

Steve Graves, Candidate for President

Professor of Geography, CSU Northridge

PhD, University of Illinois

MA, Miami University

BS Ed., Ohio University

BA, Ohio State University

(Reprint of VP statement) I have long thought the APCG an ideal organization, so I'm honored to be nominated to stand as a candidate for President. I've been involved with the APCG for many years – sometimes intensely and sometimes more casually, as my involvement with other organizations has waxed and waned. I was a co-organizer of our Palm Springs meeting, and I helped reconfigure the conference registration process a few years back, in addition to leading a field trip or two.

I have served many roles with our sister organization, the California Geographical Society (president, treasurer, web master, conference organizer, etc.), so hopefully, I can bring some measure of insight to the APCG from my experiences with the CGS.

My career interests and achievements are varied. I have published articles and chapters on pedagogy, pop music, crime, gentrification and vernacular landscapes. My primary research agenda has been for many centered on issues of access to quality credit, and the attendant social justice issues arising from predatory lending practices. Still, I consider myself first-and-foremost a teacher. I continue to carry a heavy course load, teaching courses in both Physical and Human Geography. My free e-text for Introduction to Human Geography has grown in popularity in recent years, especially across California and neighboring states. Roughly 50 instructors have adopted it nationally.

I think I can bring both experience and energy to the APCG. I care deeply about the discipline. I'm an unapologetic acolyte, perhaps even a zealot for geography as discipline. I believe deeply in the power of our spatial epistemology and I think organizations like the APCG have an important role in promoting / defending what we collectively can achieve. However, I'm not sure we do a good job of promoting our discipline.

I don't have a long list of agenda items to promote, but I do have a couple of ideas that I would like to pursue. First, I think the APCG might serve the discipline more effectively if it would more conscientiously involve itself with pedagogy issues and outreach to K-12, especially where effective statewide organizations dedicated to such efforts are absent. Second, I think I can bring some additional energy to ongoing efforts to engage faculty and students from more colleges and universities with the APCG. I've seen first-hand the transformational effect of conference attendance on students – and I would like very much to increase the number / background of students who come home from an APCG conference energized, invigorated and inspired to pursue knowledge for reasons beyond their GPA.

Kris Bezdecny, Candidate for Vice President

Assistant Professor of Geography, Department of Geosciences & Environment, Cal State Los Angeles

PhD, Geography and Environmental Science & Policy, University of South Florida

MA, Geography, University of South Florida

BA, History, Metropolitan State College of Denver

BS, Mathematics, Metropolitan State College of Denver

Thank you so much for nominating me for Vice President of the APCG! I received my PhD from University of South Florida in 2011. I began working as an assistant professor at Cal State LA in Fall 2015, and have been an active member of APCG since 2016.

My research focuses on uneven geographical development in urban spaces – or, how we reinforce sociospatial inequities in city-spaces at the neighborhood, local, regional, state, national, and global scales. My work is a hybridization of political economy/ecology and sociopolitical/sociocultural analysis. My first research thread right now is on the policy behind the 2015 California Drought, and how it disproportionately impacted urban spaces and the narratives of individually “doing our part” – and the disconnect with the *actual* water load on the ground before and during the Drought. My second primary thread focuses on the evolution of the relationship between urban globalization and urban theming taking place in the guise of branded communities, with a focus on the case study of Celebration, Florida. This is something we also see in less extreme forms as we watch gentrification and “hipsterization” in communities tie into global branding as part of changing the neighborhood landscape.

In the classroom, I facilitate the senior thesis research of all geography students at Cal State LA, which includes research projects in environmental geography, urban geography, and GIS – mostly focused on issues of environmental justice, social justice, transportation access, and community development. I also actively supervise several master’s thesis students each year.

I try to provide additional support to geography through our institutions for the discipline. For the past two years, I have been a Board Member of the Qualitative Research Specialty Group of the AAG; for the past three years I was Treasurer of the Los Angeles Geographical Society, and this year I was named President of the Los Angeles Geographical Society. In my time attending APCG meetings I have participated as a judge on the Awards Committee twice (at the Portland and Flagstaff meetings), and I will be supporting awards for our upcoming 2020 meeting in San Marcos as Awards Committee Chair.

As APCG Vice President, I plan to build on the foundations of our most recent Presidents, and focus on increased visibility of geography throughout the APCG region. I would build on the outreach campaigns already in progress, particularly to K-12 schools and non/alt-ac professionals. As a geographer for 20 years this year (!), I am still amazed at the number of “geographers in hiding”: people who do geography, but don’t have the name to attach to it, or geographers who are working across a wide variety of academic disciplines and professional positions that aren’t called “geography” or “geographer.”

I also want to continue the work of targeting underrepresented departments in our region, particularly the students at these departments. APCG is an amazing opportunity for them to plug into an amazing network of researchers in a way not fully possible during the whirlwind of AAG. In addition, and something I plan to work on NOW as Awards Chair, is to build on previous work to help increase the awards we can fund each year as a continuing avenue to target underrepresented departments. This is not just money – though while we have a robust number of awards, this is a case where more is always better – but also doing the very best we can to ensure we have applicants for all our awards each year. I tell my students frequently that they are what the future of geography looks like, and our awards system is one of the fastest ways to make that future a reality today, while continuing to do the slower, harder work of creating a more pluralistic geography at all levels and institutions.

And much of this work would not be possible without working with the other AAG regions and AAG. Brian Pompeii, David Kaplan at AAG, and particularly Mike Pretes have done an amazing job plugging APCG into the ongoing discussions between the organizations, and I would be remiss to have those connections fall apart during my time as VP.

Finally, I want to thank all of you for welcoming me into the APCG family 4 years ago, when I first began attending meetings! I worked with the Florida Society of Geographers as a member, presenter, and Managing Editor of *The Florida Geographer* as a graduate student at USF. I also took students to East/West Lakes during my one year teaching at Wright State. What made them special was that they were smaller than AAG, which

meant more community – and more discussions and interactions between geographers of every stripe and calling. I also found them to be very supportive of both students and faculty. It only made sense for me, 4 years ago, to bring students to APCG in Portland. I see this as paying forward the experiences I had had as a student – while giving my students an opportunity to interact with a broader array of geographers and present their work in a more community-oriented space. Whether elected VP or not, I plan to continue to support our APCG community as best that I can for the foreseeable future, as it has supported my students and me.

Michael W. Pesses, Candidate for Vice President

Professor of Geography, Antelope Valley College
PhD, Cultural Studies, Claremont Graduate University
MA, Geography, California State University, Northridge
BA, Anthropology, University of California, Los Angeles

I am honored to be nominated for the position of APCG Vice President. I attended my first APCG meeting as a CSUN masters student over a decade ago and made connections and friends that I maintain to this day. The relatively small gatherings combined with top notch discussions on a variety of spatial subjects have made this event one I look forward to each year.

My path to becoming a geographer has not been direct, nor exactly as I had planned. A career as a field archaeologist led me to a career in GIS which, thank goodness, led me to the masters program at CSUN. It was there that I realized I was better suited to a life in academia than in the industry jobs I had held up until that point. And thanks to the incredible faculty, I also realized that I was above all else a human geographer. I had planned on going straight into a geography PhD program, but being a new dad and new homeowner at the start of Great Recession Southern California put those plans on hold. I was incredibly fortunate to get a tenure-track position at Antelope Valley College in Northern Los Angeles County at that same time, however, and have worked at the college ever since. Eventually I was able to go back to grad school and earned my PhD. While my doctorate is in cultural studies, my dissertation is a work of human geography that involves participant observation of four-wheeling along the Rubicon Trail of Northern California, as well as a sustained exploration of spatial theory to question how we perceive nature. I am currently finishing a monograph on cinema and the automobile to explore why we struggle to abandon cars even if they are environmentally destructive. I am also working on a paper that combines classic landscape reading in Flint, Michigan with an analysis of the surreal fact that Foucault was repeatedly discussed by local officials during the peak of the water crisis.

As Vice President, I would like to reach out to more institutions to encourage participation from faculty and students who might not normally think to attend. As one who works in the California Community College system, I know how hard it can be to get to these meetings. Institutional funding can often be non-existent; in recent years I myself have had to foot the bill to attend as it is seen as non-essential! At the same time, our outreach to such schools is minimal. With rising costs of education, community colleges are the only option for many students. If we sincerely wish to develop and nurture a diverse discipline, we should be reaching out to the institutions in which future geography students are attending and figuring out ways to get them to our meetings. Many community college students are still trying to figure out their path through college and are often very excited by what geography has to offer. These first- and second-year students might not have research to share (though many community colleges are building robust undergraduate research programs) but they can benefit, as I know I did, by seeing how geography is applied to a variety of problems. The community feel at my first APCG meeting in Long Beach got me excited about geography way more than my first overwhelming and imposing AAG meeting. Our transfer students are an incredible resource in filling university programs with bright minds and I would love the opportunity to make our region a leader in the cultivation of future geographers.

Elena Givental, Candidate for Treasurer

CSU East Bay and Berkeley City College

PhD (Geography), UC Davis

MBA, St. Mary's College of California

BS (Geography), Moscow Pedagogical University, Russia

I started my career as a field geologist in Russia (when it was still the Soviet Union), moved to California in 1996, worked as a business manager and, later, as a director of finance at a K-8 school in El Cerrito, CA, did my MBA and then PhD in Geography, and finally arrived to where I am today. I've been teaching a variety of Geography classes at Berkeley City College and CSU East Bay for the last ten years. My first encounter with APCG happened at the 2007 annual meeting in Eugene (OR), and I've been faithful to this fine organization ever since, participating in almost all annual meetings, serving at the Student Paper/Poster Competition and the Budget Committees. I am well aware of the amount of time and effort necessary for the smooth and efficient functioning of the APCG finances but I hope I can rise to the task.