AAR/WR
Unit Chairs Meeting
Sunday, March 10, 2013, 1-2:00
Notes

1. Welcome and Introductions
   After AAR/WR Vice President Riley's welcome to the meeting, chairs of 20 of the region's units introduced themselves.
   Since the roster of unit chairs is a public document posted on our website individuals were encouraged to *not* use personal addresses for contact information.

2. Unit Chair Guidelines on AAR/WR website
   The executive committee of the board is updating the guidelines for unit chairs. A copy of the current version was circulated to chairs and they were asked chairs to provide feedback based on their experience this past year.
   The chairs offered several observations, some of which could be addressed in the revised text:
   - Regarding our procedures, the devil is in the details—e.g. only one person submitted proposals to more than one unit this year; but resolving it took a couple of weeks.
   - Several chairs suggested that reminders throughout the process help them keep on track.
   - Regarding the pool process that was piloted this year, it was reported that only 6 papers were "pooled," three of which were picked up by other sections, and after re-consideration, two of the remaining three were accommodated by an additional panel in the unit to which they were originally submitted. Chairs seemed to agree we should continue with this step, but that we needed to adhere to a much tighter schedule: there was strong agreement that the entire process needs to be completed no later than early December, well before Christmas break as people need time to plan and work on their papers. One item that needs work in this process is who will notify individuals whose proposals were not accepted by one unit and have been sent to the "pool," where they may or may not be picked up by another unit. Resolution of these items should be incorporated clearly into the guidelines.
   - Chairs reported frustration with having to wait so long to let individuals know whether or not proposals they submitted had been accepted. The rationale behind the current procedure is that the program chair needs to review all unit panels in order to identify possible conflicts. Everyone agreed that we all need to be more consistent and uniform from year to year in setting deadlines and keeping to them.
   - It was requested that we eliminate the possibility of "snail mail" submissions from our instructions.
   - Given that the AAR/WR program chair position turns over every year, it was suggested that we create a generic e-mail for the program chair (e.g. AAR_WR_VP ProgramChair) so unit chairs can easily find these important e-mails in their in boxes.

- Chairs came back to this topic later in the meeting, suggesting that the guidelines emphasize the practice of chairs contacting individuals to encourage them to submit proposals, and/or to serve as moderators or respondents.
- There was also considerable discussion of the criteria by which units' panels are scheduled throughout the conference, suggesting a need to make those criteria clear to chairs up front.

The chairs were also asked to take an advisory vote on a motion put forward by Board Member Kahena Viale, that individuals be allowed to submit proposals to two units. In the discussion it was noted that this might increase participation in the regional meetings and help units who recently have received fewer proposals. The restriction of only one proposal per individual was adopted several years ago, largely out of a desire to streamline the process. It was noted that chairs would have to be timely and efficient in sharing information about proposals they are considering, and that this could make the program chair's work on the program more complex. An advisory vote was taken, with 13 in favor of the change, 8 opposing and 1 abstention.

3. Unit Chair Feedback on the Role of the Conference Theme in the Conference and Units
   Unit chairs discussed and then completed an advisory survey regarding the role of the conference theme in developing the overall conference and the panels within their units. It was reported the practice across the regions varies considerably, with some adopting themes like ours and others simply going with individual unit calls. Highlights from the unit chairs' discussion include:
   - Some chairs thought the theme gives focus to the conference as a whole; others argued that it does little to change the overall conference experience.
   - Some chairs thought the theme can drive people away if they believe their project does not relate to it.
   - The conference is largely about the units, and the chairs know best what is happening in their field; that should be the focus for the conference.
   - Some chairs took a both/and approach, suggesting that units can develop their own theme or variation on the conference theme.

   Chairs completed a survey on this question; the detailed results of the survey are included as an appendix to these notes. There was consensus that in past units used the conference theme to craft their call for proposals and that individuals had addressed the themes in their papers. Looking to the future, it appears the unit chairs were divided on whether that should continue to be the case.

4. Number of Units in the Region

   Time did not allow the group to pursue another question that had been posed regarding the number of units we have in the western region: of the nine regions, at 23 ours is the most robust. The average across the other regions is 8.5, with a range from 0 to 16.

5. New Business/Other: Thanks to ASU

    Prof. Souad Ali publicly thanked the administrators at ASU who had supported the conference. The chairs echoed their appreciation for the generous support provided by the host institution, particularly for the superb facilities made available for our meeting.

    Vice President/Program Director Elect Emily Silverman gave chairs a preview of what she was developing as a conference theme for 2014—what methodologies do we use in our specialties to uncover and represent the voices and histories of the marginalized?—and encouraged unit chairs to begin thinking about their calls with that question in mind.

6. Closing
    The meeting adjourned at 2:00.

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Appendix: Report on Survey on Conference Theme submitted at end of the meeting.
(Chairs were given a survey to complete and return at the end of the meeting. The survey asked them to respond to statements by the following scale:

1 Disagree   2 Strongly Disagree   3 Agree   4 Agree strongly

The original statements are in italics; the results are not.)

What happened in the past one, two, three years?

__   *my unit depended on/used the conference theme to craft our unit call for proposals*

Results: A strong majority registered agreement with this statement:

1-1

2-2

3-8

4-4

__   *my unit's call did not depend on/use the theme*

Results: a strong majority registered disagreement with this statement:

1-6

2-6

3-1

4-2

__   *all the proposals submitted to my unit addressed the conference theme*

Results: a strong majority registered disagreement with this statement:

1-3

2-9

3-3

4-0

_   *all the proposals accepted by my unit addressed the conference theme (i.e. it was a criterion)*

Results: a strong majority registered disagreement with this statement:

1-4

2-8

3-2

4-1

What I would like to see happen

__ *continue to develop over arching conference themes; they help units*

Results: chairs seemed divided in their views of this statement: 8 were on the disagreement side; 7 on the agreement side, with the same number on each registering "Strongly"

1-5

2-3

3-2

4-5

__ *let units develop their own call focus; a conference theme is a hassle*

Results: chairs seemed divided in their views of this statement: 9 were on the disagreement side (3 "strongly"); 8 on the agreement side (7 "strongly")

1-3

2-6

3-1

4-7