

To: SSSP Board of Directors

From: Gabriel Aquino (Chair) and Susan M. Carlson (incoming Chair) Permanent Organization and Strategic Planning Committee

Date: May 05, 2008

RE: SSSP Executive Office Site Visit Report

Introduction:

Items of Business during executive office site visit

1. Evaluation of Executive Office, Executive Officer, Administrative Officer, Meeting Manager, and Graduate Research Associate
2. Review Operations Manual
3. Assess the website and electronic balloting
4. Develop paper ballot bylaws amendment
5. Discuss 2009 contract with the University of Tennessee
6. Recommend salaries for the Executive Officer, Administrative Officer, Meeting Manager, and Graduate Research Associate

During our site visit we met with Dr. Tom Hood, Executive Officer; Sarah Hendricks, Graduate Research Associate; Michele Koontz, Administrative Officer and Meeting Manager; Dr. Scott Frey, Head of the Sociology Department; Dr. Bill Dunne, Associate Dean of Research, Graduate Studies and Facilities; Dr. Greg Reed, Associate Vice Chancellor, Office of Research. Our meeting with each person went well, and everyone at the University was extremely gracious and welcoming. Tom and Michele provided us with all the materials and information we needed, and arranged our site visit itinerary.

Interview with Tom Hood Executive Office

We met with Dr. Hood, who plans on ending his service as Executive Officer (EO) in August of 2009 with the hiring of the new Executive Office, a search that is currently underway. Dr. Hood wanted to address some recommendations that he felt needed clarification from the retreat during the 2007 Annual Meeting before we could begin to consider their implementations.

Dr. Hood's first concern was the recommendation for a public affairs officer who would publicize SSSP's position on public policy issues and research. According to Dr. Hood, the position has to be referred to the Permanent Organization and Strategic Planning Committee (PO&SPC) in order to formalize a job description for the position. This description should outline the responsibilities of the public affairs officer, the remuneration, if any, for the

position, and the public affairs officer's relationship to the Executive Officer, the Executive Office, the President of SSSP, and the Board of Directors. Additionally, we need to address amendments to the bylaws in regards to the position and the above mentioned relationships. Susan and I agreed with Tom's assessment, yet we are concerned with how the new Executive Officer would envision this position with regard to publicizing and advocating for the Society. We encourage a discussion with the candidates for the executive officer position and consider the new EO's recommendations during the development of the public affairs officer position.

The next issue addressed by Dr. Hood was another item from the retreat, the travel stipend for the executive officer outreach duties. During the retreat it was recommended that the Executive Officer have a \$15,000 stipend to promote SSSP to other organizations by attending their annual meetings, events, and specialized programs or workshops that would enhance the visibility of the Society. Dr. Hood recommended that this proposal could be implemented by amending the job description for the executive officer position. This job description should include how the stipend should be spent. Additionally, before the amount of the stipend is finalized, the Budget, Finance, and Audit Committee should review actual costs of this recommendation and determine how the stipend will be funded. In addition, Susan and I believe that, as with the public affairs officer position, the candidates for the executive officer position should be asked about how they envision using the stipend to promote the interests of the Society. We recommend that interviews with executive officer candidates include discussions of the public affairs position and use of the travel stipend in order to assess each candidate's views of how these resources will be used to enhance the visibility of the Society, and facilitate growth through recruitment of new members.

Dr. Hood provided an extremely positive review of Michele Koontz's work as Administrative Officer and Meeting Manager for SSSP. He praised Michele's work ethic, organizational skills, and commitment to the Society and its members. He expressed his belief that Michele has been and is essential to SSSP. Dr. Hood did raise a concern regarding a conflict between Michele's duties as Administrative Officer and Meeting Manager during the annual meeting. Specifically, during the annual meeting, Michele is required to staff the Board of Director's meetings, Budget, Finance, and Audit Committee meetings, and several other committee meetings. When issues arise with respect to meeting management, Michele is sometimes required to leave committee meetings to resolve these issues. Thus, performing both roles simultaneously can pose logistical problems. Susan and I discussed this potential problem with Michele, and our recommendations are discussed below.

With regards to the Graduate Research Associate, Dr. Hood greatly praised Sarah Hendricks for her high work ethic and dedication to her work for SSSP. He expressed concern over the number of extra hours the graduate research associate position was requiring. Dr. Hood was hopeful that with the new administrative assistant and webmaster position would decrease some of the workload for the graduate research position. Susan and I recommend that the Executive Officer and Administrative Officer continue to monitor the number of hours worked each week by the Graduate Research Associate.

Interview with Michele Koontz, Administrative Officer and Meeting Manager

Although Michele's positions with SSSP are distinct, it is because she is responsible for both that has made many of the recent SSSP annual meetings highly successful, and it is why we will address these positions simultaneously. We do want to add that the site visit subcommittee believes that much of this success is uniquely due to Michele's organizational abilities and to her dedication to the Society, and that under different circumstances we would address the positions separately. Michele Koontz is an important asset to the Society, and, as expressed during the retreat and other committee meetings during previous annual meetings, we believe it important to assure Michele continues as SSSP's Administrative Officer and Meeting Manger.

The subcommittee discussed Dr. Hood's concerns over the conflicts of the administrative officer and meeting manager duties during the annual meetings with Michele. She explained that incidence of such conflicts were rare. However, the potential for such conflicts did exist, but could be resolved. Michele suggested that the administrative assistant job description be amended to allow for the duties of the meeting manager to be assumed when the Meeting Manager is unavailable. During these times, the Administrative Assistant will handle meeting issues in regards to membership, registration, and equipment problems. Additionally, Michele requested that the job description for the administrative officer be amended to include language that would explain the relationship with the administrative assistant and webmaster position. Currently, there is no language in the job description that explains this relationship.

Michele stated that she has a very positive working relationship with Dr. Hood and Sarah. She was also very excited about the potential candidate for the administrative assistant position, who she feels is highly qualified. As with Dr. Hood and Sarah, Michele expressed concerns over the workload of the Graduate Research Associate and believes that the new administrative assistant position will provide a great deal of relief to the executive office as a whole.

Interview with Sarah Hendricks, Graduate Research Associate

Sarah Hendricks is a graduate student in the Department of Sociology at the University of Tennessee. She stated that she is very happy with her working relationships with Dr. Hood and Michele. In addition, she was looking forward to continuing her work with the Society. Sarah felt that she had adequate training for the position, and that coming to the position early enough to participate and train during the 2007 annual meeting has prepared her to accomplish her current and upcoming responsibilities well. As with Dr. Hood, Sarah was looking forward to the arrival of the new Administrative Assistant and Webmaster to ease some of the additional hours she has had to devote to her position as the Society's needs have increased.

Interviews with Scott Frey, Chair Sociology Department; Dr. Bill Dunne, Associate Dean of Research, Graduate Studies, and Facilities; and Dr. Greg Reed, Associate Vice Chancellor, Office of Research, University of Tennessee.

Because of the possible termination of the contract with the University of Tennessee in August of 2009, the interviews with Dr. Frey, Dr. Dunne, and Dr. Reed were extremely brief, yet highly positive. Additionally, Dr. Scott Frey is a candidate for the executive officer position, and we did not wish to unfairly give this candidate and the institution a possible advantage over other candidates. However, all of them highly praised the relationship that their units have had with SSSP, and how much this relationship has benefited the University of Tennessee. They expressed hope that the relationship with the Society will continue, and gave full commitment to their continued support of SSSP through the end of the current contract.

Conclusion and Recommendations

The site visit subcommittee was extremely impressed with the operation of the executive office, and although we regret the retirement of Dr. Tom Hood as the current Executive Officer, we are encouraged by the preparations Dr. Hood and Michele Koontz are making to ease the coming transition. In addition, we are very pleased with Michele and Dr. Hood's ability to hire extremely competent and qualified individuals to fill the support positions for the executive office.

Retreat Recommendations and the Executive Officer

1. We believe that the public affairs position needs to be formalized through development of a detailed job description. Although the new public affairs position will not be filled by the new Executive Officer, we recommend that interviews with executive officer candidates include a discussion of the role they envision for this position, and the relationship between the Public Affairs Officer, Executive Officer, and Administrative Officer.
2. The financial implications of the travel stipend for the Executive Officer need to be assessed by the Budget, Finance, and Audit Committee. This stipend was recommended to give the Society greater visibility, and provide the Executive Officer with funds to participate in meetings and workshops that would enhance SSSP's recruitment of new members. The executive officer candidates should be asked how they would use this resource to fulfill this new responsibility of the executive officer. This will allow the candidates to understand the vision of the members of SSSP, and how we wish to promote and advance the Society.

Transition to the New Executive Officer

1. With Dr. Hood's retirement in August 2009, the executive office will be going through an important transition. Dr. Hood graciously has expressed his willingness to

help the new Executive Officer adapt to his/her new responsibilities. The subcommittee is very grateful to Dr. Hood for his dedication to the Society for the Study of Social Problems, and to the successful transition of the executive office to a new Executive Officer.

Revisions to the Operations Manual and Job Descriptions

1. Add the administrative assistant and webmaster position to the Operations Manual
2. Add language to the administrative assistant position that includes assuming the meeting manager's duties as necessary during the annual meeting when the meeting manager is not available.
3. Add language to the administrative officer position that explains the relationship between the Administrative Officer and the Administrative Assistant.
4. Rewrite language in the Operations Manual Part I. A. Executive Office, Relationship to Institution Hosting the Executive Office, to reflect the new contract with the new Executive Officer's host institution. Specifically:
 - a. Paragraph one, second sentence, change from annually to every two years to reflect site visits. Additionally, add flexible language that would allow for the Society to negotiate with host institution.
 - b. Change paragraph two sentence one, providing a specific amount and time for the Research Associate.

Compensation

The site visit subcommittee recommends that appropriate pay raises be given to the Executive Officer, Administrative Officer, and Graduate Research Associate. Tom, Michele, and Sarah should be rewarded for their excellent management of the Society.

Website and Webmaster

Dr. Hood recommended the establishment of a website subcommittee to review improvements to the website, and increase the use of the internet by the Society. A website subcommittee will provide insights on development and improvements, while the Webmaster can implement the subcommittee's recommendations. Additionally, use of a subcommittee will reduce the need for the Executive Office to make all the decisions with respect to the website.

In conclusion, we wish to express our sincere appreciation to Dr. Hood, Michele Koontz, and Sarah Hendricks for their excellent work. We thank you them for their dedication and commitment to the Society for the Study of Social Problems.

Cc: SSSP Executive Office; SSSP Board of Directors;
SSSP Budget, Finance, and Audit Committee;
SSSP Permanent Organization and Strategic Planning Committee