

**Society for the Study of Social Problems
Council of Divisions Report, August 2026**

I. Update on the 2026–2027 Chairperson-Elect, Council of the Divisions Election

The Council elected Janelle Pham. Congratulations Janelle! Janelle will serve as Chairperson-Elect for 2026-2027 and Chair for 2027-2030.

II. Update on Division Rebranding and Consolidation

From August 2024 – August 2025, 6 divisions merged, resulting in a reduction from 23 to 20 divisions. From August 2025 – August 2026, 0 divisions merged. 4 divisions (2 pairs) are currently considering merging.

Challenges/drawbacks to merging:

- 1) Division members want to maintain identity and cohesion of their division – mergers require new division name/identity.
- 2) Mergers require agreement among chairs on a new division leadership structure – some divisions are functioning well and adding more chairs into the mix may complicate the leadership structure.
- 3) Chairs of both divisions need to agree to the merger. Sometimes the chair of one division is open to a merger, but the chair of the other division declines.

During the 2025-26 academic year, the Council requested, and the Board approved, a **tiered distribution of resources as one alternative to division consolidation**. This approach allows divisions to maintain their independent identities even if they are smaller, while still contributing to the overall goal of reducing expenditures.

The new allocation of division-sponsored sessions at the Annual Meeting reflects a **reduction from 3 solo sessions and 7 co-sponsored sessions for each division**, and is as follows:

Division Size	Session Allocation
Large (126+ members)	3 solo sessions and 5 co-sponsored sessions
Medium (76–125 members)	2 solo sessions and 4 co-sponsored sessions
Small (50–75 members)	1 solo session and 3 co-sponsored sessions
Unsustainable (below 50 members)	0 solo sessions and 3 co-sponsored sessions

The new division budget allocation reflects a **reduction from \$600 for each division**, and is as follows:

Division Size	Budget
Large (126+ members)	\$500
Medium (76-125 members)	\$400
Small (50-75 members)	\$300

III. *Divisions by Membership Year Report, July 2026 (attached)*

Large (126+ members)	
255	Critical Race and Ethnic Study
193	Gender, Sexual Behavior, Politics, and Communities
138	Crime and Justice
130	Community, Research, and Practice
Medium (76–125 members)	
117	Poverty, Class, and Inequality
116	Conflict, Social Action, and Change
104	Global
103	Social Problems Theory
101	Law and Society
94	Health, Health Policy, and Health Services
86	Sociology, Social Work, and Social Welfare
85	Educational Problems
78	Disability, Mental Wellness, and Social Justice
Small (50–75 members)	
75	Labor Studies
72	Family, Aging, and Youth
68	Teaching Social Problems
66	Institutional Ethnography
63	Environment and Technology
Unsustainable (below 50 members)	
32	Drinking and Drugs
28	Sport, Leisure, and the Body

Two divisions, Drinking and Drugs and Sport, Leisure, and the Body, are in the unsustainable category, maintaining a membership of less than 50 for at least 2 consecutive years.

The Roles and Responsibilities of Division Chairs states: “The Executive Officer may initiate efforts to review the viability of any division that fails to comply with one or more of the following requirements: (1) have at least 50 members for two years running...”

Chairs of the two unsustainable divisions have been asked to merge or sunset their divisions or submit an action plan to reach sustainability.

Sanjay Tewari, Chair of Sport, Leisure, and the Body, submitted a plan to increase membership by December 2026, especially by recruiting members from the Research Committee on the Sociology of Sports of the Indian Sociological Association. Honoria Guarino, Chair of Drinking and Drugs, indicated receptiveness to merging with another division, however her term ends on 8/8/2026 and she did not hold an election for a new division chair.

Shannon and Elroi agree that the current procedure for handling unsustainable divisions is problematic because it requires a top-down intervention from the Executive Officer. The Council will create a task force at the 8/9/2026 meeting to propose an updated approach to be voted on within the Council of Divisions and the Board of Directors. The Council will also make a recommendation for handling the current situation with Drinking and Drugs being below sustainability and not having an incoming chair.

IV. *Summary of Division Activities, 2025–2026 (attached)*

The following division chairs completed all required tasks for 2025-26, which includes submitting a budget on time, representing the division at most council meetings, reviewing/editing the division mission statement on the website, holding elections if needed, coordinating sessions for the annual meeting, scheduling a division meeting, and coordinating division awards (without excessive reminders):

Sara Tehrani, Conflict, Social Action, and Change

Rafia Mallick, Jennifer Carpenter, and Kelly Tabbutt, Crime and Justice

Marta Maria Maldonado and Foroogh Mohammadi, Critical Race and Ethnic Study

Jacqueline Zalewski, Educational Problems

Angus Nurse, Environment and Technology

Kat Fuller and Hannah Regan, Gender, Sexual Behavior, Politics, and Communities

Beatriz Padilla, Global

Raja Staggers-Hakim and Jennifer Bulanda, Health, Health Policy, and Health Services

Hans-Peter de Ruiter, Institutional Ethnography

Michael Branch and Sino Esthappan, Law and Society

Joshua Stout, Social Problems Theory

Erica Jablonski and Miriam Landsman, Sociology, Social Work, and Social Welfare

Janelle Pham, Teaching Social Problems

Chairs of 6 divisions did not submit a budget:

Sarah Stanlick, Community, Research, and Practice

Melinda Leigh Maconi and Muhammed Faisol Olaitan, Disability, Mental Wellness, and Social Justice

Honorio Guarino, Drinking and Drugs

Allison Jendry James and Ami Frost, Family, Aging, and Youth

Leticia Morales and Sara Maani, Labor Studies

Sanjay Tewari, Sport, Leisure, and the Body

Other tasks completed/not completed can be reviewed in the Summary of Division Activities. Some tasks are completed only after numerous reminders from the Administrative Office and/or Chair of the Council.

V. *Processes for Reducing Administrative Burden of the Divisions and Addressing Nonresponsive Chairs*

The Council of Divisions is implementing several steps to reduce the administrative burden of the divisions:

- 1) The Council approved changing the language in the Roles and Responsibilities of Divisions Chairs Division Chair Calendar (p. 16-18) to specific dates for each task instead of “in response to request.” This change facilitates independent planning on the part of division chairs rather than waiting for instruction and deadlines from the administrative office.
- 2) Sarah Paquette, an undergraduate student at the University of Central Florida, will work as an intern for Fall 2026 with Shannon Carter, Chair of the Council of Divisions, to facilitate coordination of division tasks. Sarah will create a set of calendar invitations that outline due dates, send reminders to division chairs, and complete other tasks as needed. The position is renewable for Spring 2027.

The Council of Divisions is also implementing several steps to address nonresponsive chairs to further reduce the administrative burden of the divisions:

- 3) The Council approved expanding the criteria for replacing a division chair in the Roles and Responsibilities of Division Chairs to include all tasks required of division chairs (see attachment).
- 4) The Council will create a task force at the 8/9/2026 meeting to review the process for replacing a division chair. The current process involves a top-down model initiated by the Chair of the Council of Divisions to the Executive Officer and Administrative Officer. It does not explain how necessary steps will be completed, including identifying candidates for an emergency election. Any recommendations to change the process will be voted on within the Council of Divisions and the Board of Directors before December 2026.

VI. *Concerns of the Divisions*

- 1) As outlined above, the Council has voted in favor of changing the criteria for replacing a division chair and the division chair calendar in the Roles and Responsibilities of Division Chairs.
- 2) The Council also voted in favor of changing the language of the division awards from “Student Paper Competition and Outstanding Scholarship Awards” to “Student Paper Competition and Other Division Awards” to better reflect the range of division awards (e.g., scholar-activist, scholarship, article, book, etc.).

Action Item: The Council requests that the Board vote on relevant sections of the Proposed Changes to the Roles and Responsibilities of Division Chairs (attached).

- 3) Current rules and processes for the Student Paper Competition are unclear, resulting in unnecessary labor by division chairs, award committee members, and the administrative office. Council members Rafia Mallick and Beatriz Padilla proposed revisions that are on the 8/9 Council meeting agenda that will be brought to the Board of Directors once approved.

VII. *Gratitude*

The Division Chairs are deeply grateful for the support provided by the administrative office, especially Michele Koontz. We are grateful for the guidance and support of Executive Officer Elroi Windsor. We appreciate the collaboration and work of Hadi Khoshnevis as Program Chair, and support from President Sarah Jane Brubaker and the Board of Directors. As Council Chair, I want to extend my gratitude to the Division Chairs whose hard work contributes to member engagement and the overall success of the Society.

Submitted by:
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