section meeting should be designed to achieve clearly understood objectives. Examples of objectives: (1) to convey new information on subject matter, (2) to present new methodologies of teaching, (3) to challenge and inspire, (4) to entertain.
4. Remember the audience. Keep in mind the wide differences in teaching situations and geographical settings for the TCCTA members who will hear your program. A talk geared to stimulate thinking primarily by teachers at the large, urban colleges might be regarded as a total waste of time by teachers from the smaller, rural campuses. Similarly, a program dealing with a highly-specialized area of a discipline may have little value to teachers of broad survey courses.
5. Assess available resources. It is a mistake to plan meetings with little attention to the resources of the city in which the convention is to be held. Frequently, faculty from universities in the area are available at little or no expense. Private industries and government agencies located in the convention city are also good sources of program speakers for some sections.

Highly respected and nationally-prominent speakers are often available through the courtesy of publishers, at no expense to TCCTA. Care must be taken to assure that the program does not become a forum for a “sales pitch” by an author. Most publisher representatives are aware of the necessity for discretion, but it would be a good idea to emphasize the point.

Examples of programs in recent conventions which were planned on the basis of the above suggestions:

- Accounting—Demonstration of computer software for instructional use (speakers and equipment provided by publisher and software developer.)
- Biology—The Evolutionary Enigma of Sex, address by a noted biologist and textbook author
- Economics—The Global Economic Crisis, address by an economist with the Houston Branch of the Federal Reserve Board
- Government—Address by a prominent national or state political leader
- Office Technology—“Hands-on” demonstration of desktop publishing instructional software (speaker and equipment provided by publisher.)
- Psychology—*Bullies Across the Lifespan*, address by a noted psychologist and textbook author

It is interesting to note that the section programs listed above were well-attended, received excellent evaluations from participants, and were provided at no cost to TCCTA, being primarily arranged through publishers.

In recent years, our office has received an increasing number of complaints that some section programs which featured speakers provided by publishers or industry have appeared to be more of a “sales pitch” than a professional development program. Section chairs who make arrangements for authors or industry representatives to speak should ensure that the presenters have a clear understanding of the nature of the meeting. Section meetings are designed to enhance the knowledge and teaching effectiveness of those who attend; they should not promote speakers’ products or services.

6. Select the topic. Once the objectives have been determined and the resources assessed, a specific program topic should be chosen.

It is unwise to select a topic so broad in concept and content that it cannot reasonably be considered during the time allotted for the meeting. Items to be considered in selection of a topic might include the following:

- Will the topic appeal to all the faculty who teach in the discipline?
- Will the information be useful to the intellectual development of those who attend?
- Will it be possible to obtain a speaker for the selected topic who is recognized as knowledgeable on the subject?
- Will a program based on the topic help improve effectiveness in the classroom?

7. Choose a speaker. (Or a whole panel of speakers, if you prefer!) Just remember that you’re operating on a limited budget.

If an honorarium is to be paid to a speaker (see the accompanying memo about expenses), the section chair should confirm the amount to be paid in writing. PLEASE NOTE THAT NO HONORARIUM OR TRAVEL EXPENSES MAY BE PAID TO ANY MEMBER OF THE PROFESSIONAL STAFF OF ANY COMMUNITY OR TECHNICAL COLLEGE IN THE STATE OF TEXAS. (It is assumed that such an individual would be attending the convention anyway and that he or she would be willing to share his or her expertise with colleagues in such a manner without the necessity of remuneration.)

If a speaker appears through arrangements with a publisher, an honorarium is not normally presented. It may be assumed that the publisher has handled all the financial arrangements with the speaker. Similarly, honoraria are not normally presented to employees of state governmental agencies.

8. “Field trips” are strongly discouraged. Section chairs are urged to plan programs which will not require travel outside the convention facility. “Field trips” pose a variety of problems: Charter transportation is very expensive (and private transportation raises serious issues regarding liability insurance); logistics of coordinating events away from the convention location are difficult, even under ideal circumstances; exhibitors complain that convention participants cannot visit the exhibits when they are away from the convention site for several hours; some members object to programs away from the convention location and the fact that “field trips” almost always interfere with other convention activities; the possibility of inclement weather is a real threat.

With rare exceptions, suitable programs can be planned which will be of interest and benefit to those in attendance. Please plan programs utilizing outstanding speakers or panels discussing timely topics—without the necessity and inconvenience of having participants leave the convention site.

9. Complete all forms. The Section Chair is responsible for completing forms and mailing them to the State Office by the stated deadlines. Programs which are not submitted to the State Office in time cannot be included in the official convention program, and meeting space cannot be assigned.

10. About ten days prior to the convention, check to assure that all arrangements are complete. Telephone calls to your speakers (to be sure they still plan to be present and to tell them of the specific meeting times and places) are strongly suggested.

11. Arrive early. Efforts will be made to have your meeting room properly set up, but oversights sometimes occur. Check for room arrangements, media equipment, etc.

12. End on time. Other convention activities may be planned immediately following your section meeting, and your meeting room may be needed for other purposes. Please leave the room at the scheduled time.
13. Nominate officers for next year's convention. Each section should recommend a chair and a vice chair. A secretary and other officers may be elected if the group cares to do so. **ONLY TCCTA MEMBERS SHOULD BE PERMITTED TO VOTE, AND ONLY INDIVIDUALS WHO TEACH IN THE DISCIPLINE OF THE SECTION MEETING SHOULD BE ALLOWED TO PARTICIPATE IN THE ELECTION. GUESTS FROM OTHER DISCIPLINES AND NON-MEMBERS SHOULD BE ASKED TO REFRAIN FROM PARTICIPATING IN THE BUSINESS SESSION OF THE SECTION.**
14. Conduct an evaluation of the meeting. An evaluation form will be included in the convention programs. Results of the evaluation will be passed on to next year's chair.
15. Submit final reports to the state office. Forms for this purpose will be provided just prior to the convention.
16. Submit vouchers for expenses **NO LATER THAN MARCH 1, 2009.**
17. Ask questions. If you have any questions or need help with any problems, don't hesitate to contact the State Office.

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