



ACSP
Connecting educators,
researchers and students

This article includes two letters:

1. May 30 announcement to the membership that the ACSP Governing Board reaffirmed its decision to host the 2019 Annual Conference in Greenville, South Carolina;
2. May 3 letter to the membership describes the issue of the State of California travel ban of the State of South Carolina, and asks for member feedback.

May 30, 2019

Dear ACSP Colleagues:

We write to follow up on a previous statement from the ACSP Executive Committee dated May 3, 2019, about our annual conference in Greenville (contained at the bottom of this message). Thanks to many of you for responding to the call. We received 100 responses through the Google form, as well as another dozen direct communications via email. Having reviewed these comments, the ACSP Governing Board met on Friday May 24, 2019, via video conference for two hours. Present were 15 voting members (out of a total of 16), and 2 non-voting members. Summarized briefly here are the meeting proceedings:

- Members of the Governing Board discussed the tremendous range and nuance in how our members viewed this important issue, and how broad outreach to the membership was critical. The responses presented a rich array of opinions, thoughts, and advice on questions about whether to proceed with the Fall 2019 conference in Greenville, how to address discrimination and inequities at ACSP conferences, and whether ACSP should develop a policy about conference locations. You can view a summary of the comments [here](#).
- The Executive Committee presented further clarification ([view here](#)) on the California travel ban. The South Carolina law at issue was passed in a budget rider in 2018 and was determined by the CA Attorney General to be discriminatory on April 2, 2019. The SC law provides an exception for a religiously-affiliated adoption agency, Miracle Hill, to restrict foster and adoption placements to heterosexual couples within specific (we believe Christian) faiths. Working with the conference local host committee, we spoke with Clemson University staff who are local leaders/experts on LGBTQ issues to learn more about the political landscape and anti-discrimination efforts ongoing in the state.

- The Executive Committee developed three financial scenarios (view here) related to options for the Fall 2019 conference. First, cancellation would result in a loss to ACSP of approximately \$384,000, including committed obligations to the hotel and other contracts and lost revenue from attendance. Second, relocation would result in a loss of about \$265,000, because of hotel and other contract obligations. Third, the loss associated with continuing the conference in Greenville, due to anticipated reduced attendance, is the most difficult to predict.
- The Governing Board, with the voting members present, voted unanimously to continue the 2019 Annual Conference in Greenville, South Carolina. In addition, the Board passed unanimously a resolution, as follows: To meaningfully address discriminatory activities and to raise LGBTQ voices at the Annual Conference. We ask the National Conference Committee to design and implement a set of activities related to this resolution. The survey responses offered many compelling and viable recommendations for how we might do this.

The Governing Board members agreed that the Greenville conference must be a different kind of conference – one that centers the experience of the LGBTQ community locally and within our association, and that highlights issues of inclusion and intersectionality. We will continue to be in touch with local LGBTQ leaders/experts in South Carolina in order to explore ways that we can support their efforts and connect meaningfully with those already deeply engaged on these issues. Given ACSP’s core mission to connect educators, researchers and students in planning, we feel that the annual conference is an important event where we can come together to engage in critical discussions and knowledge exchange.

We will also make many other efforts to address questions of discrimination and to highlight the values of ACSP. We have asked track chairs to identify abstracts that focus on those topics to be highlighted in the program, we have set in motion plans for a presidential session on this issue, we have the support of ACSP interest groups and members to organize more than half a dozen targeted panels and roundtables, the local host committee has been connecting with South Carolina organizations to advocate beyond the conference, and ACSP staff have been working with the conference hotel to ensure a more inclusive meeting environment. In addition, we are exploring ways to help ACSP members, especially students, from California institutions be able to benefit from conference activities.

Your participation and voice will help ACSP and our planning community effect positive change. We believe our role as an academic association is best fulfilled by raising our voice within South Carolina, engaging with and using the conference as a vehicle for doing that. So that ACSP can be proactive in the future in signaling its values, the Governing Board will pursue the development of a conference location policy for future annual conferences. We invite your input on this issue anytime and encourage you to attend a listening session at the Fall 2019 conference to help inform the development of this policy.

Your ACSP Governing Board
(see [this page](#) for board members)

May 3, 2019

Dear ACSP Colleagues:

We write to engage you in a discussion of great importance regarding our upcoming conference hosted by Clemson University (in Greenville, South Carolina, October 24-27, 2019) as well as decision-making regarding future conference locations. On April 2, the California Attorney General placed South Carolina on a list with nine other states where California employees cannot travel on state funds, due to South Carolina's discrimination against the LGBTQ community in adoption and foster care (<https://oag.ca.gov/ab1887>). The ten states include Alabama, Kansas, Kentucky, Mississippi, North Carolina, Oklahoma, South Carolina, South Dakota, Tennessee, and Texas.

Upon learning about this, we took several steps to gather information from within the ACSP community. We reached out to the ACSP Governing Board, Conference Chair, the leadership of the Faculty Women's Interest Group, the leadership of a nascent LGBTQ interest group (not yet formally established), the Clemson local host committee, and department chairs of ACSP member programs that are public universities in California. We discussed with each group how best to proceed. We also did some preliminary research on how other organizations handled (or will handle) similar circumstances, including the Association for the Study of Higher Education (which held a conference in 2017 in Houston after Texas was placed on the list) and the American Planning Association (which will hold its conference next year in Houston).

We now ask for your opinion and thoughts. Given ACSP's core mission to connect educators, researchers and students in planning, we feel that the annual conference is an important event where we can come together to engage in critical discussions, knowledge exchange, and professional development. Our [values statement](#), recently posted, reiterates that "ACSP recognizes the critical importance of deep and sustained community engagement with multiple publics to create transformative, socially responsible, and just actions." In this context, our annual conference will focus directly on questions of planning and inclusion in the LGBTQ community. We have asked track chairs to identify abstracts that focus on those topics, we plan on highlighting those abstracts and panels at the conference, and we have set in motion plans for a presidential session and other panels to raise the Association's voice on this issue.

Based on our discussions so far, the Executive Committee believes that the best course of action is to continue with the annual conference in South Carolina. Our local host Clemson University and colleagues there are fully committed to a broadly inclusive environment and have been advocating for LGBTQ rights against less inclusive state politics. Holding our conference in South Carolina offers opportunities to engage meaningfully with the larger local and state communities to effect positive change. We believe our role, as an academic association, is best fulfilled by raising our voice within South Carolina, and using the conference as a vehicle for doing that.

We understand this is a very complex matter, and consideration of values must be at the heart of how we think about it. An alternative to continuing the conference in South Carolina would be to move to another state (not on the California "travel prohibition" list for state employees) and

possibly with a new local host university. The estimated financial and staff costs of moving the conference are more than a quarter million dollars, largely stemming from hotel contract obligations that must be legally enforced. If we are unable to find a location that can host the conference at a suitable time, this might include, in an extreme case, cancelling the conference for this year. As a result, the Executive Committee believes that the alternative of moving the conference is not tenable.

Decisions about future conference locations also are at stake, as we solicit local hosts several years in advance. It is possible that the divisive national political environment may cause states to take reciprocal actions, other states may produce their own “travel prohibition” lists (several other states already have similar restrictions), or California could add/remove states to/from its list. Do we support travel bans as a boycott/disapproval mechanism? Or would we, as an organization, hope to address discrimination and inequities through other avenues? Should ACSP develop a policy about conference locations? What factors should be considered in the host decision process?

Given the great importance of these questions, we ask that you please let us know your opinion, thoughts, and advice, through this [Google Form link by Monday May 20, 2019](#). We will then convene the ACSP Governing Board via video-conference in late May, to consider how best to move forward, taking into account discussion and input from our membership.

We know this comes at a busy time of the year, when most of our departments and programs are ending classes and celebrating graduation, and we appreciate your input and ideas. Please also reach out directly should you prefer, via email to us or to Donna Dodd at this address (PresidentsOffice@acsp.org).

Weiping, Marlon, Carissa, and Joe
Your ACSP Officers / Executive Committee
2017-2019