

To: SSSP Board of Directors

From: Permanent Organization and Strategic Planning Committee (represented by Drs. Maggie Ussery and Arthur Greil)

Date: February 21, 2011

RE: SSSP Administrative Office Site Visit

The Permanent Organization and Strategic Planning Committee (POSPC) visited the administrative office of the Society for the Study of Social Problems in Knoxville, Tennessee for its biennial review of the Society's staff on February 11, 2011. The site visit focused on an evaluation of the administrative office staff and a review of the Society's contract with the University of Tennessee. The items of business for this visit were as follows:

- Evaluation of the Executive Officer, Administrative Officer, Meeting Manager and Administrative Assistant
- Discuss the review of the Graduate Research Associate and Webmaster
- Review and discuss the operations manual (schedule a review ~ last review: 2009)
- Discuss website redesign
- Discuss policy for SSSP Division Sponsored Workshops
- Discuss the current contract with the University of Tennessee
- Prepare the 2012 salary recommendations for the Executive Officer, Administrative Officer, Meeting Manager, Administrative Assistant, and Graduate Research Associate and Webmaster

During the site review the POSPC interviewed Dr. Hèctor L. Delgado, the Executive Officer; Kelley Flatford, the Administrative Assistant; and, Michele Koontz, the Administrative Officer and Meeting Manager. The committee also met with Dr. Jon Shefner, Head of the Department of Sociology; Dr. Christine Boake, Associate Dean of Research, Graduate Studies, and Facilities; and, Dr. Gregory Reed, Associate Vice Chancellor for Research and Engagement. The Graduate Research Associate and Webmaster Sarah Hendricks was interviewed by telephone.

Evaluation of SSSP Administrative Office Staff:

The POSPC met the Society's administrative office staff. The overall assessment of the administrative office staff is that the office runs well and that the staff is devoted to the Society's members and its mission. Both the office staff and the university officials interviewed praised the office staff and the reported that the relationship between the Society and the university was highly valued. Evaluations for the administrative office staff follows.

Dr. Hèctor Delgado, Executive Officer:

This is Dr. Delgado's first year as the Society's executive officer. He describes his main function as providing the public face of the society and interfacing with the board of directors. Dr. Delgado says that he leaves the day-to-day operations of the Society to the Administrative Officer, Michele Koontz, although he provides oversight to the administrative office staff and works as the Society's "trouble-shooter." He sees his main task as making the Society more visible.

Dr. Delgado faced three challenges during his first year as the Executive Officer, the arrest of the Society's newsletter editor, its response to the Arizona immigration legislation, and the re-location of the annual meetings from Chicago to Las Vegas. In each instance, Dr. Delgado adroitly preformed his duties and placed the reputation and mission of the Society above all else. After the arrest of the newsletter editor, Dr. Delgado fielded questions from a reporter and actively worked to ensure that the Society would not be perceived negatively nor associated with the actions of the editor. In the case of the Arizona immigration legislation, he provided the Society's official response which emphasized a commitment to social justice and rejection of racial profiling. This commitment is also seen in his handling of unfair labor practices found by an administrative labor judge at the Chicago site for the 2011 annual meeting. He wrote to the hotel expressing concern on several occasions and consulted with the labor union representing the workers. This became a non-issue, however, when the ASA cancelled its meeting in Chicago and both organizations moved their respective meetings to Las Vegas.

Dr. Delgado's future objectives include increasing the Society's international focus and creating a consortium of social justice organizations.

Michele Koontz, Administrative Officer and Meeting Manager:

Michele Koontz has been the Society's Administrative Officer since 1992 and the meetings manager since 1994. She is responsible for the day-to-day operation of the administrative office and the successful execution of the annual meetings. Ms. Koontz works closely with the Executive Officer, the Division Chairs, and the Board of Directors. Additionally, she is the official liaison between the Society and the University of Tennessee. In her position as the Administrative Officer, Ms. Koontz oversees the administrative office staff, maintains ledgers, journals, prepares checks and oversees accounts receivable and accounts payable, and promotes the Society through work with the newsletter and journal editors. As the Meeting Manager, she negotiates the Society's contract with the host hotel, lays out the program and menus, and supervises the Administrative Assistant's running of the registration desk.

Ms. Koontz's job performance was universally praised. She is regarded as a very effective administrator and organizer (although under-staffed). She is also credited with

ensuring the smooth execution of the annual meetings. Dr. Delgado remarked that the Society would be lost without her.

Kelley Flatford, Administrative Assistant:

Kelley Flatford has been the part-time Administrative Assistant since August of 2010. She is primarily responsible for maintaining the membership database and processing the Society's mail. Ms. Flatford also prepares member dues and fees for deposit (the Administrative Officer makes the deposits). Additionally, she is responsible for compiling monthly reports on the membership, updating the membership lists, and culling duplicate listings. Although she started her current too late to attend the annual meetings in 2010, Ms. Flatford will be responsible for the registration desk at future meetings.

The Administrative Officer is quite pleased with Ms. Flatford's job performance and praised her highly. Ms. Flatford's background in E-commerce and computer programming were mentioned as providing the Society with valuable skills and knowledge.

Sarah Hendricks, Graduate Research Associate and Webmaster:

The interview with Ms. Hendricks was conducted by telephone on March 2, 2011. Ms. Hendricks is a Ph.D. candidate in the department of sociology at the university but she currently resides in Iowa. Ms. Hendricks has worked for the society for four years. She is currently the webmaster; she is responsible updating the website, running the elections on-line and on paper, and distributing the newsletter and membership lists. Ms. Hendricks is also responsible for running the registration desk with Ms. Flatford.

The review of Ms. Hendricks job performance is favorable. The Administrative Officer is quite pleased with her job performance.

Review of SSSP Operations Manual:

There are two main changes proposed by the POSPC to the operations manual. First, it is recommended that a general description and overview of the Administrative and Executive Officer positions be added to the manual. As it stands, there are bulleted lists of duties and functions but the manual lacks a general statement of each position's duties. This is deemed necessary as there have been changes to the positions since the retirement of Dr. Hood and through the natural evolution of the positions. The second recommendation is that the biennial site reviews be scheduled to coincide with the Society's contract renewal process. The committee feels that this will be a better use of the review process.

Website Evaluation:

The POSPC is tasked with reviewing the Society's website. The website has undergone its first update in the last nine years. It has been professionally designed and improved. As this review has not been done before the committee will undertake a general review of the site once it is functional. As the website has been professionally designed the committee's function will be limited to looking at the website's overall functionality and layout.

The committee recommends that the Board of Directors decide on a regular maintenance timeframe and set aside funds for the website to be professionally updated. The website is often the first introduction to the Society, especially for young viewers, and its upkeep is critical.

Review of Current Contract with the University of Tennessee:

The following summary and recommendations are based on conversations with Drs. Jon Shefner, Head of the Department of Sociology; Christine Boake, Associate Dean of Research, Graduate Studies, and Facilities; and, Gregory Reed, Associate Vice Chancellor for Research and Engagement. Each person was interviewed separately by the committee and the administrative office staff.

The university administrators we met with expressed that the relationship between the Society and the university is highly valued and prized. The Vice Chancellor mentioned that the Society's reputation made it a valuable asset as the university attempts to move into the top twenty-five public research universities. The head of the sociology department mentioned that the Society's employment of a sociology graduate student (with tuition waiver) allows the department an additional source of funding for its students. It is clear that the university wishes to retain its relationship with the Society and that it sees the relationship as mutually beneficial.

The Society will negotiate a contract renewal with the University of Tennessee this year (the current contract expires December 31, 2011). The new contract will be a five-year contract instead of the previous one for three-years; it will cover from 2012 to 2016. There were two main areas of concern to the new contract negotiations. One, the Administrative Officer and the Knoxville-based staff are no longer eligible for tuition waivers from the university; this represents a change in policy from previous years and the staff would like to re-gain the waivers. The second issue is a request for a raise in the compensation paid to the department of sociology by the Society.

The Knoxville-based staff is contractually employed by the University of Tennessee. It therefore receives the benefits given to the university staff. However, the Society's employees have recently lost the ability to take courses through the university free of charge. This is seen as an important benefit to the staff. It allows for the re-skilling and up-skilling the Society's employees and is important for the recruitment and retention of a highly skilled workforce. In

our conversations with Drs. Boake and Reed, they both expressed a desire to provide this service to the Society's staff and were surprised that the benefit had been denied. It is our understanding that there are no university-based barriers to the reinstatement of this benefit; however we recommend that the language of the new contract make the status of the Society's staff in relation to the university's benefits packages clear.

Currently, the Society pays the department of sociology \$11,000 annually for its relationship to the Society. Dr. Shefner has requested that the Society increase the compensation given to the department. When queried he suggested a \$2,000 increase (although he said that he would be open to a larger one). His request comes directly from the current budgetary issues faced by most institutions in the last few years. Given the budgetary constraints experienced by the department, it is understandable that the Dr. Shefner would ask for more funding. However, it is clear that the Society faces budgetary issues also and that any increase would affect the budget for the next five years. It is the recommendation of this committee that the Society offer a small increase as a token of how much it values the relationship with the department but that the Society not match the chair's desired increase.

2012 Salary Recommendations for Administrative Office Staff:

The POSCP recommends that appropriate pay raises be given to the Administrative Officer, Administrative Assistant, and Executive Officer. The Society's administrative office runs well and the raises are deemed necessary to the maintenance of a professional and skilled staff.