

ANNUAL REPORT OF THE MEETING MANAGER

Michele Koontz

July 31, 2026

I. 2026 ANNUAL MEETING

I am pleased to report that **477 attendees** have registered for the Annual Meeting.

- 220 (**46%**) are professionals
- 237 (**50%**) are students/unemployed/emeritus
- 20 (**4%**) received an Annual Meeting registration fee exemption

For comparison (at the time of my report):

- 439 in 2025 (Chicago)
- 535 in 2024 (Montréal)
- 579 in 2023 (Philadelphia)
- 480 in 2022 (Los Angeles)
- 769 in 2021 (fully virtual)
- 120 in 2020 (half-day complimentary virtual)
- 995 in 2019 (New York City)

We have scheduled:

- 88 sessions with 349 papers
- 11 panels featuring 44 panelists
- 6 critics, and
- 1 plenary speaker

In comparison, the 2025 meeting featured 83 sessions with 322 papers, 11 panels with 52 panelists, 3 critics, and 1 plenary speaker.

II. 2026 HOTEL ROOM RATES

SSSP received a favorable sleeping room rate of \$239 single/double/triple/quad plus tax per night.

The original contracted room block totaled **745 room nights**. Pursuant to the contract, the Society exercised its option to reduce the room block by **80 room nights** prior to the Annual Meeting, resulting in a revised contracted room block of **665 room nights**.

As of July 31, 2026, our pickup is **671 room nights (101% of the revised contracted room block)**. Under the terms of the contract, attrition is calculated on a nightly basis, with an allowable **20% reduction from each night's revised room block** before attrition charges apply.

Based on our current pickup, I do not anticipate that the Society will incur attrition charges.

III. 2026 MEMBERSHIP DUES

As of July 31, 2026, **total membership** (including lapsed members) is **1,326**, reflecting a **9.05% decline** (132 members) compared to the same time last year. **Current membership** (2026+) is **915**, an increase of **7.02%** (60 members) over 2025.

<u>7/31/26</u>	<u>7/31/25</u>	<u>7/31/24</u>	<u>7/14/23</u>	<u>7/16/22</u>
2026+: 915	2025+: 855	2024+: 1,088	2023+: 1,079	2022+: 1,202
2025: 411	2024: 603	2023: 522	2022: 599	2021: 747
Total: 1,326	Total: 1,458	Total: 1,610	Total: 1,678	Total: 1,949

Although current membership has increased from the previous year, the continued decline in total membership reflects ongoing challenges facing professional associations, including member retention, economic pressures, and reduced institutional support.

IV. ACCESSIBILITY ISSUES

SSSP remains committed to ensuring that the Annual Meeting is as inclusive and accessible as possible for all participants.

In advance of the conference, all registrants were invited to submit accessibility requests by the June 30 deadline to facilitate full participation. Two formal requests were received:

- Access to all-gender restrooms
- A microphone and the possibility of closed captioning screens

A registrant contacted Dr. Muhammed Faisol Olaitan, Chair of the Accessibility Committee, directly and requested an electric scooter. As of the date of this report, the registrant had not followed up with Dr. Olaitan regarding their specific needs and no scooter was rented.

On the registration form, registrants were able to indicate their dietary restrictions. A total of 42 dietary requests were submitted. Vegetarian preferences were the most common request (14), followed by gluten-free needs (7), vegan requests (6), and pescatarian preferences (4). Additional requests included halal or kosher dietary considerations, dairy-free options, and various food allergies or ingredient restrictions, including shellfish, nuts, soy, and other allergens.

The Accessibility Committee asked me to investigate the cost of providing closed captioning for the SSSP Business Meeting, Town Hall, Presidential Address, and Awards Ceremony. I met with a representative from Karasch regarding virtual live captioning services. While the charge for this type of captioning service was nominal for approximately 6.5 hours of coverage (\$1,066), the required audio-visual equipment, dedicated internet connection, dedicated technician in the meeting room, and associated labor costs were significant. Providing live captioning for all four sessions would cost approximately \$12,000 this year.

To promote accessibility and inclusion throughout the conference, written guidelines were posted on the SSSP website and distributed to all program participants. These guidelines addressed topics such as accessible presentations, visual materials, air quality and service animals, accessible seating, sign and voice interpreting, audio equipment, and fostering inclusive discussions.

The Board voted to offer the opportunity for remote presentation, with paid registration, for individuals with disabilities and individuals with medical conditions for which a medical professional would advise against in-person attendance. Two program participants will participate remotely under this policy, at a total cost of \$1,856.

Additionally, the Board recommended that individuals who registered but are fearful of traveling submit a written copy of their paper(s) to be distributed and read during their scheduled session(s). No participants opted to have their papers read on their behalf.

Area of Rescue Assistance

Clearly marked Areas of Rescue Assistance will be established on all levels of the conference space. In the event of a hotel evacuation during meeting hours, hotel staff will check these areas for attendees requiring assistance.

Comfort Zone

The Comfort Zone will be located in the New Amsterdam Room on the 9th floor. This space is available to all attendees, no matter where they are staying. Attendees are encouraged to use this room to relax, reflect, and re-energize and to please silence all devices and refrain from phone conversations, meetings, or social gatherings in this space.

All-Gender Restrooms

All-Gender Restrooms will be provided as follows:

- 2nd floor Thursday, Friday, and Sunday
- 3rd floor Saturday-Sunday
- 5th floor Saturday
- 9th floor Thursday-Sunday

Men's restrooms and women's restrooms will be available on the 4th floor. All attendees are welcome to use the restroom that best aligns with their gender identity. Signage will clearly mark these facilities, and registration workers will help ensure signage remains intact throughout the meeting.

Lactation Room

The Lactation Room will be located in the Nederlander Room on the 9th floor. This designated space is for attendees with young children to privately care for their children's needs. Babies, nursing or not, are welcome in sessions. This room is not available for conversations or meetings.

V. ANNUAL MEETING EXEMPTION POLICY

Twenty annual meeting exemptions were requested and granted this year (21 in 2025, 20 in 2024, 17 in 2023, and 11 in 2022).

Current Exemption Policy

All session participants (except for those listed under "2" below) must be current members (they may join on acceptance of their presentation) of the Society and must register for the annual meeting by June 1.

The Administrative Office processes all qualified exemption requests for conference registration in the order received. In addition, the Program Chair notifies the Administrative Officer when they approve a direct request.

All exemption requests must be submitted by May 15. Exemptions from paying registration fees will be considered for:

1. Non-students who are unemployed and/or receiving monthly financial assistance to meet living expenses.
2. Program participants from community, labor, and comparable organizations working on social problems or social justice issues who have been invited by a session organizer to serve on a panel or to make a presentation. The exemption applies only to one individual – the paper presenter – when there are multiple authors on the paper.
3. Non-U.S. and non-Canadian scholars residing in economically disadvantaged countries who without these funds would be unable to attend the meeting.
4. Co-authors of papers who will not be attending the meeting. One of the co-authors must be a paid registrant. Both co-authors must pay if both expect to attend the meeting.
5. Persons excused by direct request of the Program Chair.

VI. AUDIO-VISUAL

LCD projectors and screens will be available for all traditional/regular sessions. Panels, Papers in the Round, Works in Progress, Research Feedback Forum, and Critical Dialogue sessions will not have audio-visual equipment.

Presenters and/or session organizers must bring their own laptop and necessary adapters (e.g., Apple or HDMI connection cords) for all traditional/regular sessions. SSSP does not supply laptops or cables for use.

To avoid disruptions, presenters are encouraged to save their presentations to a thumb drive in case they need to use another participant's computer. Powered speakers for audio will not be available for general session use; however, one powered speaker will be provided as an accessibility accommodation. Presenters are strongly discouraged from including short video clips, as audio may be difficult for the audience to hear, particularly for accessibility purposes.

During contract negotiations, the hotel agreed to provide complimentary wireless internet access in all conference meeting spaces. To preserve bandwidth for participants presenting remotely under accessibility accommodations, we will ask attendees to refrain from high-bandwidth activities (e.g., streaming videos or holding Zoom meetings) during sessions.

In accordance with my Meeting Manager duties, I am required to obtain a minimum of three audio-visual bids. This year, six companies were contacted. Three companies submitted proposals, one declined due to availability, and two did not respond.

Obtaining multiple proposals provides the opportunity to compare pricing, services, and available options. The competitive bidding process also strengthened our position during negotiations and helped secure significant cost savings while maintaining the necessary level of service for the Annual Meeting.

After negotiations, the most favorable quote was submitted by Encore, the in-house A/V provider. Their initial quote was \$93,877. After extensive negotiations, the majority of the equipment rental was comped, and SSSP will receive a 75% discount on equipment rental for accessibility accommodations, the Presidential Address, and the Awards Ceremony. Additionally, I negotiated the removal of the 25% administration fee. The total projected A/V cost is approximately \$41,177.

Projected A/V Costs:

- Equipment Rental: \$2,465.50
- Rigging Equipment: \$30.25
- Labor (Setup Charges and Operator Labor): \$36,445
- Accessibility Accommodations: \$2,236.25

As previously noted, two program participants will present remotely in accordance with SSSP's accessibility policy. The additional cost of supporting remote presentations (including the use of a Meeting Owl Pro video conferencing device and a dedicated hard wired internet connection in one meeting room) is \$1,856. This cost is in addition to the LCD projector package (\$343.75). Each session organizer is responsible for providing a Zoom link to the remote presenter. One presenter will have an audio package (\$380) for their presentation.

Historical Audio-Visual Costs:

- 2025 (Chicago): \$33,641
- 2024 (Montréal): \$28,183 (USD)
- 2023 (Philadelphia): \$33,662
- 2022 (Los Angeles): \$34,543
- 2019 (New York City): \$31,518

VII. AWARDS CEREMONY

The Awards Ceremony will include the presentations of the Arlene Kaplan Daniels Paper Award, Beth B. Hess Memorial Scholarship, C. Wright Mills Award, Doris Wilkinson Faculty Leadership Award, Indigenous Peoples' Social Justice Award, Joseph B. Gittler Award, Kathleen S. Lowney Mentoring Award, Lee Founders Award, Racial/Ethnic Minority Graduate Fellowship, Thomas C. Hood Social Action Award, and the Student Paper Competition winners.

Thanks to the Board's earlier decision to provide electronic certificates to each student paper competition winner and the Beth B. Hess Memorial Scholarship Fund winner, SSSP was able to reduce both costs and the amount of time needed for certificate preparation and distribution.

Action Item: To further streamline the awards process and reduce costs, provide electronic certificates to all major award winners and honorable mention recipients.

VIII. CATERING

During contract negotiations, the hotel agreed to a 10% discount on the 2024 food and beverage (F&B) prices. The F&B minimum is \$40,000. When factoring in the 25% service charge (no 8.875% sales tax, as SSSP is exempt in New York), the total commitment is \$50,000. This year, the Society will spend approximately \$65,000, including fees.

Catering prices are exceptionally high. While attendees may not be aware of these costs, I want the Board to understand the challenges involved in planning each catered event. Many of our attendees are health-conscious, and follow vegetarian, vegan, gluten-free, or other specialized diets. Considerable time is spent developing menus that are both cost-effective and inclusive while meeting the hotel's catering requirements.

As previously reported, the Board voted to discontinue the Thursday Arrival Meet & Greet Reception and instead provide hors d'oeuvres and a complimentary beer, wine, and soda open bar during the Friday Welcoming Reception and Saturday Division-Sponsored Reception.

Action Item: Given the Society's financial challenges and the need to further reduce costs, discontinue the Thursday Meet & Greet Reception until the Society's financial position improves.

Catering Examples:

Welcoming Reception (Friday)

95 guests

NYC Flatbread Pizza Station (includes vegan, vegetarian, gluten-free)

Mediterranean Station (includes vegan, vegetarian, gluten-free)

Beer, Wine, and Soda Bar

Two bartender fees (hotel requires one bartender for every 70 guests)

Food: \$7,256 | Beer, Wine, Soda Bar: \$4,706 | Total: \$11,962

New Member Breakfast (Saturday)

70 guests

Breakfast Table Buffet (Sliced fresh fruit and berries; Muffins, croissants, bagels; Fruit preserves, sweet butter, cream cheese; Crispy bacon; Farm fresh scrambled eggs; Breakfast potatoes; orange, grapefruit, and apple juice; Starbucks coffee and assorted Tazo teas)

Total: \$6,378

*Division-Sponsored Reception (Saturday)

120 guests

Pasta Station (includes vegan, vegetarian, gluten-free)

Mediterranean Station (includes vegan, vegetarian, gluten-free)

Beer, Wine, and Soda Bar

Two bartender fees (hotel requires one bartender for every 70 guests)

Food: \$9,788 | Beer, Wine, Soda Bar: \$5,800 | Total: \$15,588

**Fourteen divisions are contributing a combined \$2,425 from their division budgets toward the reception.*

Daily Hospitality Offerings

Complimentary continental breakfast will be available each morning, along with hot and cold beverages and afternoon snacks. Grab-and-go items include KIND bars, individual bags of chips, and/or trail mix.

- Thursday: 2:00pm-6:00pm (**50 guests, cost \$2,475**)
- Friday: 8:00am-10:00am (**65 guests, cost \$4,607**) and 2:00pm-4:00pm (**65 guests, cost \$3,004**)
- Saturday: 7:00am-9:00am (**40 guests, cost \$2,835**) and 2:00pm-4:00pm (**75 guests, cost \$3,431**)
- Sunday: 8:00am-10:00am (**40 guests, cost \$2,835**) and 1:00pm-3:00pm (**30 guests, cost \$1,800**)

IX. EXHIBIT INFORMATION

The Scholar's Choice will once again be organizing and managing our book exhibit without cost to the Society. Members interested in having their book displayed were instructed to contact their publisher. Please note that publishers pay a fee to display with The Scholar's Choice and may not have the marketing budget necessary to honor all requests, particularly for older titles.

PM Press will be exhibiting again this year. They amplify the voices of radical authors, artists, and activists. Their aim is to deliver bold political ideas and vital stories to all walks of life and arm the dreamers to demand the impossible.

Bristol University Press, and its imprint Policy Press, will not be exhibiting this year. However, they are sending some materials to be displayed and are offering a 50% discount off Sociology titles throughout August.

X. MOBILE APP

Based on the Board's decision to no longer print programs, it is essential to provide a mobile app that is easy to use. Given our positive experience with Core-Apps in the past, we contracted with them for our mobile app needs. IT Specialist Rachel Cogburn worked tirelessly to customize the mobile app to assure its ease of use.

XI. REGISTRATION REMINDERS

The Board approved a policy requiring program participants to register by June 1 in order to remain on the program. The Board also requested that program participants receive at least three reminders prior to the June 1 deadline.

This year, the Administrative Office sent four targeted email reminders to program participants, asked session organizers twice to contact their participants who had not registered, and Program Chair Hadi Khoshnevis sent an additional reminder encouraging registration.

On July 6, the Administrative Office sent a final, personalized message to fifty-three paper authors and their session organizer(s), stating that failure to register by July 10 would result in removal from the program. On July 13, forty-two program participants were removed for non-registration.

The growing number of missed deadlines and the increasing follow-up required across many organizational functions continue to be a concern. Given the Society's reduced staffing and the potential for additional personnel changes, the Administrative Office recommends a more streamlined approach to reminders.

Action Item: Change the date for program participants to register from June 1 to June 15 (consistent with the American Sociological Association). The additional two weeks would provide program participants with more time to register while reducing the need for multiple follow-up communications.

Action Item: The Administrative Office will send two targeted email reminders to program participants, with one serving as the final reminder and deadline. If no response is received by the deadline, the Administrative Office will proceed accordingly. Session organizers will be asked twice to contact their participants who have not registered, and the Program Chair will send one reminder.

Action Item: If the registration deadline is changed to June 15, the Annual Meeting exemption request deadline will change from May 15 to June 1.

XII. REGISTRATION WORKERS

Eight graduate student members will work at the registration desk. In exchange for working 12 hours, they will receive a complimentary shared hotel room for the nights of August 6-8.

XIII. SSSP MERCHANDISE

The Board approved merchandise items and pricing for tote bags, magnets, and stickers. SSSP merchandise was available for purchase online through July 16.

Available Items

- [Tote Bag](#) - \$10 each (minimum order 150, 47 sold)
- [Magnet](#) - \$5 each (minimum order 125, 29 sold)
- [Sticker](#) - \$3 each (ordered 100, 33 sold)

Unsold items will be available for purchase at the registration desk.

Additionally, these items will continue to be available for purchase via the website through December 31, 2026. Individuals who order via the website will pay shipping charges (\$9.95 US/Canada and \$14.95 International). Please note: All SSSP merchandise sales are non-refundable, regardless of the circumstances.

A limited quantity of buttons from the previous Annual Meeting will also be available for purchase.

President Sarah Jane Brubaker will reimburse the Society for any difference between sales revenue and the cost of the tote bags, magnets, and stickers.

XIV. SPONSORS

A special thanks to our sponsors for their financial contributions to program activities: Virginia Commonwealth University, L. Douglas Wilder School of Government and Public Affairs; University of Delaware, Department of Sociology & Criminal Justice; and Rhodes College Academic Affairs.

XV. UPDATE ON POTENTIAL BALTIMORE VENUES FOR THE 2028 ANNUAL MEETING

At the Board's direction, Elroi and I have explored university campuses and community spaces as potential alternatives to the traditional conference hotel model. While this approach may offer cost-saving opportunities, the evaluation process has required additional follow-up. Conference hotels and university venues each have different operational models. Conference hotels typically coordinate meeting space, guest rooms, catering, and audiovisual services through established event operations, while university venues may involve different processes and timelines for obtaining information and confirming services.

Coppin State University

Elroi and I conducted a virtual site visit of available spaces, including auditoriums, gymnasiums, dining facilities, classrooms, and other spaces. While some spaces could accommodate larger sessions, several of these would not be feasible for smaller breakout sessions.

During discussions, we were informed that Coppin State University's current restroom configurations do not meet Maryland state requirements to designate or provide the all-gender restroom accommodations requested by SSSP.

Because the availability of all-gender restrooms is an important component of SSSP's commitment to creating an inclusive and accessible meeting environment, SSSP is unable to move forward with Coppin State University as a potential site for the 2028 Annual Meeting.

Morgan State University

Unfortunately, Morgan State University was unable to accommodate our event, as the campus is already committed to an annual event during our potential meeting dates.

University of Maryland Baltimore County (UMBC)

UMBC provided a preliminary cost estimate of \$55,630 for meeting space, audiovisual services for the University Center, housekeeping, parking, signage, and technical support. The estimate does not include catering, shuttle transportation, additional audio-visual services outside the University Center, or lodging, as on-campus housing is not available during our potential meeting dates. The university also indicated that pricing is based on 2026 rates and is subject to change.

Additional information obtained during the review included:

- No food and beverage minimum is required; groups may select from several approved caterers or use another caterer of their choice.
- Public Wi-Fi is included at no charge; hardwired internet is available for an additional fee (not included in cost estimate).
- All meeting spaces are ADA accessible.
- Classroom assignments cannot be confirmed until March 2028, when academic space is released.
- Parking, university-produced signage, and technical support are additional required expenses.
- Shuttle transportation between venues was identified as an additional cost that would need to be incorporated into the budget, if needed.
- Some employees are unionized; our contact will obtain additional information regarding applicable labor requirements.
- Some all-gender restrooms are available on campus.

Preliminary Cost Comparison

	UMBC	2026 Conference Hotel
Meeting Room Rental	\$31,300	Included with room block/F&B minimum
Audio-visual Services (University Center only)	\$13,160	\$41,177 (2026 audio-visual needs)
Housekeeping	\$9,720	Included
Parking	\$900	Attendee pays fee
Campus Directional Signage	\$550	N/A
Subtotal	\$55,630	\$41,177

Additional considerations include the timing of the meeting, which may coincide with the start of the academic year, limited food service options if classes haven't started, and the need for additional planning related to accessibility, signage, and attendee navigation if meeting activities occur across multiple campus buildings.

Non-University Venues

Kelsey Whitaker, Assistant to the Administrative Officer, explored non-university spaces, including the Reginald F. Lewis Museum and Baltimore Center Stage. She made initial contact with both spaces; however, after no response was received, I followed up but was unable to obtain additional information.

Meeting Manager's Assessment

The exploration of university and community-based venues has provided valuable information regarding alternative approaches to hosting the Annual Meeting. University-based meeting models may provide opportunities for cost savings and offer a different meeting environment for SSSP members. Additional information is needed regarding catering, transportation, hotel accommodations, labor requirements, and other operational considerations before a complete comparison can be made.

XVI. CLOSING COMMENTS

I worked with Jacob Marks, Senior Sales Manager, to negotiate our hotel contract. Last week, Elroi and I were made aware of a renovation that would occur during our meeting dates.

The hotel advised that carpet replacement was scheduled for the 8th and 9th floor meeting space. The planned schedule was as follows:

- 8th floor: Monday, August 3 – Friday, August 7
- 9th floor: Monday, August 10 – Friday, August 28

Given the potential disruption to presenters, attendees, and meeting operations, we requested that the hotel postpone the 8th floor carpet installation until after the Annual Meeting concluded. We also requested confirmation that no carpet installation activities or related materials would occur on the 9th floor during the Annual Meeting.

Ultimately, the hotel was unable to postpone the project; however, working with the hotel, we were able to relocate affected meetings and move sessions to other floors. The hotel also confirmed that no carpet installation activities or related materials would occur on the 9th floor during the Annual Meeting.

No concessions were offered by the hotel; however, the hotel worked with SSSP to minimize the impact on meeting operations.

I worked closely with Gerry Rodriguez, Senior Event Manager, to:

- arrange hotel reservations for officers, VIPs, and staff
- finalize catering for all food functions and meeting room setups
- order the twenty complimentary Westin Sleep Well amenity boxes (per our hotel contract)
- ensure that all items in the hotel contract are honored

Gerry was highly knowledgeable and responsive throughout the planning process and provided valuable assistance with menu selections and meeting room setups.

I appreciated the opportunity to work with President Sarah Jane Brubaker; Program Chair Hadi Khoshnevis; Executive Officer Elroi J. Windsor; Assistant to the Administrative Officer Kelsey Whitaker; and Graduate Research Associate and Webmaster Helen Wilds. Their dedication and hard work were instrumental in making the 2026 Annual Meeting a success.

I would also like to extend a special thank you to Information Technology Specialist Rachel Cogburn, who worked with SSSP for almost 10 years and whose last day was July 24, 2026.

Finally, I would like to thank the Board for giving me another opportunity to serve as Meeting Manager. It has been a privilege to work alongside you this year. I look forward to continuing this service next year in Chicago under Dr. David G. Embrick's leadership.