

Conference Report

87th Annual Georgia Public Health Association Meeting & Conference Report

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The 87th Annual Meeting of the Georgia Public Health Association (GPHA) was held in Atlanta, Georgia, on March 22-23, 2016, with pre-conference (March 21st) and post-conference (March 23rd) Executive Board meetings. As Georgia's leading forum for public health researchers, practitioners, and students, the annual meeting of the GPHA brings together participants from across the state to explore recent developments in the field and to exchange techniques, tools, and experiences. In recent years the venue for the GPHA annual conference has been Atlanta, with the 2017 GPHA Annual Meeting and Conference also scheduled to be held in Atlanta.

Several new initiatives were highlighted as part of this year's conference. These included three pre-conference workshops, expansion of academic sponsorships, an enhanced exhibit hall integrated with the poster sessions, silent auction, breaks and President's Reception, an information booth, and an inaugural administration section track. The 2016 Annual Meeting & Conference added the Certified in Public Health (CPH) Continuing Education (CE) designation.

The theme for the conference was *Understanding Public Health: Research, Evidence and Practice*, which reflects the science of public health. Specifically, the program addressed strengthening health systems in the United States and other countries through public health informatics; national accreditation of local health departments; applying an epidemiological approach to promoting reading proficiency for young children; an examination of factors related to health and educational disparities; continuing efforts to eliminate health disparities; and addressing key public health issues important to the state of Georgia. One hundred and nine (109) abstracts were submitted for peer review; 45 were accepted for poster and 40 for workshop presentations. Four plenary sessions with keynote speakers covered the development of collaborative methods to strengthen information capacity of public health systems, including accreditation and the linkage between early brain development and reading success. Concurrent workshops focused on board of health training, public health accreditation, capacity building, collaboration, health disparities, impacts of climatic variability on public health, monitoring systems for travelers from Ebola-affected countries, policy, and regulation.

Twelve (12) awards were presented, including Legislator of the Year Award to Senator Dean Burke for his legislative efforts critical to the success of public health initiatives. These efforts included a bill creating the Maternal Mortality Committee within the Georgia Department of Public Health and his efforts related to potential Medicaid innovations for public health. The Sellers-McCroan Award went to Lee S. Caplan, MD, MPH, PhD, Professor, Department of Community Health and Preventive Medicine, Morehouse School of Medicine for his efforts in securing funding from the National Cancer Institute to develop and implement a Cancer Prevention and Control Research Training Program that focuses on cancer disparities. The conference attracted 475 registrants primarily through pre-registration (n=461) with limited onsite registration (n=15). Although there was a decrease in overall conference attendance (19%), the number of exhibitors (n=36) and sponsorships (n=17) remained constant as compared to 2015. There was a significant increase in the number of posters (n=9), while the number of workshops remained the same (n=40). Of registrants reporting GPHA section participation, representation included: Academic (13%); Administration (25%); Boards of Health (11%); Career Development (4%); Emergency Preparedness (1%); Environmental Health (7%); Epidemiology (7%); Health Education and Promotion (8%); Information Technology (3%); Maternal and Child Health (5%); Medical/Dental (1%); Nursing (10%); and Nutrition (1%). There was a significant increase in the Administration Section (15%) which is likely attributable to the addition of the Administration Track. Yvette Daniels, JD, of the Department of Public Health was instrumental in working to revitalize the Maternal and Child Health Section and the Safety and Health Preparedness (formerly Emergency Preparedness) Section participation at the Annual Meeting and Conference. There was 100% participation in the conference from

the state's 18 public health districts. The online conference evaluation completed by a representative sample of registrants indicated areas of potential improvement as: alignment of breakout session topics with conference theme, enhancement of the use of information technology and social media for the conference agenda/syllabus, change pre-workshops to post-workshops, and consider repetitive sessions. Most rated the conference as "good" or "excellent."

Overview

Purpose

The Georgia Public Health Association (GPHA), established in 1928, is the largest body of public health professionals in the southeastern U.S. As one of 54 state and regional affiliates of the American Public Health Association (APHA), GPHA supports the mission of APHA: to improve the health of the public and achieve equity in health status. The 2016 GPHA strategic priorities are to: advocate for the development of policies that positively impact the health of communities; promote excellence in public health practice; strengthen, advance and support the activities; and provide membership benefits, services and opportunities. GPHA's Annual Meeting and Conference presents the opportunity for public health researchers, practitioners, and students to exchange techniques, tools and experiences and recent developments in the field.

History

Historically, the GPHA conference has been held in various locations across the state: Savannah (n=24); Jekyll Island (n=20); Atlanta (n=17); Augusta (n=4), and Gainesville (n=1). In recent years the venue for the GPHA Conference has been Atlanta, with the 2017 GPHA Annual Meeting and Conference also scheduled to be held in Atlanta.

Theme

The 2016 GPHA theme was selected by President Johanna Hinman, presented to the Conference and Executive Committees, and approved by the Executive Board. This year's meeting theme, "Understanding Public Health: Research, Evidence and Practice" calls for the gathering of raw data into comprehensible evidence and sound practice. According to APHA, the many facets of public health include speaking out for laws that promote smoke-free indoor air and seatbelts, spreading the word about how to stay healthy and giving science-based solutions to problems.

Content

The conference included plenary sessions, luncheons, workshops, posters and exhibits:

1. Plenary Sessions

David A. Ross, President, the Task Force for Global Health: "Evidence to Practice: Using Data to See the Faces of Those We Serve"

Kaye Bender, President and CEO, Public Health Accreditation Board (PHAB): "The Evidence for and from Accreditation"

A panel that included Arianne B. Weldon, Campaign Director, Get Georgia Reading; Brenda Fitzgerald, Commissioner, Georgia Department of Public Health; Francesca Gary, President, Amerigroup Georgia; and Bryan Lee Williams, Epidemiologist and Psychometrician: "Lightning Talks to Fire Your Synapses: Making the Connection between Early Brain Development and Reading Success"

Sellers-McCroan Lecture keynote speaker Daniel S. Blumenthal's topic was "Achieving Health Equity through Public Health"

2. Luncheons, Workshops and Posters

The Sellers-McCroan Award Lecture and Luncheon was offered on Day 1, while the GPHA Awards Luncheon took place on Day 2. Concurrent workshops focused on training for members of local boards of health, public health accreditation, administration, local efforts to address health disparities, community engagement approaches for health prevention, impacts of climatic variability, monitoring emerging infectious disease outbreaks such as Ebola through rapid implementation of new surveillance systems, tobacco addiction and prevention, and disseminating an evidence-based program across cultures. Throughout the conference period, posters and exhibits were presented in dedicated space with participant access.

Administration

The 87th GPHA Annual Meeting served as the venue for the inaugural Administration Section Track, "Defining Excellence" organized and led by Section Chairs Brian Morgan and Nicholle Harrison of the Northwest Georgia Public Health District in Rome. The Administration Section track was designed specifically to increase GPHA membership and participation at the annual meeting and conference for non-clinical and non-environmental health public health staff. This was in response to the need voiced by administrative staff across the state, whose section membership had shrunk to only 33 in September 2015. The Administration Section annual conference participation increased from 10% of attendees in 2015 to 25% in 2016 with 94 section members participating in the section track, as reflected in Figure 1. The Administration Section track, according to persons who attended, consisted of "exciting discussions that not only inspired but also challenged its participants" as well as created "the story the section members wanted to tell and have told."

National Public Health Accreditation and Learning

The Public Health (PH) Accreditation and Learning Track, funded through the American Public Health Association (APHA) sponsorship, aimed to connect the GPHA community. The track was organized and facilitated by Angie Peden of the Jiann-Ping Hsu College of Public Health (JPHCOPH). The content of the track was planned by the Georgia PHAB Learning Community (GA PHAB LC). The GA PHAB LC is a group of accreditation coordinators and accreditation team members that meet monthly to share knowledge, questions and answers to further accreditation goals in the state. Ms. Peden and the GA PHAB LC created an interesting, relevant and educational PH Accreditation and Training Track. One of the highlights of the track was the “PH Accreditation, Performance Management, Quality Improvement and Public Health Accreditation” concurrent session presented by William Riley, PhD.

Local Boards of Health

The mission of the Boards of Health (BOH) section is to encourage board of health members to become more engaged, at the strategic level, with their local health departments in advocating for public health in their communities. BOH Section Chair David Gowan provided a presentation on developing, maintaining and improving the relationship between the local board of health and the local public school district. Special initiatives will include the implementation of the following prior to the 2017 GPHA Annual Conference: develop and obtain accurate local board of health member contact list; develop and post a GPHA website link to the 2016 BOH section training videos; support college student internships at local boards of health; and develop minimum training requirements for local boards of health members.

3. *Exhibits*

As the premier meeting place for organizations committed to improving the health of all Georgians, the GPHA Annual Meeting and Conference provides

networking opportunities and access to conference registrants (Table 1).

Sponsorship

Each year, the GPHA Conference Committee establishes a sponsorship goal to offset costs associated with a quality and affordable annual meeting. Conference sponsors (e.g., academic institutions, corporations, and community-based organizations) gain access to a broad community of professionals representing various public health disciplines: academic, research, practice, policy, and administration. For the 2016 conference, a goal of \$70,000 was set, and a prospectus outlining sponsorship levels was distributed to past and potential sponsors between June - October, 2015, with follow-up by the GPHA President, Vice President, or Executive Services Provider. Table 3 presents sponsorship for this year’s conference.

A major initiative for the 2016 Annual Conference was to engage the 9 accredited schools and programs of public health as sponsors for the annual conference. Of the 9 accredited schools and programs of public health, eight participated as sponsors for the annual conference with sponsorships ranging from Academic Presenting (\$5,000) to Academic Supporter (\$250). One of the 2016 GPHA sponsorship goals is to continue to strengthen the partnership and support of our academic partners including revitalization of the Academic Section under the leadership of Raymona Lawrence, PhD, who was instrumental in the restructuring and revitalization of the Career Development Section.

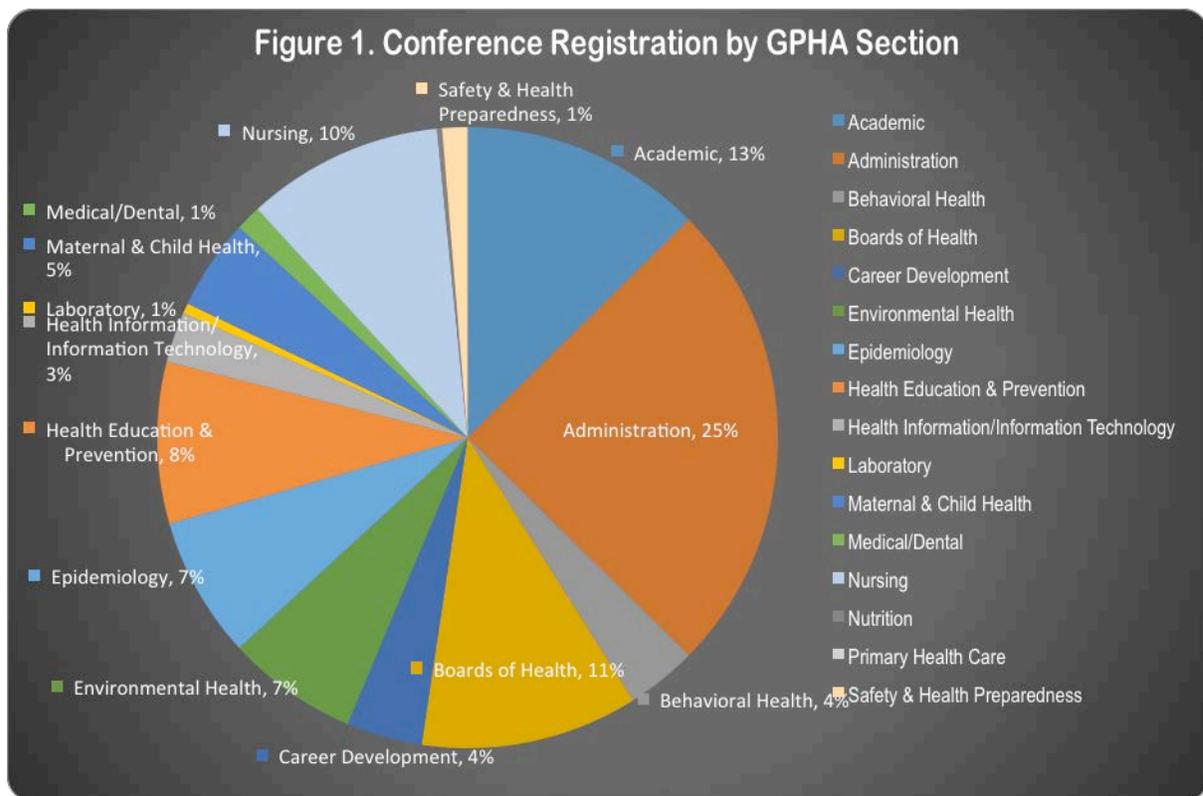
The sponsorship committee also plans to expand the business and corporate sponsorships and membership of the association in 2017 and beyond.

Although the number of sponsorships increased in 2016, the sponsorship revenue did not reflect an increase, but there was an increase in conference exhibitor revenue for the annual conference. The total combined sponsorship and exhibitor revenue was \$72,610 which was 9% less than the established goal.

Table 1. Conference Exhibitors

Exhibitors
Amerigroup
Armstrong University
Atlanta Postal Credit Union
Augusta University, Georgia Health Sciences University
CDP, Inc.
Children’s Healthcare of Atlanta
Eggland’s Best
Emory University, Region IV Public Health Training Center
Emory University, Rollins School of Public Health
ETR Associates
Fort Valley University
Georgia Chapter Alzheimer’s Association
Georgia Chapter American Academy of Pediatrics
Georgia Department of Public Health
Georgia Department of Public Health Immunization Program
Georgia Department of Public Health Tuberculosis Program

Exhibitors
Georgia Department of Public Health Women, Infants, Children Program
Georgia Southern University Jiann-Ping Hsu College of Public Health
Georgia State University School of Public Health
Harris Health Solutions
Hemophilia of Georgia
Hologic
Institute of Public and Preventive Health - Augusta University
MCCi
Morehouse School of Medicine
Mothers & Others for Clean Air
Northside Hospital Cancer Institute
Patagonia Health
Peach State Health Plan
Sanofi Pasteur
The Instrument House
Tyler Technologies
University of Georgia College of Public Health
Verizon
Walden University
Patagonia Health
Peach State Health Plan



Conference Registration

As units of the GPHA, sections provide opportunities for member involvement, social networking, professional development, and mentoring. GPHA has 16 sections

representing public health disciplines or programs. Figure 1 outlines section representation for the 2016 conference.

Table 2 provides a breakdown of the conference registration.

Table 2. Registration Breakdown

Registration Type	Total (n)
Pre-registration	461
Onsite registration	14
Speaker	3
Full Conference/Member	241
Full Conference/Non-member	44
One-day Conference/Member	19
One-day Conference/Non-member	3
Full Conference/Career Development (Student)	28
Full Conference/Retiree	3
One-day Conference/Career Development	13
Full Conference/Accreditation	10
Full Conference/Career Development Scholarship	13
Sellers-McCroan Luncheon	6
GPHA Awards Luncheon	9
Exhibitor/Sponsor	46
Total Registrations	475

As previously referenced, the Administration Section experienced a significant increase in annual conference registration (15%) from 2015 to 2016. The Academic Section experienced a significant increase of 8% which may be attributed to the concerted efforts of the Sponsorship Committee to engage the partnership of the schools of public health. The Environmental Health Section experienced a slight increase of 1%. The Health Education and Promotion section remained constant at 11% for the year. The Boards of Health Section experienced a slight

increase of 2% while the Career Development Section experienced a 7% reduction in registration. The total number of conference attendees that aligned with a section reflected a 5% decrease as compared to the previous year.

One of the major initiatives of the 2017 GPHA annual conference is to continue to review and analyze the 87th Annual Meeting and Conference evaluation responses in support of planning future conference workshops and sessions that meet the needs of the membership.

Table 3. Conference Sponsorships

Sponsorship Level	Organization	Amount
Preferred Sponsor	Healthcare Georgia Foundation	\$10,000
Awards Sponsor	Harris Health Solutions	7,500
Platinum Sponsor	Georgia Department of Public Health	5,000
	American Public Health Association	5,000
Academic Presenting Sponsor	Augusta University Institute of Public and Preventive Health	5,000
	Emory University Rollins School of Public Health	5,000
	Morehouse School of Medicine	5,000
Academic Silver Sponsor	Georgia State University School of Public Health	2,500
Bronze Sponsor	Amerigroup	1,500
	MCCi	1,500
	Patagonia Health	1,500
	Southern Health Association	1,500
	Peach State Health Plan	1,500
	Verizon	1,500
Academic Bronze Sponsor	University of Georgia College of Public Health	1,500
Academic Friend of GPHA	Augusta University Georgia Health Sciences University	1,000
	Georgia Southern University Jiann-Ping Hsu College of Public Health	1,000
Academic Supporter	Armstrong University	250

The 2015 GPHA annual conference was a joint conference with the Southern Health Association (SHA) resulting in a slightly higher attendance than the 2016 annual conference. Of the 569 attendees in 2015, 28 were SHA attendees. The registration for the 2016 annual conference reflects a registration reduction of 16% (Table 4).

Table 4. GPHA Conference Data (2012-2016)

Data	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016
Registrants	483	313	417	569	478
Posters	15	18	24	36	45
Workshops	32	26	32	40	40
Exhibitors	36	17	14	42	36
Sponsors	7	7	10	11	17

The poster and workshop presentations, exhibitors, and sponsors (Table 4) reflect an increase or remained steady from 2015 to 2016. From 2015 to 2016, the number of exhibits decreased by 6 which is due to the combined GPHA and SHA conference in 2015.

Abstract Submission and Acceptance Process

The conference committee invited public health practitioners, researchers, educators, and students with expertise/experience in public health to serve as abstract reviewers. A total of 36 abstract reviewers representing academic institutions (Armstrong University, Emory University, and Augusta University); local health districts; Georgia Department of Public Health; and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention served as reviewers. Reviewers used a numerical rating to judge abstracts as: a) 9-10 (definitely accept); b) 6-8 (accept); c) 4-5 (borderline accept); d) 1-3 (not acceptable). Reviewers submitted reviews to the conference committee on October 25, 2015, and authors were informed of decisions during December 2015. A total of 109 abstracts were submitted, with 85 accepted based on a rating of ≥ 7.75 .

James W. Alley Memorial Fund /Silent Auction History and Process

The James W. Alley Memorial Fund was established to honor James W. Alley, MD, MPH, who served as Director of the Georgia Division of Public Health for 17 years. In the 1970's during his tenure as State Health Director, Dr. Alley focused the attention of public health on chronic diseases that could be amenable to public health interventions and education. As a former GPHA president and as a medical missionary to Bolivia, Dr. Alley helped establish a local Board of Health in the city of Montero to remediate some of the health issues of the indigent and medically needy. He continued to visit and work in this eastern area of Bolivia for over a decade and left the region with the most respected medical service in that country. The fund was first proposed to the GPHA members at the annual meeting in 2001. The original intent of the memorial was to raise enough funds through silent auctions at the annual meetings to sponsor a three-week "summer break" for two people, an MPH student and a public health professional, to visit Bolivia and work in the health services that Dr. Alley helped establish. The first award was aborted due to unstable political conditions in Bolivia. In December 2013, the Past President's Council was tasked with overseeing the annual silent auction, but deferred the auction pending a final determination of the utilization of funds raised. In 2014, the Executive Board approved use of resources from the James W. Alley Memorial Fund to support a limited number of registration scholarships for the upcoming Annual Meeting. The Career Development Section developed criteria for distribution of scholarships. In 2016, 10 conference registration scholarships were awarded to students representing 6 of 9 public health schools/programs in Georgia.

Annual Awards

A call for award nominations was released to the membership on November 20, 2015, and extended to January 2016. The Awards Committee reviewed nominations and selected the recipient for the Jules S. Terry Memorial Award. GPHA sections reviewed remaining nominations and selected recipients based on discipline. The annual association Awards Luncheon, which recognizes outstanding service of individuals in the field of public health, included presentation of 10 section awards.

Sellers-McCroan Award/Luncheon History and Process

During the 56th conference in 1985, a resolution was presented and approved for establishment of an annual lecture honoring the memory of Thomas Fort Sellers, Sr., MD, and John Edgar McCroan, Jr., PhD. This year's call for nominations was issued in October 23, 2015. The award recognizes outstanding achievement and service in epidemiology and/or laboratory professionals in Georgia and may be given to an individual or team whose work has had substantial impact at the state, district, or county levels, in academia or in hospitals. Applications were received by the GPHA President-Elect and the Sellers-McCroan Award committee. The 2016 Sellers-McCroan Award was given to Lee S. Caplan, MD, MPH, PhD, Professor, Department of Community Health and Preventive Medicine, Morehouse School of Medicine, Atlanta for his many contributions to public health, the impact of his work for the health of the state and the strength of epidemiology in public health education.

Legislator of the Year Award

The Legislator of the Year Award is recommended and approved by the Executive Board and awarded for special support of health care and public health issues during the most recent General Assembly. Senator Dean Burke, M.D. was selected to receive the "Legislator of the Year" Award for his introduction and support of legislation critical to the success of public health initiatives. Senator Burke introduced a bill creating the Maternal Mortality Committee within the Georgia Department of Public Health (SB273). He also authored SB342, legislation which ultimately enabled the Department to pursue an advanced information technology solution to better serve HIV patients in a pilot program with Grady Hospital and Fulton County. As the Senate sponsor of HB988, Senator Burke helped pass a measure that modernized Georgia's medical school loan repayment programs, providing significant incentives for physicians, particularly obstetricians, to practice in rural areas of the state.

He also convened a workgroup of various health agencies and the National Council of State Legislatures (NCSL) to discuss potential Medicaid innovations including public and behavioral health, as well as the medical homes concept of providing comprehensive care under a single roof.

Senator Burke chairs the Appropriations Community Health Subcommittee and also serves on the Appropriations

Human Development Subcommittee, where he is a leading supporter of adequate funding levels for public health programs.

GPHA President Johanna Hinman presented Senator Burke with the Legislator of the Year Award to recognize him for his public health efforts.

Continuing Education

The Individual Educational Activity Applicant Eligibility Verification application for continuing education accreditation was submitted by GPHA to APHA in February 2016, for continuing medical education (CME), continuing nursing education (CNE), and certified health education specialist (CHES). APHA created accounts for each registrant and emailed a link to the online evaluation survey, which was completed by registrants prior to receipt of a continuing education certificate. The on-line survey closed on May 29. Evaluation surveys were forwarded to GPHA for review and use for future conference planning. GPHA extended the annual conference continuing education certification to include the Certified in Public Health (CPH) Continuing Education (CE). GPHA applied to the National Board for Public Health Examiners (NBPHE) to offer continuing education for a single event. GPHA provided NBPHE with a detailed description of activity for which CPH professionals will receive CPH CE credit hours that must be related to one of the following domain areas of competency: Biostatistics, Environmental Health Sciences, Epidemiology, Health Policy and Management, Social and Behavioral Sciences, Communication and Informatics, Diversity and Culture, Leadership, Public Health Biology, Professionalism, Program Planning and Systems Thinking. The CPHCE certification provided conference attendees additional opportunities to receive continuing education credits.

Evaluation

Exhibitor Responses

The post-conference evaluation for exhibitors was provided in an electronic format with a 30% response rate. Overall, 50% of the exhibitors indicated that the exhibit hall met their expectations. The exhibitors expressed the need to generate more traffic to the exhibit hall with the suggestion to serve the breaks in the exhibit hall. The exhibitor

registration process received an excellent or good rating. Ninety (90%) percent of the exhibitors planned to exhibit next year at the GPHA meeting and annual conference. The exhibitors liked the location and excellent customer service from the hotel staff.

Conference Registrant Responses

The post-conference evaluation for conference registrants was provided in an electronic format for the purpose of expanding participation in providing feedback for the Annual Conference which resulted in a significant increase in conference registrant feedback and input for future conference planning.

A total of 131 post-conference evaluations were received which reflects a representative sample of conference registrants. Over 60% of the conference registrants indicated that they attended the Annual Meeting and Conference for professional development and to avail themselves of networking opportunities with other professionals in the field (23%). The majority of conference registrants rated the workshop sessions as the most valuable part of the program. Of the workshop sessions, the highest ranked sessions were Administration, Boards of Health and PHAB accreditation. Eighty-three (83%) percent of the conference registrants rated the 87th GPHA meeting and conference as “excellent” or “good.”

Areas of potential improvement identified by conference evaluation comments included: align breakout session topics with conference theme, enhance use of information technology and social media for the conference agenda/syllabus, change pre-workshops to post-workshops, and consider repetitive sessions for the purpose of providing opportunities for more attendees to participate in the session.

A third of the conference registrants expressed the desire to change the location of future GPHA Annual Meeting and Conference to other areas in the state including Savannah or Jekyll Island.

The post-conference evaluations serve as a resource for the upcoming and future Conference Planning Committees as the GPHA Executive Board and committees strive to meet the needs of the GPHA members.

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