Student interaction - tighter themes

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This article is part of the Antiquity coverage of the Fifth World Archaeology Congress (WAC-5), held in Washington DC in June 2003. Please see our other articles from WAC-5

This being my first WAC experience, I was particularly impressed by the overall organization and management of the event (considering the large number of participants). The general quality of WAC (which appears to be a consistent feature) was made apparent through prior communication (via email) and personal communication during the Congress with some of the organizers. Their hard work, dedication, and enthusiasm for the subject were the primary factors that lead to the success of the event.

However, one concern of mine is the benefit for students, which goes beyond the basic social and academic level. Being a student and not having attended WAC before, I am not certain of the degree to which students of anthropology and archaeology have interacted and benefited in the past. Therefore, it may be advisable to organize a formal council or committee within the WAC administration, which is directly managed by and for all students. Besides enlarging the network to allow students to interact with each other, such a council can provide a platform to conduct professional dialogue with more experienced researchers at a formal level. For example, a student council or board at the WAC level can accommodate and address important issues relating to degree structure, teaching content, and the regulation of academic archaeology for students. The actual objectives and benefits of such an enterprise should be explored and tested during the next Congress.

Another more minor aspect that may be been better managed in the future is the schedule of papers according to the themes. I noticed many papers and sessions of a similar theme (e.g., palaeolithic, etc.) were running simultaneously. This made it difficult and often impossible for me to attend all relevant papers pertaining to a common subject. Understandably, a schedule that pleases all delegates and accommodates all papers is a daunting task to accomplish, considering the size of the Congress. One additional minor improvement during future WACs is to have more than one computer made available (with Internet access) to the delegates.

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