

Minutes
AAR Board of Directors Meeting
February 15-16, 2020

Present: (Board Members) Whitney Bauman, José Cabezón, Kimberly Connor, Kerry Danner, Kathy Downey, Stacey Floyd-Thomas, Marla Frederick, Amir Hussain, Zayn Kassam, Aarti Patel, Myra Rivera, Randall Styers, Alice Hunt; (staff members) Elizabeth Hardcastle, Sarah Levine, Josh Patterson, Robert Puckett, Sandy Stevens.

The meeting began at 9:00 AM with President Cabezón's call to order.

Motion 1: Approve Agenda. Passed unanimously

President's Report (José Cabezón): President Cabezón reported on the exit interviews conducted with outgoing board members. President Cabezón's theme for this year is "The AAR as a Scholarly Guild." Part of his goal for the year is to have digitized and archived past program books. There is a link to the archives on the AAR website.

President Cabezón noted we have now, as of January 1, 2020, implemented the *Professional Conduct Policy and Procedures* with Immediate Past President Laurie Patton serving as the first ombudsperson and the elections for two other ombudspersons to be held along with Director elections this fall.

President Cabezón has a goal of increasing international (especially from developing countries) participation in governance and general membership.

Treasurer's Report (Randall Styers): Treasurer Styers presented the FY2020 Budget vs. Actuals.

Program Committee Report (Whitney Bauman, Robert Puckett): Program Unit Director Bauman reported that the annual meeting session schedule will change starting in 2021, eliminating the longer sessions, per the preference of the membership. The Program Committee reviewed, according to its 5-year review schedule, Related Scholarly Organizations (RSOs) and spent time talking about the RSOs in relation to AAR values, particularly the value of inclusion.

Motion 2: To approve the following recommendations of the Program Committee:

5-year renewal of RSOs to: Theta Alpha Kappa, International Association for the Cognitive Science of Religion, Jack, Joseph, and Morton Mandell Center for Advanced Holocaust Studies, African Association for the Study of Religions, Center for Interdisciplinary Study of Monotheistic Religions, European Society for the Study of Western Esotericism

Deny renewal of RSO status, with an invitation to amend membership criteria, to: Society of Christian Philosophers, European Society of Women in Theological Research

Approve RSO status for: Feminist Studies in Religion

Decline RSO status for: National Institute of Newman Studies.

Passed Unanimously.

AM19 San Diego Annual Meeting Review (Robert Puckett): Chief Scholarly Engagement Officer Puckett reviewed the Annual-Meeting-by-the-numbers and offered analysis of the post-annual meeting survey.

Strategies around sustainability (José Cabezón, Alice Hunt): The board discussed pros and cons of the concept, raised over the last number of years, that the AAR take a sabbatical from the annual meeting every seven years. The AAR, along with the SBL (with whom we hold a legal common convention agreement), has already entered into contracts with convention centers and hotels in annual meeting cities through 2031.

Motion 3: To suspend the Annual Meeting for one year at the first time when it is contractually feasible.

Opposed unanimously.

Motion 4: The ED will raise for discussion, before the next set of Annual Meeting contracts are negotiated, a sabbatical year for the Annual Meeting.

Passed. 3 opposed; no abstentions.

President Cabezón will appoint a small group of board members to follow up on sustainability issues with an emphasis on best practices and use of data.

Committee / Working Group Reports (Rivera): Vice President Rivera explained her approach to summarizing the work of the working groups and the recommendations that emerged from the meetings along with her comments.

Constant themes were the desire to meet more regularly and the need to have a budget. The cost of committee work is not standardized and needs to move towards best practice. The staff is taking up this issue and will bring recommendations to the board.

Annual Meeting – safety, security, affordability issues (Alice Hunt): Executive Director Hunt reminded the board of the issues that came up around name badges at last year’s San Diego annual meeting, noting the crucial need for clear, forward-thinking, and effective communication. She discussed the initial concerns raised about emailed badges and the vulnerability of fraud that might give access to someone with dangerous intentions. Important issues to keep in mind: **1)** Communication with membership is important. **2)** We have a legal relationship with SBL and work with them on all annual meeting issues. **3)** There are insurance requirements (our liability insurance and the requirements of convention centers) that name badges be checked. Overall the competing priorities are safety and safety; trolls and access to name badges on the one hand and, on the other hand, members’ concerns over scrutiny. The consensus of the board was to support management in proceeding with emailing name badges, at least until a better solution can be found.

The name badge issue from AM2019 brought up affordability issues in relation to registration costs, particularly for students. The AAR, in collaboration with the SBL, will address student registration costs (and refundable period) this year; and the two organizations have made a commitment to have plan by AM 2021 to address registration costs for under employed/under-resourced members.

Executive Director Hunt and Status Committee Director Kassam will return to the members who raised the original emailed name badge security issue to make sure we have adequately addressed their concerns.

Public Statements Standards (Cabézón):

The board discussed AAR policy and practices around the issuing of public statements. In the end, the board made no changes to the current policy or approach.

Publications and Open Access conversation (Sarah Levine): Director of Publications Sarah Levine offered an overview to the work of the Publications Committee and AAR publications program across venues. She addressed how the AAR might move in to open access in light of the charge to promote the public understanding of religion. Open access for readers, as Sarah observed, is two parts of an equation—free to access and free to reproduce. Open access for publishers/societies means a charge to publish rather than a charge to read/access. Levels include: bronze, green gold, diamond. Plan S

(European states and NGO funders) is an important issue now because funding is tied to how published open access. She explained that, while this makes sense for STEM, it does not make sense for the humanities. Questions remain, such as, who in the scholarly community is covered in transformative agreements negotiated between publishers and libraries/consortia that allows open access? Finite resources complicate the desire for open access. Data shows that authors prioritize reputation of journal/publisher over open access.

Hiring, Evaluation, and Promotion (HEP) Task Force update (Marla Frederick):

President-elect Frederick gave a brief update on the work of the task force and looks forward to bringing a final report to the board in September.

The meeting was suspended at 5:00 PM on Saturday, February 15, 2020.

The meeting was resumed at 9:00 AM on Sunday, February 16, 2020.

Luce grant conversation (Alice Hunt): Executive Director Hunt reviewed the two major initiatives of the current Luce grant: 1) to capitalize on the momentum of *Reading Religion* to reach wider audiences and 2) to advance public scholarship through talking with decision makers and piloting a two-year mini-grant program for emerging public scholars.

Bylaws conversation (Jose Cabézón):

The board discussed the governance structure and bylaws. No changes were made to the bylaws at this time.

Governance and Leadership Development Committee Report (Hunt): Executive Director Hunt gave the board a report from the committee for the election of new board members and ombudspersons to begin in January of 2021. The slate remains confidential until the election opens in the fall.

Executive Director's Report (Hunt):

Executive Director Hunt affirmed her appreciation for the opportunity to serve in her role. She noted the organization has been through many changes, included staff transitions, reorganization of the organization to match the mission, the long-range goals and AAR values. She reported on welcoming new staff, particularly Chief Public Engagement Officer Dorrie Toney who will start in March as well as Jill Marshall, who has joined as Publications/Communications Specialist.

Executive Director Hunt addressed fundraising on a variety of fronts, including foundations, annual donations, brainstorming with board members about potential opportunities.

She updated the board on the new website and membership data base which will roll out in this spring.

She reported that the Committee on Professional Conduct has elected Kathy Downey as its chair for 2020. She reminded the board that the procedures were approved as a two-year pilot program.

She invited the board to discuss strategic issues for learned societies.

The meeting was adjourned at 11:00 AM.

Respectfully submitted,

Kimberly Rae Connor, Secretary