



# Society for the Study of Social Problems

*In Pursuit of Social Justice*

Presentation to SSSP Board of Directors  
Budget, Finance, and Audit (BFA) Committee Report  
July 23, 2021

On May 21, 2021 at our midyear meeting and on July 1, 2021, the BFA Committee met virtually to discuss the proposed budget for the Society for the 2021 fiscal year. The Society has continued to see the negative financial impact of the COVID-19 pandemic largely through the cancellation of the 2020 and 2021 in-person annual meetings in San Francisco and Chicago, respectively, and a corresponding decline in membership and membership dues revenue. Nonetheless, continued strong performance of *Social Problems* and related earnings, as well as a well-balanced financial portfolio and significant cash reserves have enabled the Society to remain financially solvent.

The BFA Committee discussed several items at the mid-year meeting. One item discussed was the “Pilot Approach B” proposed by the Accessibility Committee. This item concerned the financial feasibility of childcare, spousal care, or elder care grants for the annual meeting. The BFA Committee agreed in principle with the spirit of the request, but found it to be much more difficult in practice. We recognized the importance of accessibility and agreed with it as a priority, while at the same time being cognizant of the uncertain financial implications of the pandemic and the administrative complexity of the request. Planning an in-person meeting is already a very involved process, and adding the prospects of finding childcare, eldercare, or care providers for other populations would increase the labor involved substantially and have legal implications that stretch beyond the financial implications. We noted that the virtual meeting provided accessibility (including for international participants) and that it also provided opportunity for increased engagement among people who have responsibility caring for others, but this is not a feasible option given the additional labor required to run an in-person or hybrid meeting; this fact is worth noting as it will have implications for the 2022 budget. With all of these factors in mind, we do not recommend this proposal.

Next, we discussed developing a policy for accumulating and drawing from the Society’s reserves. The conversation around developing this policy began before the COVID-19 pandemic. Now, due to the continuing impacts of the pandemic and the related uncertainty (e.g., increased cost of hybrid meetings), and continually changing costs, we do not recommend establishing this policy yet. The BFA committee is, however, working on establishing a policy, and notes that other organizations are also revisiting and evaluating their policies around reserves at this time. One idea is to build toward an endowment to fund fellowships, with the understanding that the purpose of our cash reserves as a nonprofit is to weather the volatility, but our long-term plan is to endow our Society’s priorities.

Finally, BFA discussed the Committee on Social Action's request to integrate their suggestions into future annual meetings. These suggestions included a budget of \$ 1,500 to support a sustained presence in the host city in the form of a speaker series beginning in the months leading up to the annual meeting and culminating in a plenary at the annual meeting (as one possible example). The BFA Committee noted that the Committee on Social Action was intended to collaborate with divisions and not have a budget itself. Instead, we recommend the CSA work with divisions who have access to the division sponsored projects budget to fund initiatives like the one proposed by the CSA.

In our conversation with the auditors, they discussed the audit report, which indicated an unqualified opinion giving reasonable assurance our financial statements were presented without material misstatement. Independent of this opinion, the auditors noted that we appeared to be in relatively strong financial shape relative to similar-sized nonprofits. This was good news, as the BFA committee has gone to great lengths to attempt to cut costs for the Society. Some cost-saving recommendations worth noting, which also have a positive environmental impact, include eliminating the printed Call for Papers posters, printed membership renewal campaign, and printed final program, as well as eliminating registration bags.

As for the 2021 budget, the BFA committee was happy to see that we significantly decreased the projected deficit, going from a projected deficit of \$ 231,984 to \$ 77,732. We recognize this is still a substantial deficit, and anticipate continuing financial challenges and necessary restraint due to the impact of the coronavirus pandemic and virtual annual meetings for the near future.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "David J. Luke". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "D" and "L".

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