AAR WR

Executive Committee

Meeting

Friday, September 13, 2013

Notes

1. **Unit Chairs Nominations**

We reviewed nominations for three unit chairs. EC formed consensus around this principle: unit leadership (co-chairs) should include a senior scholar, but in cases where we cannot find one, graduate students (ABD, i.e. have completed qualifying exams) can serve as unit chairs. Two chair nominations were then approved:

* Education Workshop: Melissa Jones
* Asian American Religions: Dean Ryuta Adachi, a graduate student, as co-chair with Jonathan Lee.

Emily Silverman clarified after the discussion that for the third nomination, in Goddess Studies, she had asked the graduate student who expressed interest to work on finding a senior scholar, and that AAR/WR would then take up re-instating Goddess Studies as a unit for the 2015 conference. So that nomination was tabled.

PBR will make sure the Policy File task force draft of a policy on this question reflects this discussion.

1. **Amir Hussain, JAAR Editor and LMU faculty member--participation in Conference**

PBR briefed the EC on Amir Hussain’s willingness to participate in the conference, explaining one idea we discussed was a session in which he spoke 1) about the ins/outs of publishing, from the perspective of a journal editor (a variation on a talk he has given to graduate students before), and 2) about trends or directions he sees in religious studies research, again from his vantage point as editor of a journal that probably reflects cutting edge research in our field.

The EC thinks this is a great opportunity. We decided to postpone scheduling questions for his presentation—e.g. running a special, dedicated morning or late afternoon session, or a second plenary, or something in conjunction with the president’s address—until mid-October, when we have a better sense of how many paper proposals units have received.

1. **Board Meeting at AAR/National (Boo)**

The EC agreed PBR should send out a draft agenda for our Board meeting in Baltimore that included these items

* approval of a budget for 2013-2014
* discussion and action on three task forces’ reports: Website, Policy File, and Finances.

This may prompt Board members to propose other items—although each of these items are major and will take quite a bit of time.

1. **Vacant Board Positions (Boo)**

The EC discussed the three vacant Board positions, spending most of its time on the Diversity Advocate, a position for which Shanshan Yang has been nominated by outgoing Board member Jonathan Lee.

PBR explained that although the Operating Agreement states that all board members must be elected by the general membership, in which case we would wait until we hold an election, presumably at the 2014 meeting, on any new Board members. But the by-laws carry a provision for the Board to make an interim appointment (4.12). The E.C. accepted PBR’s recommendation that the E.C. make an interim appointment now so that the Diversity Advocate position would be filled for the two board meetings this year. This way Shanshan Yang could then stand as a candidate in an election. In our discussion we noted that outgoing Diversity Advocate Jonathan Lee had vetted her candidacy, including confirmation that her visa will not affect her ability to serve in this position, and that having an international student fill this position added a valuable perspective to the Board. PBR will inform Ms. Yang that her appointment would be interim, through the end of the 2014 annual meeting, and that she is encouraged to stand for election to a full three year term at that time.

Two other vacant positions: Only 1 person volunteered to fill one of the other vacant board positions, a graduate student representative from the northern CA (or Pacific Island) region, but neither her institution or residence is north of Santa Barbara, so PBR thanked her for her interest and indicated we already have a graduate student representative from the southern region. Nobody volunteered for the other position, the general northern CA representative.

The EC decided to leave both positions vacant until we hold an election, and in the meantime solicit nominations.

1. **Report on 8/15 phone call with Deborah Minor (Boo)**

PBR reported on this conversation with Deborah Minor over the phone a while ago, focusing on three specific items:

Budget Reserve: Deborah explained that National AAR asks regions to have a reserve sufficient to cover fixed costs for one conference (not three, as some of us had thought). It is not yet written policy, but will be, when they revise the Regional Officer’s Handbook. The scenario she suggested we envision: we have to cancel the conference at the last minute and refund all registration fees; our reserve would cover costs to which we had already committed (e.g. Conference Manager stipend). PBR has added this to the Policy File Draft.

The EC discussed whether or not we want to open our reserve for other purposes. The consensus was No, that we should wait until the conference operates without a deficit for at least two years running before opening that question.

Online Elections: Deborah explained that some regions already have online elections and that the AAR National could help us set this up if we would like to do this in the Western Region. She also explained there is a provision for online elections in the OA (it is not obvious!). We had discussion of this in Arizona, where Franz Metcalf pitched the idea at the general membership meeting, and I would like to pursue it.

The EC decided we would need further information before pursuing this option. What are the rates of voter participation at the national or at those regions that use on-line elections? The majority of the EC felt that the benefit of holding an election at the general meeting, even if only 30 people participate, is that individuals who are invested enough to attend the conference and membership meeting are probably the ones we want voting.

Revising the OA: PBR reported that Deborah Minor had gotten back to him on the question he raised about the OA: currently the OA does not include a procedure by which it can be revised. Deborah consulted with AAR attorneys and advised that we can use whatever process we want in the region, but that final approval of a revision rests with AAR National. She also noted that Article IV is the only section where region’s had some autonomy and control over the language.

1. **Next Meeting**

We set our next meeting via conference call for October 4, Friday, 10:00 a.m., where the main item would be to see if we need to extend our deadline—so Emily will have had contacted and received some indication from Chairs about how things are going earlier that week. It is possible we can conduct this by e-mail

1. **Other/New Business?**

Dirk will send out a reminder notice to AAR membership about the 2014 conference.