

Site Visit Report and Recommendation Windsor - 2020 NASSS Conference

Submitted to: NASSS Executive Board

Submitted by: NASSS Conference Site Locator – F. Michelle Richardson

On behalf of NASSS Conference Site Committee - Toni Bruce, Mary McDonald, Andrew Meyer, Kenneth Muir, Josh Newman, F. Michelle Richardson, Nicholas Schlereth, and Maureen Smith

Context:

In the tradition of rotation of the NASSS Conference, the direction from the Board was that the NASSS 2020 should be in the southwest region of the country. The cities that had been researched were San Diego, CA; Tucson, AZ, Phoenix, AZ, Dallas, TX, Fort Worth, TX, Austin, TX, Houston, TX, and New Orleans, LA. Usually only one city is visited. I visited Houston and New Orleans because the two cities are unique, diverse, and pull from each other's audience when it comes to sport. Throughout this process, I have been working with Hershel Goldsher of Helms-Brisco to assist us in getting the most for our conference dollars.

City Selection:

The following cities were eliminated from contention for the following reasons: San Diego, CA, Dallas/Fort Worth and Austin, TX because hotels

The list was narrowed down to Houston, TX (Hyatt Galleria and Hilton Galleria) and New Orleans, LA (Westin Hotel and Doubletree).

City Selection:

Bids were solicited from all the cities previously listed. Of the cities listed following were disqualified for the following reasons: 1) San Diego: hotel F&B as well as room cost were too high; 2) Phoenix and Tucson, AZ: the end of October and beginning of November is the busy season. The conference and visitor bureau for those cities said it would be very expensive and difficult for us to get into those cities at that time of year. Dallas/Fort Worth and Austin, TX all came in far over the F&B budget and desired room rates.

Cities visited: Houston, TX and New Orleans, LA – These cities were chosen because they both have multiple professional sports teams; offer many things to do outside of the conference setting (i.e. sports, restaurants, etc.); and they have a very diverse population of citizen. Also, the cities both have international airports that offer reasonable air fares throughout the North America and abroad. Houston and New Orleans are close in proximity to one another. Residents of NOLA and Houston can be found on I-10 visiting each of the respective cities on any given weekend or holiday. Because of that very reason I let both cities know that they were the finalist in hopes to get a bidding war going to garner NASSS the best possible price for our conference.

Houston Hotels:

Hyatt Regency Houston Galleria –

- 1) The Hyatt was a beautiful property that is next door to the Galleria. The room cost and F&B were within the parameters of what we wanted in a hotel. An excellent property all the way around.

Hilton Houston Post Oak by The Galleria –

- 2) About a mile or so away from the Galleria, and I didn't care for this property at all. The conference rooms were in variety of odd shapes because the hotel itself is round. The strange angles of the rooms were just off putting and distracting to me, as well as the fact that some of the rooms were guest rooms they had turned into meeting rooms.

New Orleans Hotels:

The Doubletree by Hilton Hotel New Orleans

- 1) Located on Canal Street, one block away from the French Quarter, next door to Harrah's Casino. Offers everything we need, plus, during our time there, we (NASSS) would occupy the entire hotel. It has enough rooms to fit our largest number of registrants (numbers from 2016 Tampa were used). Plus, it is a Hilton property, and if we were to grow out of the Doubletree there is another Hilton property about one block away that they would be happy to help us transition into.
- 2) The Doubletree has also offered to provide a block of twenty (20) rooms at a discounted rate for students. The rate would be \$30 cheaper than the group rate of \$159 and a F&B of 25,000 minimum. This type of discounted student rate can assist increasing the student participation numbers, as well as keeping them proximity so that they can network and get to know the their fellow NASSS student and professional scholars.
- 3) The Doubletree will lock the room rate of \$159 down for us for 2020 without raising the price in line with future inflationary reasons.

The Westin New Orleans at Canal Place –

- 1) The Westin offers all the accommodations across on Canal across the street from The Doubletree. The main issues with the Westin is: 1) the dates available at the Westin are Friday, October 30th through Thursday, November 5th which do not coincide with our usual meeting days of Wednesday thru Saturday; and 2) Room rates would be above \$200 and F&B at the time of my visit was \$28,000.
- 2) This is a revised offer from The Westin after my visit
 - Comp Wi-Fi in Guest rooms
 - 1/50
 - \$189.00 student rate (up to 20 rooms)
 - Comp meeting space with achieving \$20,000 F & B Min
 - Complimentary snacks in office
 - 20% attrition
 - Five (5) suite upgrades
 - Five welcome amenities
 - 10% off in-house AV

City Choice: New Orleans, LA – NOLA offered everything that we could possibly want for a conference city. It is a city that wide and vast experience outside of the conference.

Hotel Recommendation: I recommend that we go with the Doubletree because all the prices align with our budget and we will take over the entire hotel.