

2014 Yearly Report of Committee Activities and Outcomes

Society for the Study of Social Problems Membership & Outreach Committee

Chair and Student Representative: Jay Borchert, University of Michigan

Members: Debora A. Paterniti, UC Davis; Deana Rohlinger, Florida State University; Kendra Jason, University of North Carolina Charlotte; Karen M. McCormack, Wheaton College; Ryon Cobb, University of Southern California; Rachel Rabyburn, Indiana University Purdue University – Fort Wayne; Nadia Shapkina, Kansas State University; Meagan E. Jain, Georgia State University.

Membership Totals

The committee is pleased to report that SSSP has the highest number of members since July 2008 when membership in the society peaked at 2,439 members. That threshold was reached just prior to the damages caused by the economic downturn. Since that time the M & O Committee has worked diligently to increase our membership through promotional campaigns, advertising, and increasing our presence in social media such as Facebook. We have also worked diligently to retain new members through our sponsoring of the New Member Breakfast that has been quite a success each year. We hope that all members have been encouraged to remain members of the society due to our increased presence on social media as well as our continuing dedication to social justice and activist scholarship. Our current membership of 2,376 members represents 97% of peak membership, measured at July 31, 2008. As it stands, there is good reason to believe that as people register for the upcoming meetings, we will exceed our peak membership. That is certainly our hope and our goal. Memberships have increased during that June to July period each year since 2007 and we see no reason to believe that this trend will not continue.

Sustaining Memberships

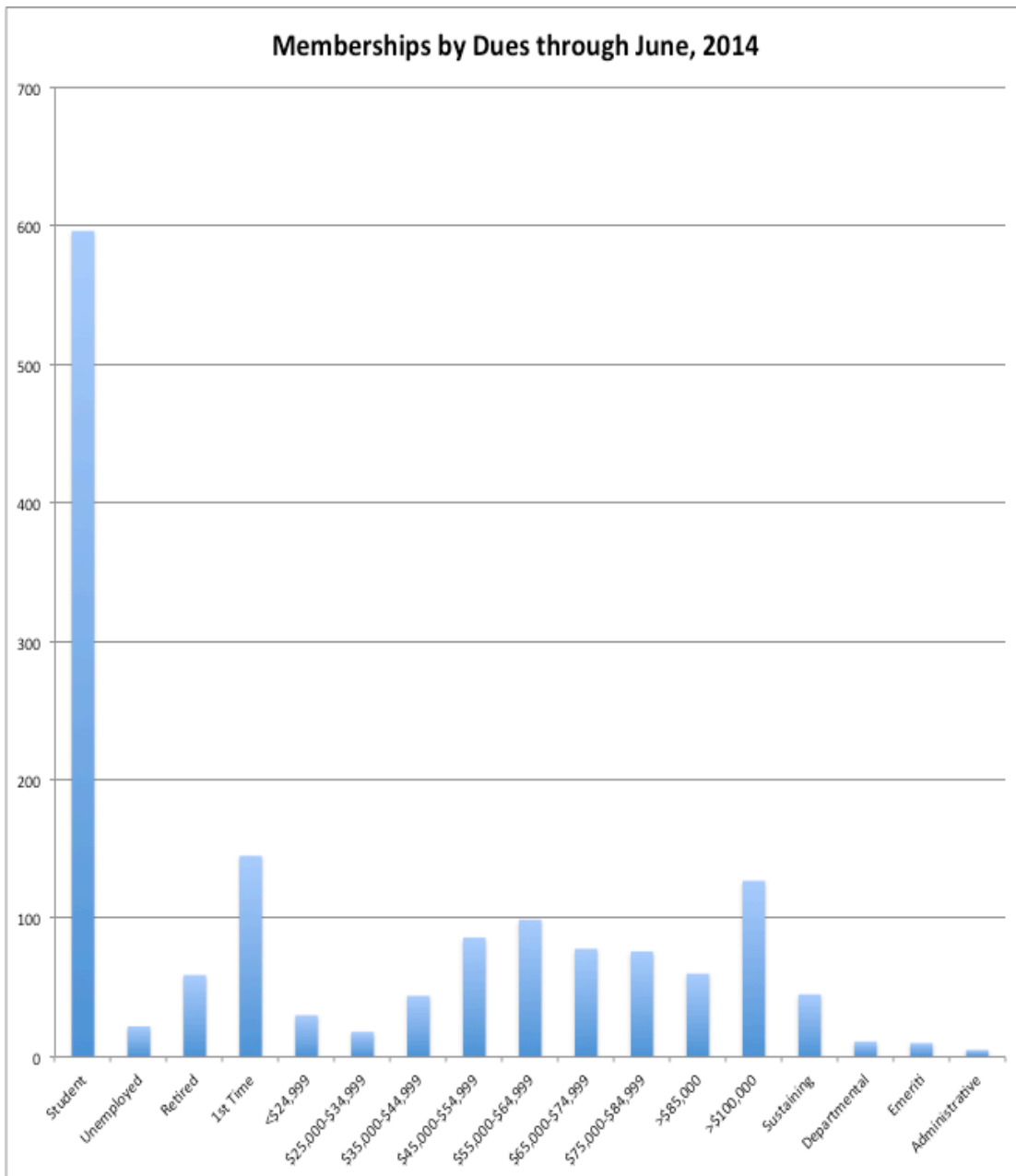
Sustaining Memberships, formally known as *Life Memberships*, increased this year to a total of 45 sustaining members. We are pleased to note that 3 additional sustaining members committed to this membership level in 2014, generating \$4,600 in revenue for the society. The 3 additional members at this level represent the biggest yearly increase in sustaining memberships in quite a few years. This certainly can be seen as nothing other than a very strong commitment to the Society and its' ideals as well as significant hope for the future vitality of the society. As outgoing chair, I would like to ask the M & O committee to form ideas that may help the society to gain new members at this exceptional level of commitment.

Dues Report

According to our report of dues paying members, measured at June 30th, there is a 6% decrease in dues paying members between June 30, 2013 and June 30, 2014. The major components of this drop between 2013 and 2014 in paying members as of June 30th are from students, first time professional members, people earning \$55,000-\$64,999, and

individuals earning between \$85,000-\$100,000 yearly. As registration for the annual meeting continues, we expect this decrease of 6% in paying members at June 30th to be turned around by July 31, 2014.

As per past years, students remain our most populated category of membership. As chair, I would like to suggest that all aspects of SSSP look into ways to keep these members as their careers advance and as their research, advocacy and other professional interests may change. Certainly, conference attendance comes with a price tag and enhancing our meeting as a worthwhile destination is a goal that needs regular attention.



Our Divisions

Our two largest divisions remain “Racial and Ethnic Minorities” with 453 members, and “Poverty, Class and Inequality” with 438 members. Each of these has increased membership over last years numbers. Our third largest division “Conflict, Social Action and Change” with 310 members had a slight drop in membership from last year. These 3 divisions represent SSSP’s commitment to social justice and activist scholarship in direct relationship to ongoing problems in our social space such as racism, ethnic divisions, increasing social inequality and decreased social mobility, along with a focus on settling these areas of conflict through social action and change.

As per previous comments in this report, it is difficult to fully gauge the health of the organization, vis-à-vis membership until after the Annual Meeting. Since membership totals, including division memberships increase yearly, during the months leading to the meeting, we do not expect 2014 to be different from previous years.

Promotional Campaign

Our promotional efforts this year have been a resounding success. With expenditures of only \$90 in direct costs, we have gained \$16,905 in promotional revenue and more importantly 389 new members. This is a huge rate of return! There are a few areas where the M & O committee may want to reconsider or reshape efforts based on low rate of return within these specific areas of outreach. These areas are: UC Press Promotional Efforts – Brochures; Contexts and JSTOR online advertisements, and Flyer/ Professional Meeting. Together these efforts produced only 7 new memberships, generating \$475 in revenue.

Our targeted email blasts have been quite successful. Nearly 50% of students who received one of our email blasts opened our emails. Finally, 291 people opened our emails asking them to keep SSSP vital by recruiting new members. We received 108 new members and generated \$3,720 in revenue, with costs of only \$90. These email blasts seem to be a particularly worthwhile effort and I ask M & O to continue their efforts with these emails and to also consider the ways we might be able to improve outcomes.

Our Facebook page, certainly can be looked at as an excellent portion of our promotional campaign and our public identity. During the last year, I worked with Lisa East, Michele Koontz, Ryon Cobb and others to help shape our online presence with Facebook. Members contributed compelling research developments as well as sociologically oriented news and current events to our page to energize members and non-members alike. During the year, the page was used to highlight member testimonials and featured abstracts from our 2013 meeting in New York, as part of the larger promotional effort to recruit new members and sustain current membership. Having an online presence in Social Media is to me and the committee, part of the larger effort to ensure that SSSP remains vital in our new digital, virtual age. As chair, I encourage further development of these efforts as the Society moves forward.

News and Other Developments

At our Annual Meeting, the committee will elect a new chair for the 2014/2015 year from 3 excellent representatives: Kendra Jason, Ryon Cobb and Karen McCormack. I wish each of these colleagues the absolute best in their continued commitment to the Society.

As chair, I would like to thank the Society for the privilege of serving in this capacity. I truly enjoyed doing my best to build SSSP membership and look forward to future service as the incoming Chair of our Law & Society Division. Deborah Paterniti of UC Davis and Deana Rohlinger of Florida State University will also be ending their tenure on the committee at the 2014 Annual Meeting. I would like to thank them, and all of our members for their excellent service. It has been my honor to work with each of you over the last 3 years as member and chair.

I would also like to thank Michele Koontz and Lisa East for their untiring assistance to the committee's efforts and for being simply amazing communicators with each and every one of us on the committee.

Thank you!

Jay Borchert
2014 Chair Membership & Outreach Committee
University of Michigan Department of Sociology
Center for the Study of Law and Society UC Berkeley

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Jay Borchert". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, stylized initial "J".