

Date: July 16, 2012

To: Michele Koontz, Administrative Officer

From: Stephani Williams
Chair, Council of the Special Problems Divisions

RE: Council of Division Chairs Report

This report highlights activities and thoughts of both me and of the Council of Division Chairs during 2011-2012. I will update this report after the second meeting of the Council in order to share the thoughts and concerns of Division Chairs with the Executive Office and Board of Directors.

1. As always, I must first thank Michele for her support and patience. The Division Chairs also express their thanks for her patience and assistance.

2. As in previous year, a significant issue that remains is the problem with getting the work of divisions completed in a timely manner, sometimes at all. I spent one full session at the meeting last year reviewing the roles and responsibilities, tips for success and the importance of communicating early about problems or issues. The office staff and I spend a significant amount of time during the year sending emails with instructions, and reminders, yet still find that some do not complete the required tasks. While we did make some progress, I plan to once again communicate to the Chairs the importance of fulfilling **all** Division responsibilities, and the burden they place on the office by not doing so in a timely manner.

A. At 6 meetings, Division Chairs failed to have representation as required (division chair meetings, business meeting, program committee meeting, resolutions meeting).

B. All Division Chairs submitted budgets this year (first time in several years).

C. Last year 1 Divisions had not produced a newsletter since the 2010 meeting, and 8 did not produce the desired goal of 2 newsletters to communicate with their members. This year all divisions produced at least one newsletter and 8 again did not meet the goal of 2.

D. Last year 5 Divisions did not secure nominees for a new division chair. The Administrative Office and I had to send out email blasts and solicit nominees, holding last minute elections. **This year the divisions handled all of their own elections, and we (the Administrative office and I) did not have to hold any elections.**

E. We have 8 incoming Chairs, 2 incoming Co-Chairs, and 1 Chair-Elect, so I hope that we can get these Chairs off to a good start, and reduce the number of Divisions not currently meeting all of the requirements listed in the bylaws.

The general sentiment expressed to Michele and I is that they need more resources, support, assistance, and information (despite being provided the Roles and Responsibilities handout, going over it at the meeting, and receiving multiple emails with detailed instructions is that they are not clear of the expectations, responsibilities, or due dates). A second issue they report is that it is difficult to accomplish the tasks with their other academic/professional responsibilities. In response to those comments and complaints, over the last several years we have revised the roles and responsibilities handout, I have added more time during the Annual Meeting to review the roles and responsibilities, Michele and I have added more sample language and other examples within emails to provide them with the tools to be successful. Despite the modifications made each year the complaints and suggestions remain largely the same.

3. Many division chairs expressed concern last year that the revised membership rules might drop their membership below the 150 considered necessary to be a division in good standing. With the report generated by Michele, 12 divisions are currently below that threshold. And 1 additional division is only 5 above that threshold. Roughly half of the divisions lost approximately 1/3 or more of their membership. 2 Divisions lost roughly half of their members (Sociology and Social Welfare and Teaching Social Problems). Sport, Leisure, and the Body now has less than 50 members. 3 divisions were able to maintain more than 80% of their membership (Disabilities, Environment & Technology, and Sexual Behavior, Politics, & Communities). Though I write this report prior to the annual meeting, I do anticipate that this issue will be of significant concern to many of the division chairs.