

Date: July 11, 2013

To: Michele Koontz, Administrative Officer

From: Shannon Monnat, Chairperson of the Council of Special Problems Divisions

Re: Council of Division Chairs Report

This report highlights activities, concerns, and suggestions of the Council of Division Chairs and myself for the period of 2012-2013. 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. Appreciation and thanks

2012-2013 was my first year in the role of Chairperson of the Council of Special Problems Divisions. I would like to thank Michele Koontz, Elizabeth East, and the previous Chairperson, Stephani Williams, for their support and guidance throughout the year. The Division Chairs also express their thanks to Michele and Elizabeth for their patience and assistance.

2. Division Fulfillment of Responsibilities

a. Representation at Division Meetings (2012)

All divisions, except the Family Division, had representation at the Council of Special Problems Division meeting. Four divisions were missing representation at the 2012 Program Committee meeting: Family, Mental Health (now Society and Mental Health), Poverty, Class, and Inequality, and Sport, Leisure, and Body.

All divisions, except the Family Division and the Teaching Social Problems Division, held a Division Business meeting.

b. Budget Submission

After some reminder emails to several division chairpersons, all division chairpersons have provided budgets for their divisions.

c. Newsletter Dissemination

Six divisions did not distribute the required number of newsletters over the past year (2). One division did not distribute any newsletters. The count below represents newsletters submitted from the period Summer 2012-Spring 2013 (covers three potential newsletter periods – Summer, Fall, Spring)

Community Research and Development – 2
Conflict, Social Action, and Change – 2
Crime and Juvenile Delinquency – 2
Disabilities – 3
Drinking and Drugs – 2
Educational Problems – 1
Environment and Technology – 3
Family – 1
Global – 3
Health, Health Policy, and Health Services – 3
Institutional Ethnography – 3
Labor Studies – 2
Law and Society – 2
Poverty, Class, and Inequality – 1 (went without a newsletter for 2 years)
Racial and Ethnic Minorities – 2
Sexual Behavior, Politics, and Communities – 3
Social Problems Theory – 1
Society and Mental Health – 2
Sociology and Social Welfare – 3
Sport, Leisure, and the Body – 1
Teaching Social Problems – 2
Youth, Aging, and the Life Course - 0

d. Mission Statement Updates

Division chairs are responsible for making sure that the division maintains a current division mission statement on the SSSP webpage. The year identified below indicates the last time the mission statement was updated on the SSSP webpage. Several division chairs will need to update their division mission statements over the course of the next year. I will remind Division chairs of this responsibility and provide suggestions about how chairs can engage their membership in this activity during our Council of Special Problems Division meetings at the annual meeting.

Community Research and Development – 2011
Conflict, Social Action, and Change – 2011
Crime and Juvenile Delinquency – 2011
Disabilities – 2011
Drinking and Drugs – 2011
Educational Problems – 2013
Environment and Technology – 2011
Family – 2012
Global – 2011
Health, Health Policy, and Health Services – 2011
Institutional Ethnography – 2011

Labor Studies – 2011
Law and Society – 2011
Poverty, Class, and Inequality – 2013
Racial and Ethnic Minorities – 2011
Sexual Behavior, Politics, and Communities – 2011
Social Problems Theory – 2011
Society and Mental Health – 2011
Sociology and Social Welfare – 2011
Sport, Leisure, and the Body – 2012
Teaching Social Problems – 2011
Youth, Aging, and the Life Course - 2011

e. Nominations for Division Chairpersons

Division chairs had a difficult time securing nominees for successor. There were seven divisions for whom I had to send urgent emails requesting nominees from division members. In these emails I stressed that the continued existence of the division could be at risk if it did not produce at least two nominees. In each instance, several nominees stepped forward in response to my emails, and all divisions were able to successfully hold elections.

We were required to hold one special division election – for the Poverty, Class, and Inequality Division. The previous chair, Tracy Peressini, resigned her role, and William Cabin was elected to replace her. William served out Tracy's position from Spring 2013-August 2013 and will serve going forward from the annual meeting (2013) to 2015.

In total, 11 divisions elected new chairpersons for 2013-2015. In addition, the Crime and Juvenile Delinquency Division elected an Associate Chairperson and a Chairperson Elect, and the Law and Society Division elected a Vice Chairperson. The names of the new division chairpersons are listed below.

Community Research and Development – Tamara GJ Leech
Conflict, Social Action, and Change – Crystal A. Jackson
Crime and Juvenile Delinquency – Brent Teasdale
Disabilities (co-chair) – Alexis A. Bender
Educational Problems – Hava Rachel Gordon
Global – Yvonne Braun
Health, Health Policy, and Health Services – Erin Ruel
Institutional Ethnography – Lauren E. Eastwood
Society and Mental Health – Richard Carpiano
Poverty, Class, and Inequality – William Cabin
Sport, Leisure, and the Body – Elizabeth Cavalier

Law and Society Vice Chairperson – Lori Sexton
 Crime and Juvenile Delinquency Associate Chairperson – Kristen Budd
 Crime and Juvenile Delinquency Chairperson-Elect – Arthur Jipson

For purposes of clarity and consistency, I suggest that the Board develop formal titles for the roles. In addition to division chairperson, we now have ‘sub-chairpersons’ with titles such as Vice Chairperson, Associate Chairperson, and Chairperson-Elect. I recommend the adoption of one consistent term.

3. Social Networking Presence

For divisions (that I was able to find) have a Facebook presence. Facebook pages can be a good way to disseminate information to division members, post articles of interest, and engage participation.

Drinking and Drugs (42 Facebook fans)
 Health, Health Policy, and Health Services (69 Facebook fans)
 Sexual Behavior, Politics, and Communities (40 Facebook fans)
 Sociology and Social Welfare (8 group members)

4. Declines in Division Memberships

Last year many division chairs were concerned about the potential impact of the new policy that SSSP members would receive only one free division membership and be required to pay for subsequent memberships. The division membership tallies are not yet completed for 2013, but the table below represents the declines in special problems division memberships from 2011 to 2012 ranked in order from the highest decline to the lowest. All divisions experienced declines, and declines ranged from a low of 15.3% for the Disabilities division to a high of 45.7% for the Sociology & Social Welfare division.

Division	2011 Members	2012 Members	Decline	% Decline
Sociology & Social Welfare	184	100	84	45.7
Teaching Social Problems	267	150	117	43.8
Sport, Leisure & the Body	82	49	33	40.2
Global	230	138	92	40.0
Youth, Aging, & the Life Course	159	96	63	39.6
Poverty, Class, & Inequality	507	313	194	38.3
Conflict, Social Action, & Change	344	214	130	37.8
Social Problems Theory	308	192	116	37.7
Community Research & Development	257	171	86	33.5
Crime & Juvenile Delinquency	273	183	90	33.0
Racial & Ethnic Minorities	428	291	137	32.0
Family	188	129	59	31.4
Institutional Ethnography	189	134	55	29.1

Drinking & Drugs	138	99	39	28.3
Society and Mental Health	164	118	46	28.0
Law & Society	214	155	59	27.6
Health, Health Policy, & Health Services	281	204	77	27.4
Educational Problems	157	114	43	27.4
Labor Studies	153	114	39	25.5
Environment & Technology	127	103	24	18.9
Sexual Behavior, Politics, & Communities	250	204	46	18.4
Disabilities	72	61	11	15.3

5. My Concerns and Suggestions

I present these concerns and suggestions with the caveat that I do not yet have an institutional memory of SSSP policies, procedures, and precedents. The concerns I listed below may be momentary hiccups or may be long-term concerns of previous Council chairpersons. Further, the board or administrative office may have attempted to remedy these concerns in the past. I submit these concerns with the highest respect for the administrative office, board, and previous chairpersons of the council of special problems divisions.

- a. *Low Voter Turnout for Division Elections* – I am concerned with what I perceive to be low voter participation in Division chairperson elections (around 20%). Michele has informed me that there is an automatic voter reminder system in place for all elections. Emails are sent to non-voters 20, 10, and the last day from when the election closes. I would appreciate suggestions on how to increase voter turnout for division chair elections.
- b. *Newsletters* – failure to distribute newsletters and emails to division members puts a division at risk of losing membership. Now that SSSP members are required to pay for additional division memberships after their first complimentary selection, the inability of division chairs to engage division members could result in past members failing to renew their division memberships. This may result in a need to eliminate or consolidate divisions.
- c. *Division Chair Responsibilities and Recourse* – Issue 4B leads me to this final concern. The current wording of the Roles and Responsibilities of Division Chairs is as follows:

The Council of the Special Problems Divisions may recommend that a Division be discontinued, if the division fails to comply with one or more of the following requirements: (1) have at least 150 members for two years running, (2) distribute at least one newsletter a year, (3) have a replacement chair elected by the end of

the current chair's term of office, (4) organize at least two sessions for the Annual Meeting, (5) be represented at every meeting of the Council of the Special Problems Divisions, (6) hold a divisional meeting at the Annual Meeting, and (7) maintain a current division mission statement on the division's web page. The division can appeal the Council's recommendation, first to the Council itself, and ultimately to the Board if it is unsuccessful in its appeal to the Council.

The likelihood that SSSP is going to discontinue a division due to the acts of a delinquent division chairperson is low, and a past division chair actually indicated as such in an email to me when I attempted to remind her of her responsibilities. Currently, SSSP has no real recourse to enforce division chair responsibilities, and an entire division should not suffer based upon the inaction of the chairperson, who is in that role two full years. Accordingly, I propose the following changes in the wording of the bylaws about division chair roles and responsibilities.

The SSSP Administrative Officer, in consultation with the Chair of the Special Problems Divisions, and the Executive Officer may recommend that a Division Chairperson be replaced if the Division Chairperson fails to fulfill one or more of the following requirements after at least two reminders/warnings: (1) distribute at least one newsletter per year, (2) provide an annual division budget on time, and (3) maintain a current division mission statement on the division's web page. The division chair can appeal the Administrative Officer's recommendation to the Board of Directors within two weeks of notification. If the appeal is unsuccessful, an emergency election will be held within one month to elect a replacement chair.

The Council of the Special Problems Divisions may recommend that a Division be discontinued, if the division fails to comply with one or more of the following requirements: (1) have at least 150 members for two years running, (2) have a replacement chair elected by the end of the current chair's term of office, (3) organize at least two sessions for the Annual Meeting, (4) be represented at every meeting of the Council of the Special Problems Divisions, and (5) hold a divisional meeting at the Annual Meeting. The division can appeal the Council's recommendation, first to the Council itself, and ultimately to the Board if it is unsuccessful in its appeal to the Council.

Some of the items from the second section may make more sense being in the first section. I understand that Division Chairpersons are providing service to SSSP, and we do not want to alienate people from nominating themselves for this position. However, if the chair does not fulfill the requirements of the position, it puts the whole division at risk of disengagement from members and potential loss of membership, especially over the long term. This could have negative implications for annual meeting participation as well.

6. Concerns and Suggestions Voiced from Division Chairs

- a. *SSSP program scheduling competing with ASA* – The concern that SSSP program scheduling competes with ASA has been voiced for several years now. My understanding is that there is little that can be done to remedy this and that not all divisions are affected every year. There does continue to be low turnout at several division sessions, particularly those that overlap with ASA.
- b. *Division Budgets* – There is a suggestion that divisions receive larger budgets, possibly on a sliding scale depending upon number of awards given (especially for supporting student award winners and covering costs of plaques) or based on the number of members. Especially now that SSSP members are charged for membership in additional divisions after the first free division membership, it may make sense to distribute budgets on more of a sliding scale. A division with 100 members, for example, may not need to contribute as much to the division reception as a division with 300 members. In addition, divisions with more members are bringing in more money in division fees than divisions with fewer members. The concern about the budget was couched in an additional concern about the perception of division chairs and the important role they play. One division chair stated: “I understand that the office is staffed minimally and overworked, but division officers are expected to do quite a lot in proportion to the very minimal resources provided, and from the distribution of available funding, it is not at all apparent that the divisions are respected as being crucial for attracting, retaining, and serving members, as well as organizing much of the conference activities.”
- c. *Webpages* – One division chair suggested that divisions receive more support for webpages through either additional flexibility and space on the existing SSSP division webpages or funding for establishing and maintaining independent webpages. I imagine that independent webpages could be an administrative nightmare, but perhaps there is a possibility of more space on the existing SSSP division webpage? I will also encourage division chairs to take advantage of free social networking space to share information (e.g., Facebook, twitter, and google plus).