

To: SSSP Board of Directors

From: Permanent Organization and Strategic Planning Committee (Tracy Dietz, Chair)

Date: July 11, 2012

RE: Annual Committee Report

Critical Survey of Functioning of Society

According to the by-laws, "This society shall be a non-profit corporation to promote and protect sociological research and teaching on significant problems of social life and, particularly, to encourage the work of young sociologists; to stimulate the application of scientific method and theory to the study of vital social problems; to encourage problem-centered social research; to foster cooperative relations among persons and organization engaged in the application of scientific sociological findings to the formulation of social policies to foster higher quality of life, social welfare, and positive social relations in society and the global community and to undertake any activity related thereto or necessary or desirable for the accomplishment of the foregoing purposes.

Annual Meeting

The annual meeting is perhaps the single largest function that the organization conducts and is supportive of the primary purpose of the society. The 2011 meeting recorded the fourth highest attendance of any meeting in the history of the association. Generally, speaking the results of the meeting survey demonstrated that the vast majority of respondents reported that the online annual meeting was easily accessed and that the members approved of the online pre-registration process. Similarly, the vast majority of respondents found the program to be clear. Most respondents were complimentary of the quality of the sessions, although several comments were directed to the failure of presenters to show up and the small numbers in the audience.

More than half of the respondents reported that they found the quality of the book exhibit to be average or less. The association might consider ways to improve the quality of the book exhibit to make it more appealing to the membership. A good number of negative responses in the survey were directed to the meeting space, choice of venue, and choice of conference city. Rather than comment specifically on these, I will just mention this as I assume that this was expected. It should be noted, though, that there also positive comments about the location and many positive comments about the SSSP staff in the functioning of the meeting. Please see the survey of the meeting attendees for more details.

In evaluating the functioning of the society, it is the view of this committee that SSSP and its staff and volunteers are conducting the activity of planning and overseeing the annual meeting in such a way as to promote the purpose of the association. However, it is also the view of this committee that measures to improve the book exhibit and to encourage attendance at the sessions, particularly among the scheduled members be examined to promote increased professionalism within the association.

Encouragement of Young Scholars

In keeping with past traditions and the purpose of the society, numerous outstanding paper awards were given to student presenters over the past year. In addition, the Society awarded \$7500 in travel support to undergraduate and graduate students to present their scholarly work at the 2011 meeting. In addition to these notable activities, many students participated in meetings as presenters, attended meetings, and are members of our association. These activities are instrumental in promoting young scholars and this committee encourages the continued efforts to do so.

Health of Organization

Membership

The numbers of members reported by the Membership committee was up from the previous year. This is encouraging in a time when many organizations have felt a decline in membership. Further, the organization has a large number of student members. Cultivating a large and loyal young membership base is of vital importance to maintaining the longevity of the organization. SSSP is demonstrating that it is attracting new members. Sustaining those memberships over time while at the same time bringing in new members and maintaining established membership will be important to the health of the organization

Financial

In 2011, the society established a committee to explore opportunities to address the need for external ways to generate new finances apart from the journal (and revenue from investments). The committee generated several ideas as opportunities for discussion. The POSP Committee encourages the society to continue along the path of exploring mechanisms of generating operating capital along with a well devised 5-year strategic plan. At this time, primarily because of the costs associated with the annual meeting, the society operates on a deficit each year. It is important to identify sources of revenue that will allow the society to continue to operate for decades to come.

Volunteer Appointments

During the meeting of the POSP Committee at the 2011 annual meeting, there were detailed discussions about how to improve the functioning of the society via the roles that the volunteer scholar-activists play on committees and in the leadership positions to which they are elected. The committee agreed that the SSSP staff are professional and highly competent and have become the back-bone of the operations of the society. However, the society is supposed to function primarily by relying upon volunteers. Some volunteers are more while others are less familiar with the society and how it functions and as a result all too often the volunteers leave too much of the work to the SSSP staff. This creates overburden and stress for the staff and actually may be draining the society's financial resources as more and more staff must be hired to fulfill duties that could be done by volunteers elected or appointed. The society desperately needs to address the culture that has developed whereby so much of the work is delegated back to the SSSP staff. Perhaps this could be accomplished with better training in the social problems divisions prior to individuals being placed on ballots or appointment to positions or perhaps it could be a workshop conducted during the annual meeting for those desiring leadership roles within the association. There might be many solutions to the problem or maybe none at all but this is an issue that deserves attention.

Proposals for Improvement of Organization and Operation of Society

The committee members were asked to submit proposals for consideration at the annual meeting

of the committee. At this time some submissions have been made but have not been formally discussed. Any recommendations that come out of committee will be presented to the Board of Directors at the annual meeting.

New Goals and Future Development

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Review of Maintenance System, Records and Operating Procedures

The committee members were asked to review the operating manual. The manual was updated last year. However, a few revisions are suggested by the committee members. These revisions reflect an effort to clarify or clean-up information to reflect changes or procedures that are in place or current practice.

Section I: The discussion pertaining to the executive officer and relationship to the association and host institution seems a bit confusing to those who are not part of the SSSP. For instance, there is little description regarding how the compensation for the executive director is arranged NOW. Providing an historical accounting of what transpired in the past is fine and appropriate but there is little detail about what exists with the current arrangement. If it is important and significant to provide the record in the operations manual for the past, then it seems it would be appropriate to have an accounting of how the current negotiations between the association and current or even future executive directors are arranged. Should there be additional details such as the initial term of contract or are those types of things negotiated and dependent upon the situation?

On page 14, there reference to the site visit being conducted every two years should be revised.

Page 5, Under Administrative Officer “Day-today” should be “day-to-day”.

Under Budget, Finance, and Audit Committee: It states that the tradition has been to select the member who has served on the committee the longest. Gray indicated that this is technically incorrect language as it is technically the “third year member” who is elected. Someone could have been elected previously and then elected again at some point and thereby during their first year during a new cycle be the longest serving member.

Society Website

The SSSP website was revised during 2011 and launched just after the annual meeting. The new website design introduced new features and provided easier access to features that SSSP members used most as well as highlighting SSSP’s social action orientation. The expanded and updated site was redesigned by Distant Grass Designs and implemented by Avera Media Corporation. The new design allows SSSP members to connect via social media outlets such as Facebook, Twitter, and +1, subscribe to SSSP’s latest News RSS Feed and discuss Social Problems Forum articles online.

As of June 26, 2012, SSSP had 178 Facebook “Likes” and 119 Twitter Followers. The society has been experimenting with outreach efforts via social media outlets and the website over the past year. For example, they have we developed a 2-month social media plan to do weekly social media blasts about

the Annual Meeting over Facebook and Twitter, highlighting various components of the Annual Meeting. Also, every week, Lisa East checks Facebook and Twitter to “follow” or “like” pages that are similar to SSSP or are associated with Sociology departments. This is an attempt to increase outreach to these outlets and possibly reach new audiences. Michele and Lisa have discussed the possibility of one or both attending a social media workshop/conference to increase knowledge on outreach strategies. There is already funding in the budget for professional development for the staff for such training.

They have also updated our membership recruitment pages on the website:

<http://www.sssp1.org/membershippromo/>

<http://www.sssp1.org/gradpromo/>

That said, some of the best recruitment and outreach for SSSP comes internally from our members themselves. Discussing in departments, encouragement for grad students to join from their professors, and general commitment from members to continue to make SSSP a critical and supportive society is a crucial part of our longevity and this cannot be captured solely within the website. It is the view of this committee that the staff is moving in the right direction with the website and the use of social networking. We would hope to see increases in the traffic on the social networking sites for SSSP in the future but we recognize that the most important method of recruitment and retention of members is through our members and not the website.

Personnel Evaluations

Permanent Organization and Strategic Planning Committee (POSPC) voted during the 2011 annual meeting to meet with and conduct evaluations of the personnel during the annual meetings when no site visit is to be conducted. As such, we have no final formal evaluation to offer at this time. A formal report will be provided to the board following the evaluations that will be conducted on-site.

Evaluation of SSSP Administrative Office Staff:

The POSPC will meet and provide an overall evaluation of the functioning of the staff as a whole to the board at the annual meeting.

Dr. Hèctor Delgado, Executive Officer:

This is Dr. Delgado’s second year as the Society’s executive officer. He is responsible for organizations outside SSSP, overseeing the organization work of the association and directing the work conducted by volunteers and by Social Problems staff.

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.

Lisa East, Graduate Research Associate and Webmaster:

Ms. East is a student in the department of sociology at the University of Tennessee. She is currently the webmaster; she is responsible updating the website, running the elections on-line, and distributing the newsletter and membership lists. Ms. East is also responsible for running the registration desk. Ms. East had planned on working additional hours over the summer to reduce the workload on Ms. Koontz but due to the need to devote more time on her studies this has not been possible.

Sharon Shumaker, Administrative Assistant

Ms. Shumaker was hired in February 2012. She assists the administrative officer with day-to-day operations, providing administrative support. She also maintains the society's membership and annual meeting records. In addition, she helps as needed on special projects and assists with meeting registration duties. She assists the Meeting Manager.

Other Staff:

Ms. Flatford resigned in January, 2012 and will not be reviewed.

During the 2011 Annual Meeting the board and BFA approved additional funds to provide assistance for Ms. Koontz. Circumstances have prevented that help from being hired but it is still planned for the future and the POSP Committee encourages the Administrative Office to make those arrangements as soon as it is possible to do so.

2012 Salary Recommendations for Administrative Office Staff:

Although final recommendations are contingent upon final outcomes of the staff evaluations that will take place at the annual meeting, the POSCP notes that the Budget, Finance, and Audit Committee recommended a 4% increase in salary for the Administrative Officer and Meeting Manager and a 5% increase for the Administrative Assistant in 2013.