

2008-2009 SSSP Elections Committee Report

Submitted June 10, 2009 by Chair Patrick Donnelly

The Elections Committee was comprised of the following members:

Patrick Donnelly, University of Dayton, Chair
Art Jipson, University of Dayton
C. André Christie-Mizell, Kent State University
Stephen Lippmann, Miami University

The Elections Committee received the prioritized nominations list from the Executive Office on August 26. There were eight nominees for President (need two candidates), ten for Vice-President (need two candidates), 19 for the Board of Directors (need six candidates), ten for student representatives on the Board (need two candidates), nine for Budget, Finance, and Audit Committee (need two candidates), 11 for Committee on Committees (need four candidates), and ten for Editorial and Publications Committee (need four candidates). Since all nominees must be members of SSSP, the Executive Office verified the current membership status.

Committee work began in early September in order to complete our work by the October 15 deadline when the slate of candidates must be submitted. It is difficult to start our work any earlier since many nominees are not back on their campuses until early or mid-September. We divided up the lists among Committee members. There were a number of people who were nominated for more than one position. Our policy is to contact them for the higher ranking office first. The Committee Chair clarified with the Executive Office that the ranking of offices is President, Vice-President, Board of Directors, Budget, Finance, and Audit, Editorial and Publications, and Committee on Committees. The Chair took responsibility for the contacting nominees for four offices including those which had overlapping nominees. Other Committee members took responsibility for contacting nominees for one position.

While the six week time frame appears adequate to finalize the slate, the Committee was just able to complete its work by the deadline. Committee members made an initial phone call to the candidate and followed up with an email. A sample of the email to nominees is included below. In some cases, nominees did not immediately return phone calls or emails. We were required to make repeated efforts to contact them. A number of nominees asked for time to consider whether they would accept the nomination. Our bylaws indicate that nominees have a two week period to consider the nomination. We could not move down the list until we heard from those higher on the list. If the nominee ultimately declined the nomination, we could move to the next name on the list and start the two week clock once again. This posed a problem when a number of candidates declined the nomination. For most of the positions, there were nominees who turned down the nomination. For example, two of the first three nominees for president declined; three of the first eight nominees for Board declined. We needed to push some nominees on their consideration and were ultimately able to submit the slate of candidates on October 13.

One issue arose during the nomination process. A nominee may want to know who she or he would be running against in order to determine if they want to run. There is nothing in the

bylaws about whether the Election Committee is permitted to inform nominees of who their opposition would be in the election. However, until one nominee commits to be a candidate, the Committee would not be able to inform another nominee that the first person is a candidate. Therefore, the first candidate on the list would not be able to know who she or he might be running against. In order to provide the same information available to all nominees, it seems best to provide no information about possible opponents to nominees. This is the position that the Elections Committee took this year.

Once the slate of candidates was submitted, the Elections Committee awaited the election returns. One issue did arise that created some confusion with voting. When members join or renew their membership they are told that elections are conducted electronically but are given an option to choose to vote via a mail-in paper ballot.

This year 1,879 members were eligible to vote electronically; of these, 36 members had an invalid email address. After consultation between the Executive Office and Elections Committee Chair, it was decided that we would send a letter in the mail to these 36 explaining that they could go to the SSSP web site and vote electronically.

79 members were eligible to vote by paper ballot.

On the same membership form, members may check a box saying that they ‘do not want to receive any group emails from SSSP, including election notices, newsletters, and other announcements.’ Thirty-seven members were excluded from voting this year since they did not request a mail-in ballot and they did not want to receive group emails. After consultation between the Executive Office and Elections Committee Chair, it was decided that these 37 members would not be contacted.

This raises the issue of how we might make clear to members that choosing not to receive group emails from SSSP would affect their right to vote. Unless these members also choose to vote by mail-in paper ballot, they will not vote under the current arrangements.

The Executive Office prepared a report for the results of the electronic voting while the Chair of the Elections Committee and one member of the Elections Committee counted and recorded the 16 mail-in ballots. The total results were then tabulated. The Chair of the Elections Committee prepared letters to all candidates announcing the results. The Executive Office mailed these letters on April 28. The results were announced to the Board on May 5 and posted on the SSSP web site on May 8.

Of the 1,994 total members eligible to vote, 429 voted. This is a participation rate of 22%. The participation rate for the 1,879 members eligible to vote electronically was 22% while the rate for the 79 members who requested paper ballots was 20% (16 of 79).

The overall 22% participation rate compares favorably with the 2008 rate of 19% and the 2007 rate of 13%.

Sample email to nominees for Board, BFA, Committee on Committees, Editorial and Publications...
Dear Dr. XXX,

As Chair of the SSSP Elections Committee, I am pleased to inform you that you have been nominated for the SSSP Board of Directors for a term from 2009 to 2012. Congratulations on your nomination. Since you have been involved with SSSP over the years, you are probably familiar with some of the Board's work. But you can find a full description of the Board's responsibilities on pp. 17-18 in the SSSP Operations Manual (<http://www.sssp1.org/index.cfm/m/30>).

I hope that you are willing to run for this position. At this point, we do not need anything else other than an indication of your willingness to run. If you decide to run for this position, the SSSP Office will contact you later in the Fall to ask for a Candidate Statement.

I would be happy to talk with you if you have any questions. Would you please confirm receipt of this email?

Thank you.
Sincerely,
Pat

Sample email to nominees for president (varies somewhat based on personal connections and content of phone conversation)

Hello XXX,

Congratulations again on your nomination for the SSSP presidency. The term would be 2009-10 as President- elect and 2010-2011 as President. While you are familiar with the duties of the job, the full description can be found in the SSSP Operations Manual on pages 11-13.
http://www.sssp1.org/File/HANDBOOK_2008.pdf

I am sure you will give serious consideration to running for election.

It would be great if you would get back to me with your answer by the middle of next week. This will help me put together the slate in the timely fashion requested by the Executive Office.

Pat

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