

**To:** The SSSP Board of Directors  
**From:** The SSSP Ad Hoc Nominations Committee – Carol Gardner, PJ McGann, Nancy Mezey (Chair), and Cary Yang Costello  
**RE:** Recommended Changes to the Nominations Process  
**Date:** August 4, 2009

**Current Nominations Process:**

As stated in the bylaws, the Nominations Committee is chaired by the Chair of the Council of Special Problems Divisions (aka Chair of Chairs), and is comprised of Division Chairs and a member of the Board of Directors. The purpose of the Nominations Committee is to develop a slate of experienced candidates who are willing and able to serve in elected SSSP positions. To develop such a slate, the nominations process currently works as follows:

- The Executive Office distributes an electronic nominations form in April and mid-July to all SSSP members. The form is available online throughout the year. A hardcopy is also included with the annual meeting registration packet. Nominations are returned to the Administrative Officer and the Chair of Chairs.
- The Nominations Committee meets twice during the annual meetings to develop a list of nominees. During this meeting the committee is tasked with developing an ordered list of names of nominees. NOTE: The first of those meetings is shared with the Resolutions Committee, leaving limited time to discuss nominations.
- The Nominations Committee presents its slate of nominees to the Board of Directors which then edits and re-orders the list as needed.
- The approved list goes to the Elections Committee who contacts the nominees.

**Statement of Problem:**

Despite efforts prior to the meeting to solicit nominations for elected positions, and while the recent addition of the nominations form has proved useful, the selection process is problematic. The Nominations Committee is often faced with insufficient nominations to fill a slate of qualified nominees (often 10-15 people long). Past Chairs of Chairs have repeatedly voiced their concerns about the nominations process. SSSP President Steven Barkan created an ad hoc committee comprised of past and current Chair of Chairs to address the problem. The committee identified the following main problems with the nominations process. Specifically:

**1. The Structure of the Current Nominations Committee Is Problematic**

The current bylaws require nominations to come from the Division Chairs. This is a seemingly good idea as Chairs are close to the membership and have important SSSP institutional ties. However, while some Division Chairs are highly institutionally aware, many are fairly “unseasoned” members who know neither the process, nor much about the membership, or they are Chairs of a new division or a division with a large membership. Therefore, the evaluation of nominees is often superficial due to the relative inexperience of some of the Division Chairs, their unfamiliarity with their membership, or their workload prior to and during the annual meeting.

## **2. The Nominations Process Is Problematic**

Because of the structure of the Nominations Committee and the differing levels of familiarity with SSSP members willing and able to serve in elected positions, the selection process is problematic because:

- The suggested candidates tend to seesaw between sociological celebrities with name recognition and contacts of attending Chairs who may be less well known.
- The Nominations Committee is not easily able to determine which SSSP members have the necessary skills required for certain committees, such as the Editorial and Publications Committee and the Budget, Finance and Audit Committee.
- Unless indicated on the nomination form, the Nominations Committee does not know if a person nominated during the meeting will accept the nomination. The lack of pre-acceptance of a nomination requires that the Nominations Committee create a significantly longer list of names than may be necessary.

Because of the above structural and procedural problems, the nomination meetings are long and exhausting, requiring that the committee push through important nominations processes faster than is necessary to develop a strong slate of candidates.

### **Recommendations:**

After consulting with long-term SSSP members, including several past Presidents, who have extensive SSSP experience in multiple capacities and are involved at high levels in numerous other professional organizations, and in consultation as a committee, the ad hoc committee makes the following recommendations, understanding that if approved by the Board of Directors, the recommendations will require a bylaws change:

1. SSSP should create an elected Nominations Committee comprised of seven SSSP members who have been continuous members for the past five years. Committee members would serve for a three-year, staggered term so that there would be continuity from year to year. The committee chair would be a committee member who has served for at least one year on the committee. The chair will be elected by the committee itself. The committee will be responsible for:
  - a. holding and attending two meetings during the annual meetings (at times not shared with any other meetings)
  - b. soliciting nominations from members throughout the year, particularly from seasoned members and leaders in the organization who have a depth and breadth of knowledge of current SSSP members
  - c. reviewing nominees suggested by Division Chairs
  - d. suggesting nominations
  - e. gathering materials regarding qualifications, including the prospective nominee's willingness to be on a slate
  - f. accessing the qualifications of nominees
  - g. making recommendations to the Board of Directors
2. The Board of Directors will proceed as it currently does by reviewing and reordering nominees as necessary and approving the final slate of nominees.
3. The Division Chairs will remain involved in the process by being responsible for soliciting nominees from their divisions. Each Division Chair will send their division's nominee list to the Chair of the Nominations Committee no later than three weeks prior to the start of annual meeting. Division Chairs will no longer be charged with creating the final nominations list or evaluating nominees.