

SSSP Elections Committee Chair (Wendy Chapkis) report to the Board:

I agreed to serve as Elections Committee Chair with very little idea of what the responsibilities of that position might be. Nancy Naples, in inviting me to assume the position, had informed me that “The process will change slightly in 2008 due to the implementation of electronic voting but the main job is to oversee the ballots.” Somehow I assumed that “overseeing the ballots” would be pro forma and that the other tasks would be much less hands on than they in fact turned out to be. This was, in retrospect, probably a good thing at least in terms of getting me to agree to do it. I also convinced three colleagues (Luisa Deprez, John Baugher and David Wagner) to join the committee by informing them that “As far as I can tell from the information I’ve received, it is a one-time thing to certify the ballot count (I’m not quite sure how that is done since the voting is electronic. Maybe we just meet to record the numbers?). I have been told the work is minimal.”

As it turned out, the process proved to be rather more daunting than I had assumed and surprisingly time consuming. My learning curve was steep and I made a few embarrassing mistakes. Without the constant guidance of Michele Koontz, I really would have floundered.

The key challenges all involved the process of contacting proposed candidates from the approved nominations list. The fact that it was the first election conducted electronically posed no problems from my end - indeed that part of the process seemed effective and easy.

The process of contacting nominees to ascertain their willingness to run for office turned out to be somewhat complex. The bylaws specify that “The list [of nominees] is ordered so that preferred candidates are contacted first. If names appear on more than one list, candidates are contacted in the order they appear on each list. In the event that an individual declines to run, that person may be eligible to serve in another office. If this occurs, the person is offered the higher-ranking office first.” Several individuals did indeed appear on more than one list of nominations (that is, they had been nominated for several offices) but that was fairly easy to manage. The more significant challenge was inviting nominees in the order in which they were nominated, waiting to hear back from them whether they would accept or decline the nomination, and then sending follow up emails or phone calls as the two week deadline approached. In the case that a nominee declined, it involved beginning the process all over again with the next name on the list and trying to keep track of the by now staggered set of interim deadlines for the next round of requests to made (with the appropriate follow up reminders to be sent out). All of this had to be done with one eye on the final deadline to submit a slate of candidates no later than Monday, October 15.

I stumbled a few times at the beginning of the process (most notably, I made the mistake of contacting too many nominees for the “Committee on Committees” before hearing back from the top four on the list. Thankfully, a follow up email and phone call of apology smoothed that mistake over - though it proved embarrassing for me). Again, Michele Koontz was indispensable throughout the process.

Before I began the process of contacting people, I asked Michele if there was a template letter

that I might use when contacting each of the individuals who had been nominated to ask if they were willing to run. Michele sent me contact information for Nancy Jurik (2007 Elections Committee Chair) in case I had questions and copies of the templates she used. The templates only needed to be updated and modified for each position. I would strongly recommend that the template be provided again to next year's Elections Committee Chair. It helped me out enormously. I would also recommend passing on my contact information to next year's Chair and inviting them to get in touch with me if they have any questions or concerns.

Regarding the process of electronic voting, as I said above, I found it to be useful and easy - both as a voter and as the Elections Chair. The bylaws stipulate that "The Elections Committee shall review the computer record of votes cast, note and resolve any irregularities and file a report with the President and the Executive Office." On April 16th, Michele Koontz sent me the election results, the voter list (Member ID, Name, Email Address, Invalid Email --an "X" was listed if the member has an invalid email address), the date voted, and the member's SSSP ID. The Executive Office had also sent out a letter to each member with an invalid email address providing information on an alternative means of voting.

On receiving the election results, each member of the Elections Committee examined them and, finding no obvious irregularities, certified them. By the way, the Elections Committee was informed that we did not have to actually verify each electronic vote for accuracy which is most fortunate as I have no idea how we would have done that.

After we certified the election results, I asked the Executive Office to please send out personalized letters of congratulations and regrets to the candidates under my name via U.S. mail. Michele Koontz also emailed the certified election results to the board and Sharon Shummaker (Administrative Assistant/Webmaster) then posted the election results on the SSSP web site.

Of the 2,185 members eligible to vote, 418 voted in this election. The Executive Office informed me that this translated to a 19.13% participation rate, up from 13.16% last year.

I would be happy to answer any questions the board might have about the election process at the upcoming board meeting in Boston.

Sincerely,

Wendy Chapkis
SSSP Elections Committee Chair 2007
Professor of Sociology and Women & Gender Studies
University of Southern Maine
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TEMPLATES for Election Committee use:

[letter used for nominee for President-Elect]:

14 September 2007

Dear Dr. _____,

Today I left a brief message on your phone machine and wanted to follow up by email. I am pleased to inform you that you have been nominated to run for the office of Vice-President Elect (2008-2009) and Vice-President (2009-2010). Congratulations on this nomination. A description of the duties for this office are on page 17 of the attached SSSP Operations Manual for your review. It is also required that all candidates for office must have their dues paid up for the year in which they are nominated (i.e., 2007). Please let me know by September 28th whether or not you are willing to run. If you have additional questions, you can contact Michele Smith Koontz, Administrative Officer and Meeting Manager at 865-689-1531 or mkoontz3@utk.edu. Please confirm by email or phone (207-780-4757) that you received this message.

Thank you so much for your consideration.

Wendy Chapkis
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Portland, ME 04104
chapkis@usm.maine.edu

[letter used for SSSP offices:]

14 September 2007

Dear Dr. _____,

I am pleased to inform you that you have been nominated for the Editorial and Publications Committee of the SSSP (2008-2011). Congratulations on this nomination. A description of the duties for this office are on pages 29-30 of the attached SSSP Operations Manual for your review. It is required that all candidates for office must have their dues paid up for the year in which they are nominated (i.e., 2007). Please let me know by September 28th whether or not you are willing to run. If you have additional questions, you can contact Michele Smith Koontz,

Administrative Officer and Meeting Manager at 865-689-1531 or mkoontz3@utk.edu. Please confirm by email or phone (207-780-4757) that you received this message.

Thank you so much for your consideration.

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