Date: July 9, 2013
To: Board of Director
From: David Fasenfest, 2012-13 Program Committee Chair
Re: Report to the Board

First, I would like to acknowledge the members of my Program Committee (Kum-Kum Bhavani, Jeneve Brooks, Melanie Bush, Rodney Coates, Walda Katz-Fishman, Mary Romero and George Sanders) for their work and energy helping pull together the 2013 SSSP Annual Meeting. I am pleased to have worked to bring Ricardo Dello Buono's meeting theme "Re-imagining Social Problems: Moving Beyond Social Constuctionism" into reality, and appreciate all his help and guidance in that cause. Finally, I want to thank Michele Koontz for her tireless efforts managing all those tasks which go unnoticed (and perhaps unappreciated) unless and until they are not managed. Her ability to maintain control over what needed to be done, her efforts at getting more hotel space as the program expanded in both scope and participation, and her quick action to increase the hotel rooms at conference rates have been essential to making this a very successful and well attended annual meeting of SSSP.

In order to maximize participation, a decision was made in conjunction with President Dello Buono to place all the repository papers (not initially accepted by the 1st or 2nd choice sessions). We created 53 sessions sponsored by the Program Committee, in part as a result of Committee member efforts, and in part using the new Critical Dialogue format to include all the repository papers submitted to the program.

PAPER SUBMISSIONS AND PROGRAM CONSTRUCTION

The 2013 Annual Meeting currently (as of this writing) has 185 sessions reflecting 1214 authors of sole or co-authored papers. A total of 745 papers were submitted as a response to the call for papers: 27 (3.6%) were submitted in 2012, another 351 (47.1%) were submitted by January 30, 2013, 329 (44.2%) arrived on the January 31st deadline, and finally another 38 (5.1%) were accepted by the Program Committee due to a variety of explanations including technical problems, travel schedules and the like.

At the meeting with Division Chairs during the 2012 SSSP Meeting in Denver, it was decided that winners of Division Student Awards were to be included throughout the program rather than ghettoized in "all student" panels. Chairs were asked to move deadlines for submissions forward, and to have award selection committees make decisions by the end of January 2013 so that we can make sure all winners are properly placed. In addition, all student award submissions should have been required to also submit the paper via the online submission process to ensure they receive full consideration on the program even if we did not have the actual award information in time. Unfortunately, these decisions were not fully implemented in time and several Division winners had to be added to the program ad hoc. This becomes a problem once Division sessions are "full" and their student award paper presentations must be added to the program.

Each Division was able to propose 3 regular sessions and could co-sponsor an additional 7 sessions from which the call for papers would be generated. Divisions were encouraged to use the full range of panel types (Papers-in-the-Round, Critical Dialogues, as well as Panels with or without discussants) to increase the involvement of their Division members. Some inconsistencies emerged—for example, while some Divisions offered several individual Papers-in-the-Round sessions, another created a single session with multiple Roundtables in a single session. This is not a problem, other than it may mislead how many meeting rooms and of which size are needed when planning logistics for the conference.

Member surveys after each conference reflect two strong messages: too often they arrive and there are not many presenters on the podium, and too often sessions are populated only with graduate students. In addition, President Dello Buono made it very clear that he felt his mandate included maximizing attendance at the annual meeting. The policy to spread graduate students throughout the regular program will address the second issue mentioned above. Addressing the first requires recognition of two realities: a) not everyone who is accepted to a session eventually registers and attends, *and better statistics should be kept to understand this reality*, and b) overall attendance at the annual meeting is a function of the papers accepted for the program.

Space planning and initial limitations have another impact: at a critical moment I was told not to organize any more panels due to space restrictions. A request was made by President Dello Buono to the BFA for more space options, but it was unable to provide any guidance on parameters for possible negotiations elsewhere, other than to "wait and see." This was a highly unsatisfactory situation, and it discouraged the formation of several solicited sessions as we tried to build bridges with other organizations, to include non-traditional scholars, and to seek linkages with scholars from outside the US. When additional space was finally arranged, through the efforts of the Administrative Offices, it came too late to negotiate these special sessions for the program and relationships with SSSP.

Special kudos should go to Michele, who valiantly addressed the ever increasing space needs as the final program began to take shape due to the overwhelming response to the call for papers and the efforts of the Program Committee and the requirement for more meeting space became apparent. To have done otherwise would have made this a much smaller conference. Without her determination and good relationship with the hotel management we feel this would not have been as successful a conference as it now seems to be.

Recommendations:

1) Division Chairs should be given clearer guidelines regarding deadlines for submitting papers for student awards, requiring student award papers be submitted through the regular SSSP process with a January 31st deadline as a condition for consideration, and asking that their committees make award selections by the end of March so that winners

can be properly placed and designated within the program as they appear throughout the final schedule of sessions.

2) Guidelines for how many papers can be in any session type, and within how many different types of sessions authors can participate should be just that—guidelines. All too often, the implementation by the Executive Office was inflexible on applying those limits regardless of the consequence. More attention to the goals of the conference and less to what often seems like arbitrary rules will improve actual overall participation on panels (thereby allowing for normal attrition by the time of the conference).

3) Once decisions have been made to accept and place papers on the program, authors should not have such a long lead time to commit by registering for the Annual Meeting. The July 1st deadline, when combined with the need to quickly get the program to the printer, undercuts any effort to address the first member complaint: low numbers of presenters on the podium. This requirement should be moved up to May 1st so that program adjustments can be made, papers added where needed, and panels combined or cancelled due to low participation of panelists. As it stands, we run a risk of poor participation on some panels if we remove papers after July 1st as mandated by the Board (although President Dello Buono feels that inadequate context was given to the Board when they took their decision and he also feels it is very unlikely that their decision intended that the deadline and the removal date were meant to be one and the same for July 1).

4) Contingencies and possibly a protocol for action might be a good idea for the future. For example, consider instituting a multi-tier negotiation for hotel space that can expand under a set schedule of decisions to avoid the problem of scheduling the requisite sessions for a well subscribed program. In addition, provide latitude for the Executive Office to negotiate with proximate hotels for additional conference space on an as-needed basis.

EXEMPTIONS

SSSP has clear rules for granting exemptions for registration and membership requirements, a number of categories under which people can join SSSP, and various conference registration rates. This is an important aspect of what makes SSSP unique (the systems of exemptions and waivers) and should not be changed. The Board grants a set number of exemptions, and then the Administrative offices request an increase if needed. This does not make sense on two grounds: 1) those eligible for exemptions from annual meeting fees and/or membership dues are not likely to attend the annual meeting if not granted an exemption because the number allotted has been reached, and then 2) restricting participation of these folks undermines the stated goals of SSSP, to bridge scholarship and activism for social change.

However, Item #3 from the Exemptions from the annual meeting registration fee reads as follows: "Persons excused by direct request of the Program Chair." The result is that the

Program Chair become inundated by repeated requests and appeals and has to pass them on to the Administrative Offices in any event.

Recommendations:

5) There should *not* be a set limit on the number of eligible exemptions. The rules are quite clear and limiting, and non-academics are most likely to be invited participants on a limited number of panels. It creates unnecessary friction and added work to keep making a request for additional exemptions. The opportunity costs are insignificant unless the argument be made that otherwise these people would be paying dues and fees to SSSP.

6) While communication from the Administrative offices indicate that members should look at the SSSP website for criteria and conditions for granting exemptions and waivers, that information is not easily found because it is buried deep within the Society's website. A clear marker should be included that either creates a hotlink within the letter to the proper location in the program, or a marker be placed on the website to redirect members and possible participants (or both) to avoid any confusion and the potential for fractious interactions with Program Committee members.

7) All requests for exemptions should be made directly to the Administrative offices and rule #3 as noted above should be removed. In any mailing to members and program participants they should be instructed to make their requests to the Administrative Offices accordingly.

8) Program Chairs of each conference should be instructed that they also may nominate individuals for specific exemptions, provided with clear conditions and costs (for example, if there are direct fee waivers available through the offices of the Program Chair), and given an understanding that they undertake fundraising to support participation in the program paid for out of the Program Committee budget or additional funds raised by the President to support conference activities.

PROGRAMMING, EDITING, and TRACKING

When the initial call for papers based on Division sponsorships is issued, each session receives a tracking number. Additional numbers are assigned to sessions created by the Program Committee or are not part of the call for papers (invited but sponsored by Divisions). That number remains in the system throughout the process and enables us to track the status of sessions. Similarly, papers submitted get tracking numbers and are processed accordingly. To that extent the system works very well. But once the actual program begins to take shape, session numbers change to reflect their order in the printed program. This has the potential for confusion and cross purposes when different numbering schemes get used.

Session organizers, session chairs, discussants and participants have an opportunity to review the draft program online (instructions are sent out by the Administrative Offices to each participant in the program) so that they may correct titles, spelling and the like. Protocols should be made

clear so that inconsistent capitalization, use of italics, quotation marks and the like do not routinely appear in the program.

Finally, program participants are reminded to register, and told failure to do so in a timely manner will result in their removal from the final program. Several situations arise: a) often personal financial situations like institutional constraints limit immediate registration within the set time limits imposed by SSSP; b) participants communicate their inability to attend the conference selectively (to organizers or presiders only); c) co-authors fail to communicate with each other who will present and so no-one is registered; d) for a variety of reasons some are not able to make commitments until the last instance.

<u>Recommendations</u>:

9) Make sure that consistent numbering systems are in place throughout the program construction period, with session numbers reflecting the call for papers listed as well as new numbering as a result of panel placement. In addition, all submitted papers should retain a unique ID throughout the process.
10) A format guideline should be placed on the SSSP website, and all instructions on submissions, naming, labeling and subsequent editing and review should point to that location with instructions to follow those guidelines.
11) Include in all communication that decisions to not attend the conference should be conveyed to all co-authors, session organizers AND the administration of SSSP to ensure proper tracking and limit unnecessary reminders.
12) Allow a select number of participants, mutually agreed upon by the President, Program Chair and (when appropriate) Administrative personal, to remain on the program without having paid the requisite fees due to special circumstances, and with the reasonable expectation that these persons will eventually register for the conference.