

*SOCIETY FOR THE STUDY OF SOCIAL PROBLEMS*

**MEMBERSHIP REPORT**

**SUBMITTED BY: JEAN ELSON, CHAIR**

**SUBMITTED TO: BOARD OF DIRECTORS, SSSP**

**SUBSTITUTE REPORT PRESENTER: MICHELE KOONTZ**

I apologize that, due to financial constraints at my home university, I am unable to attend the meetings.

However, I am available via phone and/or email.

**I. MEMBERSHIP DEMOGRAPHICS (CURRENT JUNE 2008)**

**A. Income Categories**

SSSP total membership is currently 1,546, which is slightly lower than it was at this time last year, when we had 1,591 members. The following demographics indicate which income categories resulted in the most paid memberships:

- As in previous years, student members (dues rate \$30) are the largest single category of dues paying members, with 571 this year compared to 576 in 2008.
- Tied for second place are two categories of members:
  - 144 members making \$45,000-\$54,999 (dues rate \$120), which was also the second highest category in 2008, with 170 members
  - 144 members making \$85,000 and up (dues rate \$210), which was the third highest category in 2008, with 135 members
- The third highest dues paying members are in the "First Time Professional Member category" (dues rate \$45), including 132 members, compared with 121 for 2008.

The fluctuation in membership numbers cited above may be the result of several factors, including possible upward mobility in some income categories and graduation of student members. The most likely explanation for the total drop of 45 paid members may reflect dramatic negative economic changes for both members and institutions during this past year.

**B. Social Problems Divisions**

The following lists present the social problems divisions providing the largest number of memberships for this past year and the previous year:

**June 2009**

1. Poverty, Class, and Inequality (516)
2. Racial and Ethnic Minorities (454)
3. Conflict, Social Action, and Change (360)
4. Social Problems Theory (310)

**June 2008**

1. Poverty, Class, and Inequality (539)
2. Racial and Ethnic Minorities (440)
3. Conflict, Social Action, and Change (349)
4. Social Problems Theory (332)

5. Crime and Juvenile Delinquency (309)  
(301)

5. Crime and Juvenile Delinquency

Thus, while some of the most popular divisions have gained membership and some have lost membership, the top five divisions are the same as last year.

**C. Nationality**

The vast majority of members reside in the United States, with far fewer members from Canada, Mexico, and other foreign countries.

## **II. Membership Recruitment Efforts**

- A.** Unfortunately, as in past years, the recruitment drive cost more in expenses (\$9,023.98) than it gained in revenue (\$2,240.00), with a net loss of \$6,783.98.
- B.** We did enroll 51 new members, however. This is in contrast to only 12 new members who joined by June 2008.
- By far the most effective recruitment was through the graduate student promotion, which mailed enough flyers for each student to all US Ph.D. –granting departments. This promotion garnered 29 new members. Hopefully, graduate students’ enthusiasm will continue after they receive their degrees, but we must continue to retain them as active members.
  - Not nearly as successful, but second to the graduate student promotion, was mailing SSSP brochures to mailing lists purchased from targeted ASA sections. This campaign resulted in 10 new members.
  - The third highest number of new members was generated through mailed brochures from undefined sources and from fliers obtained at unspecified professional meetings. Each of these resulted in 3 new members.
  - Fliers and/or brochures distributed at other professional organizations netted negligible returns. This strategy produced only 4 new members overall, each from a different organization.
  - Only one new member was recruited through mailing brochures to 2008 members; one new member was recruited through single fliers sent to Ph.D.-granting departments.
  - “Sustaining” and/or “Emeriti,” members account for 2.3% of our membership.
- C.** Web-based payment of membership dues again increased (65.8%) compared with snail-mail payments (31.9%).

## **III. Revised Membership Committee Structure**

- A.** Kimberley Cook, 2007-2008 Membership Committee Chair, proposed a new committee name, structure, and composition at last year’s meeting. The terms of this change were agreed upon by the then-incoming 2008-2009 Chair (Jean Elson), the 2009-2010 Chair (Aimee Van Wagenen), and all present members of the membership committee. This proposal was then submitted to the SSSP Board on August 2, 2008 and was approved by the Board .
- B.** The Bylaws Committee drafted the following bylaws amendment, which was included in the 2009 General Election ballot and passed by the membership:
- New Section 10. Membership and Outreach Committee*
- The committee shall consist of nine elected members serving three year staggered terms. The first three elected shall replace those whose appointed terms expire in 2009. The second three elected shall replace those whose appointed terms expire in 2010. The next*

*three elected shall replace those whose appointed terms expire in 2011. Thereafter replacements will be elected as elected terms expire. Unexpired terms may be filled by appointment by the Board of Directors. Each cohort of elected committee members should include at least one graduate student. The members of the committee shall each year elect a chair from among those committee members who are serving their third year on the committee. The duties of the Membership and Outreach Committee are to recruit new members, to raise awareness of SSSP and to recommend retention strategies to the Executive Office and to the Board of Directors.*

**IV. Recommendations:**

- A.** Implement and monitor the new committee structure to determine its efficacy
- B.** Since student members are a rich source of new membership, target them with strategies to retain membership after graduation. Soliciting participation in division and committee leadership is key.
- C.** Given that the majority of members now join, rejoin, and pay by mail, a future goal could be to eliminate mailing costly printed brochures and fliers in favor of targeted emails.

Many thanks to Michele Koontz, Tom Hood, Héctor Delgado, Steven Barkan, Kimberly Cook, Gary Fine, Sarah Hendricks and the rest of the staff at the executive office, and the members of this committee.

Respectfully submitted,  
Jean Elson, Chair