

Executive Officer Report

Society for the Study of Social Problems (SSSP)

Submitted by Héctor L. Delgado, Executive Officer
July 25, 2013

As I have in the past, I wish to begin by thanking the many people who make this organization work as well as it does, beginning with Michele Koontz, our Administrative Officer and Meeting Manager. We are indeed fortunate to have her in the organization. I have never worked with anyone more competent – and she is an absolute pleasure to work with. I am grateful as well for her co-workers in the Administrative Office, Sharon Shumaker, Lisa East, and, our newest member, Marisa Stone (and let me insert here a warm welcome to Marisa, the newest of our staff members). We are very fortunate to have them, as we are an extraordinary Board and Committees, without whom this organization could not function. I especially want to signal out the Program Committee, but especially its Chair, David Fasenfest, and our President, Ricardo A. Dello Buono, for the tremendous job they have done putting together this year's meeting. We expect this to be the best attended meeting, hands down, but more importantly, David and Richard have demonstrated that there are indeed things we can do every year to increase attendance and participation in annual meetings. It isn't just that it is New York. The time and effort they, and Angie Beeman, Local Arrangements Committee Chair, have invested in the meeting has been both instructive and appreciated. I am looking forward to their reports and urge the Board to read them carefully and to consider seriously their recommendations.

Administrative Office and Annual Meeting

As the SSSP's Administrative Officer, Michele Koontz will be submitting her report, in which she will discuss recent changes in the Administrative Office, including the addition of a new administrative assistant, Marisa Stone, and a reorganization, that now has Sharon Shumaker serving principally as the SSSP's IT Specialist. But I do want to thank the Board for approving the new position and for its continued support and concern for the office's workload. As Meeting Manager, Michele will, as will the President and Program Chair, report on the annual meeting, so there is no need for me to include the same material in my report. Suffice it to say, that the preparation for these meetings is a long and arduous process, and this has been especially the case this year given its size. I want, once more, to commend Michele, Ricardo, David, Angie et al. for their commitment to what promises to be one of the best meetings the SSSP has ever had.

Permanent Organization and Strategic Planning Committee (POSPC)

The Administrative Office has been working closely with the POSPC to explore ways in which we can make the Society operate more efficiently and effectively. Toward that end, Michele and I provided the committee with our recommendations. An e-mail conversation ensued, in which Michele and I participated, and which saw substantial and substantive participation by several members of the committee. You will receive a report from the POSPC, so here I will simply list some of the issues that arose in the Administrative Office's conversation with the committee.

For the most part, the conversation was about the number of divisions and what a division had to do to remain a division, including maintaining a certain level of membership. We shared with the committee our experience with divisions and, based on that experience, what we believed was likely to work (and not work), what the likely cost would be of a number of proposed changes, and other bits of information that we believed would help the committee in its deliberations. I encourage the Board to read the POSPC's report carefully and the POSPC to bring to Division Chairs and Board specific recommendations for further discussion and possible action.

The POSPC will meet with Michele and me in New York to discuss the operation of the Administrative Office and our respective roles in the organization. As always, Michele and I look forward to having this conversation with the POSPC.

Social Problems Editor Search

This year we have been conducting a search for a new editor to replace Becky Pettit, who has served the SSSP with distinction as editor. She and her team will not be easy to follow, but we have "two" (one is a team of co-editors) strong candidates and teams for the position, either of which I believe will do an excellent job. The Editorial & Publications Committee has been working hard on this search, and in addition to other business to which it has to attend, will be reviewing applications for and making a recommendation in the publisher search. I want to thank the members of the committee for all of their hard work, and especially David Smith for his leadership as the Chair of the committee. The E&P Committee will submit a report on the search, so there is no need for me to go into detail, but I do want to raise a couple issues that I believe we have to address as an organization.

First, we had very few applicants for the editor's position. My first concern is whether we are doing enough, and doing it early enough, to drum up interest in the position. Implicit in my stated concern is a recommendation to begin the recruitment process earlier, and in a way that casts the widest net possible. This is something that the E&P Committee can discuss if it or the Board shares my concern, and to recommend actions to increase interest in the position for future searches. One recommendation I would like to make to the Board is to consider making the tenure of editors longer – perhaps four years instead of three. I'd be especially interested to know what previous editors think of the idea. It simply feels that as soon as we have a new editor in place, we're beginning the search for her or his replacement. I'd like the E&P Committee to consider this recommendation, barring any objections by the Board. In the future, we should also try to avoid bringing in a new editor and publisher at the same time (and conducting these searches at the same time).

Second, and for me a much more important issue, is an issue related to the unfortunate circumstance of being left with but one candidate for the editor's position, as we were, when one of the two being considered withdrew his application. The E&P Committee, with Board approval, decided to contact individuals to encourage them to apply. Hindsight is 20/20, but in hindsight I believe that this was a mistake and it is one I hope we do not repeat in the future. If we re-open a search, we need to open it in every sense of the word, i.e., advertise the position widely again, and ask *every* member of the organization to consider applying or encourage others to apply. As a social justice organization, especially, we want to eliminate the biases,

however unintended, that result from relying solely on only a small group of individuals, using *their* networks, to generate a pool of candidates. This is especially problematic when the small group is also the one conducting the interviews and making the selection, as will be the case in this search. If the Board agrees, I recommend inserting a provision in the Operations Manual on searches, to eliminate potential biases in searches and increase diversity in key positions of the Society.

Social Problems Publisher Search

I have had the pleasure to work with Susan Carlson and David Smith on the ad hoc committee leading the search for a publisher for *Social Problems*. We have narrowed the list to four strong candidates. The committee will make its recommendation to the Editorial and Publications Committee (E&P) after conducting face-to-face interviews in NYC. The E&P Committee will then make a recommendation to the Board for the final decision. Since more detailed information on the search will appear in the Treasurer's and E&P Committee's reports, I will refrain from providing more details. I simply want to thank Susan Carlson for the extraordinary work she has done soliciting and managing the applications we received, and to thank her Department Chair at Western Michigan University, Dr. David Hartmann, for providing Susan with a course release to do this very important work. There is nothing more important to the SSSP than the health of *Social Problems*, with the exception of Michele's health.

Conflict of Interest Policy

I would like to propose, especially as a social justice organization, that we adopt a policy on conflicts of interest and *the appearance* of conflicts of interest, and toward that end, in the event that the Board shares my concern, I did a little research on what such a policy might look like. It is essential that we are not only fair in the way that we conduct our business, *but that we appear to be fair as well*, in order to engender trust, especially from historically underrepresented groups, in our organization. The following is from the United Way's Center for Non-Profits' newsletter, dated July 17, 2013 (which I received in an e-mail).

Conflict of Interest Policy

A conflict of interest occurs when a board member's, or senior employee's, decision-making process for a nonprofit organization is or might be influenced by their outside personal or professional interests. Because the Duty of Loyalty requires that board members put the best interests of the organization first, conflicts can lead a nonprofit and its board down a risky path. Adopting a conflicts of interest policy is one way to minimize the risk associated with making conflicted decisions. Generally, a conflicts of interest policy should include three main parts:

Disclosure- the person with a conflict, a board member or senior employee, must disclose the conflict to the Board of Directors. A good way to handle this is to require the completion of an annual conflicts disclosure form, on which leadership discloses the existing relationships that might lead to a conflict. These forms should be reviewed regularly and updated as needed.

Recusal - The conflicted board member removes him or herself from voting on the matter that gives rise to the conflict. A simple way to do this is by having the board member leave the room while the disinterested board considers and votes on the matter.

Cure- Have only the disinterested board members vote on the conflicted matter. Board minutes should reflect that the conflict was cured by disinterested board members and that the conflicted board member did not take part in any discussions.

The following is a sample they provided, although I am not necessarily recommending something this elaborate.

It is in the best interest of [Name of Nonprofit] to be aware of and properly manage all conflicts of interest and appearances of a conflict of interest. This conflict of interest policy is designed to help directors, officers, employees and volunteers of the [Name of Nonprofit] identify situations that present potential conflicts of interest and to provide [Name of Nonprofit] with a procedure to appropriately manage conflicts in accordance with legal requirements and the goals of accountability and transparency in [Name of Nonprofit's] operations.

- 1. Conflict of Interest Defined.** *In this policy, a person with a conflict of interest is referred to as an "interested person." For purposes of this policy, the following circumstances shall be deemed to create a Conflict of Interest:*
- a. A director, officer, employee or volunteer, including a board member (or family member of any of the foregoing) is a party to a contract, or involved in a transaction with [Name of Nonprofit] for goods or services.*
 - b. A director, officer, employee or volunteer, (or a family member of any of the foregoing) has a material financial interest in a transaction between [Name of Nonprofit] and an entity in which the director, officer, employee or volunteer, or a family member of the foregoing, is a director, officer, agent, partner, associate, employee, trustee, personal representative, receiver, guardian, custodian, or other legal representative.*
 - c. A director, officer, employee or volunteer, (or a family member of the foregoing) is engaged in some capacity or has a material financial interest in a business or enterprise that competes with [Name of Nonprofit].*

Gifts, Gratuities and Entertainment. *Accepting gifts, entertainment or other favors from individuals or entities can also result in a conflict or duality of interest when the party providing the gift/entertainment/favor does so under circumstances where it might be inferred that such action was intended to influence or possibly would influence the interested person in the performance of his or her duties. This does not preclude the acceptance of items of nominal or insignificant value or entertainment of nominal or insignificant value which are not related to any particular transaction or activity of [Name of Nonprofit].*

2. Definitions.

- a. A "Conflict of Interest" is any circumstance described in Part 1 of this Policy.*
- b. An "Interested Person" is any person serving as an officer, employee or member of the Board of Directors of [Name of Nonprofit] or a major donor to [Name of Nonprofit] or anyone else who is in a position of control over [Name of Nonprofit] who has a personal interest that is in conflict with the interests of [Name of Nonprofit].*
- c. A "Family Member" is a spouse, parent, child or spouse of a child, brother, sister, or spouse of a brother or sister, of an interested person.*
- d. A "Material Financial Interest" in an entity is a financial interest of any kind, which, in view of all the circumstances, is substantial enough that it would, or reasonably could, affect an Interested Person's or Family Member's judgment with respect to transactions to which the entity is a party.*

e. A "Contract or Transaction" is any agreement or relationship involving the sale or purchase of goods or services, the providing or receipt of a loan or grant, the establishment of any other type of financial relationship, or the exercise of control over another organization. The making of a gift to [Name of Nonprofit] is not a Contract or Transaction.

3. Procedures.

a. Prior to board or committee action on a Contract or Transaction involving a Conflict of Interest, a director or committee member having a Conflict of Interest and who is in attendance at the meeting shall disclose all facts material to the Conflict of Interest. Such disclosure shall be reflected in the minutes of the meeting. If board members are aware that staff or other volunteers have a conflict of interest, relevant facts should be disclosed by the board member or by the interested person him/herself if invited to the board meeting as a guest for purposes of disclosure.

b. A director or committee member who plans not to attend a meeting at which he or she has reason to believe that the board or committee will act on a matter in which the person has a Conflict of Interest shall disclose to the chair of the meeting all facts material to the Conflict of Interest. The chair shall report the disclosure at the meeting and the disclosure shall be reflected in the minutes of the meeting.

c. A person who has a Conflict of Interest shall not participate in or be permitted to hear the board's or committee's discussion of the matter except to disclose material facts and to respond to questions. Such person shall not attempt to exert his or her personal influence with respect to the matter, either at or outside the meeting.

d. A person who has a Conflict of Interest with respect to a Contract or Transaction that will be voted on at a meeting shall not be counted in determining the presence of a quorum for purposes of the vote. Such person's ineligibility to vote shall be reflected in the minutes of the meeting. For purposes of this paragraph, a member of the Board of Directors of [Name of Nonprofit] has a Conflict of Interest when he or she stands for election as an officer or for re-election as a member of the Board of Directors.

e. Interested Persons who are not members of the Board of Directors of [Name of Nonprofit], or who have a Conflict of Interest with respect to a Contract or Transaction that is not the subject of Board or committee action, shall disclose to their supervisor, or the Chair or the Chair's designee any Conflict of Interest that such Interested Person has with respect to a Contract or Transaction. Such disclosure shall be made as soon as the Conflict of Interest is known to the Interested Person. The Interested Person shall refrain from any action that may affect [Name of Nonprofit]'s participation in such Contract or Transaction.

In the event it is not entirely clear that a Conflict of Interest exists, the individual with the potential conflict shall disclose the circumstances to his or her supervisor or the Chair or the Chair's designee, who shall determine whether full board discussion is warranted or whether there exists a Conflict of Interest that is subject to this policy.

4. Confidentiality. Each director, officer, employee and volunteer shall exercise care not to disclose confidential information acquired in connection with disclosures of conflicts of interest or potential conflicts, which might be adverse to the interests of [Name of Nonprofit]. Furthermore, directors, officers, employees and volunteers shall not disclose or use information relating to the business of [Name of Nonprofit] for their personal profit or advantage or the personal profit or advantage of their Family Member(s).

5. Review of policy.

a. Each director, officer, employee and volunteer shall be provided with and asked to review a copy of this Policy and to acknowledge in writing that he or she has done so.

b. Annually each director, officer, employee and volunteer shall complete a disclosure form identifying any relationships, positions or circumstances in which s/he is involved that he or she believes could contribute to a Conflict of Interest. Such relationships, positions or circumstances might include service as a director of or consultant to another nonprofit organization, or ownership of a business that might provide goods or services to [Name of Nonprofit]. Any such information regarding the business interests of a director, officer, employee or volunteer, or a Family Member thereof, shall be treated as confidential and shall generally be made available only to the Chair, the Executive Director, and any committee appointed to address Conflicts of Interest, except to the extent additional disclosure is necessary in connection with the implementation of this Policy.

c. This policy shall be reviewed annually by each member of the Board of Directors. Any changes to the policy shall be communicated to all staff and volunteers.

Internationalization

I would like, as others certainly do, the SSSP to have more of a presence outside of the United States and Canada. Toward that end, we created a committee to explore ways in which we can do that and the committee will submit a report on those discussions. I should note that on August 12th, in NYC, the SSSP is co-sponsoring, with the Labor and the Labor Movement Section of the ASA, a mini-conference on labor with an international theme. Furthermore, in our search for a new publisher, we will be placing a great deal of emphasis on publishers' presence internationally and their ability to give us much wider international exposure and to grow and expand our membership internationally.

Membership Survey

A survey of the membership was conducted in 2007 and we are gearing up to conduct another. There were concerns raised about the quality of the 2007 survey, and even those involved in putting it together, recommend obtaining the services of an expert in survey research for the next one. Sharon Shumaker and I are doing some research on this and hope to have a recommendation to the Board in the near future. Board members should be thinking about data they would like to collect with this instrument, keeping in mind, of course, that a lengthy survey will get a poor response. The ad hoc Racism Committee had wanted to conduct a survey of its own, but believes now that its questions/concerns can be incorporated in the general survey. Please feel free to contact me with questions, concerns, or suggestions.

Revenue Generating Strategies

We received assistance from UTK's advancement office and fundraising specialists, and Michele and others in our Administrative Office attended grant-writing workshops offered by UTK. UTK helped us to identify foundations that we could solicit for funds, but, with some follow-up

by me, in particular with the most promising on the list, the Ford Foundation, we found that this strategy is not likely to bear much fruit, unless we are very specific about requests for grants. Few foundations want to provide funds for the general operation of an organization. They are more interested in funding specific initiatives, and even then, with an eye toward the organization picking up the tab within a specified period of time. Foundations' areas of interest also shift over time. This, in fact was the case with the Ford Foundation, with whom I had extended conversations. If Board members have specific initiatives they wish to develop for funding (and we can help with the grant writing), they should let the Administrative Office know. Divisions should also be encouraged to propose specific projects to the Board.

On another front, Michele had a conversation with Lauren Tiffany, the Executive Director of the Midwestern Sociological Society, concerning their Capital Campaign. Is that something we want to pursue, since it entails soliciting our members for donations, in addition to their dues? If it is feasible, and does generate funds, the advantage of this type of fundraising is that we would be able to use these funds for general operational expenses.

CUNY - Pathways

On December 11, 2012, I sent a letter on behalf of the Board to the Chair of CUNY's Board and CUNY's Chancellor, asking them to delay the implementation of a new general education program and transfer guidelines. The letter read in part, "I am the Executive Officer of the Society for the Study of Social Problems (SSSP), and I am writing on behalf of our Board to express concern about CUNY's plan to implement a new system of general education requirements and transfer guidelines (*Pathways*) in the fall of 2013. We are not writing to express an opinion on the initiative itself, but rather to express concern about the manner in which the initiative was developed and the opposition that it is receiving, principally from your faculty and staff." We expressed concern with the manner in which faculty were, in effect, bypassed and made a plea for the university to consult with its faculty in a meaningful way, writing, "We urge you to support the time-honored tradition of shared governance with your faculty by consulting with them through their elected bodies on an initiative to reform your general education program and transfer guidelines. Ultimately, students, many of them from historically underrepresented racial and ethnic minority groups, will be the primary beneficiaries if you do." We did not receive a response. The membership, however, will consider a resolution at our meeting in New York on the same, which, if it passes, will be forwarded to CUNY's Board and Chancellor and other individuals and groups identified in the resolution.

Future Annual Meetings

We're already thinking ahead to future meetings and doing our best to find ideal hotels for our meetings. In addition to location, location, location (including proximity to the ASA's site), we place a great deal of emphasis on the food and beverage minimum, space, cost of sleeping rooms for members, and whether the hotel is a union hotel. In 2014 we will be in San Francisco, in 2015 in Chicago, and in 2016 in Montreal. The Westin in New York is a union property, as are the hotel in San Francisco and the hotels we're considering in Montreal. The Chicago property is the only non-union hotel, despite our best efforts to find an adequate union hotel in the windy city. I should add, that Michele, and our HelmsBriscoe consultant, Marisa Crame,

recently visited Montreal, as part of a familiarization trip, which resulted in virtually no cost to the SSSP for travel and meals, and we are pleased with the choices we have in Montreal. I was unable to make this trip with Michele and Marisa (as much as I would have loved to visit Montreal), as I normally do (typically in the fall), but we discussed the properties and, frankly, I was not missed.

Conclusion

Allow me to conclude with an expression of gratitude to the Board for allowing me to serve as the Executive Officer of the SSSP. When I say it is an honor, I truly mean it. If there is anything that I can do to close the gap between my value and Michele's value to the SSSP, please let me know.