

**American Academy of Religion  
Governance Task Force  
A Proposal to Restructure Governance and the Board of Directors  
Version 5  
October 2009**

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*Charge:* The Governance Task Force will study the adequacy of the current AAR by-laws and governance practices and make recommendations to the Board concerning how the AAR and its regions might organize and govern themselves so as to best serve their members. The objective of the Task Force is to achieve the ideal balance among the following values: representation of the membership as a whole, representation and protection of women and minorities within the profession, representation of the regions, the expertise required to fulfill the fiduciary responsibilities of the Board, the ability of the Board to conduct its business efficiently, and the need to give members of the AAR ample opportunity to influence and contest important decisions made by the AAR Board and staff.

### **I. Introduction to the Proposal**

The Governance Task Force was formed by the AAR Board in fall of 2007. The Task Force has met four times since then: in March 2008, in December 2008 (with Dr. Bill Ryan), in February 2009, and in August 2009. In addition to Task Force meetings, the group organized a Board discussion of governance with Bill Ryan in April 2009.

As stated in our last reports to the Board, both written and oral, the Task Force is persuaded that many of the AAR's current practices and structures no longer serve the best interests of our organization. The following problems need to be solved:

The Academy's bylaws are outdated and do not conform to current non profit standards.

The Academy's attempt to address the concerns of marginalized constituencies by granting Board membership to the chairs of certain standing committees has proven less effective and more cumbersome than one would have hoped.

The Academy's Board is large, unwieldy, expensive to gather, and lacks institutional agility.

The Academy elects and appoints Directors using processes that are ill-suited to an organization of our size, complexity, and context.

The Academy's Directors do not rotate on and off the Board in a regular, predictable manner.

The Academy's Board not only has structural problems but also uses anachronistic practices.

The Academy's committee structure is in need of a comprehensive review.

Beyond these specific concerns, the Task Force is persuaded that the work of the AAR does not always conform to current “best practices” for non-profits or professional associations. Hence, in its deliberations, the Task Force not only sought to honor the AAR’s longstanding commitments to representation and democratic practice, but also sought to identify and recommend excellent practices used by other scholarly groups, many of them members of the American Council of Learned Societies.

This proposal aims to solve the problems we have identified and to adopt a number of current best practices. We believe that the proposal preserves the values stated in our Charge, encourages democratic practice in the AAR, encourages a governing structure and style that are more readily deliberative in character, and does so in a manner that is fiscally responsible. The proposal puts in place the following goods:

An AAR Board on which all but one of the Directors are elected from the entire membership.

A proactive strategy for bringing the concerns of marginalized constituencies and other members of the Academy to the Board.

New bylaws that conform to current association / non-profit best practices.

A Board that is smaller, easier and less expensive to convene, and more institutionally agile.

A Board that is intentionally more accountable to the AAR membership.

Standardized terms and the predictable rotation of Directors on and off the Board.

Board representation for three constituencies – the Regions, the Program Units, and Students.

A revised term of office for the Presidential Line (from four years to three years).

A system of Board Orientation, Board Self Review, and Committee Assessment.

A new, more affordable way of managing our annual Leadership Summit.

## **II. A Vision for Governance**

The Board of Directors of the AAR is charged with the following responsibilities:

To set the AAR’s mission and strategy and modify these as needed.

To familiarize itself with, and respond appropriately to, the concerns of AAR members, including especially those belonging to groups that have been marginalized within the profession or in society at large.

To monitor the AAR’s performance and hold its management accountable.

To select, evaluate, support, and if necessary, replace the AAR’s Executive Director.

To develop and conserve the AAR’s resources – its funds, facilities, and people.

To advocate for the AAR and build support for it in the wider community.

While our current Board structure allows for these tasks to be completed, Board meetings tend to be taken up with discussions of management issues such as Committee or Task Force issues and Executive Office tasks, and not with the higher-level duties noted above. The Governance Task Force envisions a Board that is deliberative in character – a Board that tends to all three functions of governance: the fiduciary, the strategic, and the generative. We imagine a governing body whose time is spent in substantial discussions of the nature of the guild, the needs of our members, strategic planning, policy development, program assessment, advocacy, and fiduciary matters. We believe that this sort of governing Board would meet our Academy’s needs and would position it for future growth and development.

### III. Board Structure

We recommend that the AAR Board of Directors be made up of twelve members, as follows: Vice President, President Elect, President, Treasurer, Secretary, Student Director, Program Unit Director, Regions Director, three At-Large Directors, and a special Director who will be appointed to serve as the “Member Advocate.”

### IV. Directors

**President, President Elect, and Vice President:** Service in the Presidential line will be reduced from its current four year commitment (Vice President, President Elect, President, and Immediate Past President) to a three year scheme in which an incumbent is elected as Vice President and then serves two more years – one as President Elect and another as President. The Vice President will be elected by the entire membership. We also propose that the current practice, in which the Vice President runs unopposed for President Elect, and the President Elect runs unopposed for President, be eliminated. Once the Vice President is elected, he or she will automatically continue as President Elect and President without further elections.

**Treasurer:** An AAR member will be elected as Treasurer by the entire AAR membership. He or she will serve a three year, non-renewable term.

**Secretary:** An AAR member will be elected Secretary by the entire AAR membership. He or she will serve a three year, non-renewable term.

**Student Director:** A student member will be elected from the entire AAR membership as the Student Director. The Student Director will serve a two-year, non-renewable term. (This is identical to current practice. The stipulation of a two year term is due to the fact that most of our Student Directors have completed their courses of study within two years of being elected.)

**Program Unit Director:** An AAR member with experience as a Program Unit Chair will be elected by the entire AAR membership as the Program Unit Director. The Program Unit Director will serve a three year, non-renewable term.

**Regions Director:** An AAR member with experience in the leadership of an AAR Region (as Regionally Elected Director, President, Vice President, or Treasurer from a particular AAR Region) will be elected by the entire AAR membership as the Regions Director on the Board. The Regions Director will serve a three year, non-renewable term.

**At-Large Directors:** Three AAR members will be elected from the entire membership as At-Large Directors, each of whom will serve a three-year, non-renewable term.

**“Member Advocate”**: Our Task Force has spent a good deal of time discussing the notion of member representation and the struggles that particular groups have had to undergo to gain the ear of the Board and the Executive Office. We are committed to vigorous representation strategies that enable all our members to have an appropriate voice in AAR policymaking and to contest decisions that have been made. In short, our hope is to do better at: 1.) Identifying underrepresented constituencies among the membership and 2.) Finding ways to help such constituencies communicate their concerns to the Board.

The AAR’s current solution to the representation challenge has been to set up standing committees (whose chairs have Board seats) and task forces that represent important constituents (e.g., the Committee on the Status of Women in the Profession, the Committee on the Status of Racial and Ethnic Minorities in the Profession, the Graduate Student Committee and the Student Director, the LGBTIQ Task Force, etc.). In addition to the important efforts of these Working Groups, our Governance Task Force believes that other effective strategies, suited to a smaller deliberative Board, can be created. One such strategy we recommend is to have more members of the Board elected from the entire AAR membership. Another is to encourage our Nominations Committee to continue its excellent efforts to create slates of candidates that represent the rich diversity of the AAR membership. A third strategy is the creation of a Director’s position that is specifically designed to tend to these matters. We have tentatively named this Director the “Member Advocate.”

What role would the “Member Advocate” assume? We want to assign one Director the responsibility of reporting to the Board on a regular basis on issues pertaining to constituencies that need to be heard from. For instance, the “Member Advocate” will serve as a liaison from the Board to Working Groups such as the Committee on the Status of Women in the Profession, the Committee on the Status of Racial and Ethnic Minorities in the Profession, the LGBTIQ Task Force, and other Working Groups, each of which represents an important AAR constituency or program focus. The “Member Advocate” will periodically review the Board’s efforts to be responsive to groups that seek to influence and contest its policies, and make recommendations, when necessary, concerning how the AAR can best reach out to its members. While we expect all Directors to demonstrate commitments to just representation and to share their wisdom on such matters, we believe that our history requires us to take this unusual and somewhat aggressive measure.

Ideally, the “Member Advocate” would be an AAR member whose professional experience included work on affirmative action matters, faculty diversity projects, or policymaking with regard to representation issues. The “Member Advocate” would lead the Board’s attempts to communicate more effectively with the membership and would administer the accountability and accessibility recommendations we make below. In order to prevent the undue politicization of the selection of the “Member Advocate,” and in order to avoid the risk that a “Member Advocate” might run for election on a *particular* platform, we recommend that the “Member Advocate” be appointed by the Executive Committee from among the entire AAR membership to serve a three-year term.

The Task Force is mindful that the “Member Advocate” role is somewhat experimental: we feel compelled to address a specific, vexing problem in a constructive, responsible manner. We are similarly mindful, however, that experiments bring varied results (positive, negative, or unexpected) and that wise governing bodies, over time, adjust and revise in the light of experience. Hence, we acknowledge that our “Member Advocate” recommendation may be subject to such revision in the years to come. We are eager to address the representation challenge now. If, in the future, our Board finds even more effective means to address this matter, we would be satisfied indeed.

Two current Directors, the **ACLS Representative** and the **JAAR Editor**, will no longer serve on the Board of Directors. The AAR’s **Executive Director** will serve on the Board in an Ex Officio capacity.

### V. Terms of Service

Every Director’s term will begin on January 1 and end on December 31 three years hence (two years in the case of the Student Director). Graphically, the terms of office across a five year span would look something like this. The solid colored lines show a particular Director’s term of office.

Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Year 5
President	Vice President	President Elect	President	Vice President
President Elect	President	Vice President	President Elect	President
Vice President	President Elect	President	Vice President	President Elect
Secretary	Secretary	Secretary	Secretary	Secretary
Treasurer	Treasurer	Treasurer	Treasurer	Treasurer
Student Director	Student Director	Student Director	Student Director	Student Director
Regions Director	Regions Director	Regions Director	Regions Director	Regions Director
Program Unit Director	Program Unit Director	Program Unit Director	Program Unit Director	Program Unit Director
At-Large Director 1	At-Large Director 1	At-Large Director 1	At-Large Director 1	At-Large Director 1
At-Large Director 2	At-Large Director 2	At-Large Director 2	At-Large Director 2	At-Large Director 2
At-Large Director 3	At-Large Director 3	At-Large Director 3	At-Large Director 3	At-Large Director 3
Member Advocate	Member Advocate	Member Advocate	Member Advocate	Member Advocate

Such an arrangement will facilitate an orderly and predictable process of Directors joining the Board and rotating off the Board. If the staggered terms were coordinated (more on that below), each year four or five Directors would rotate off the Board and four or five new Directors would join the Board. Under this plan, the AAR Board would have a “class / year” system in which a Director’s “class / year” would be designated by his or her last year of Board service. For instance, if Year 1 in the chart above represented calendar year 2009, the three classes would look like this:

- Class of 2009
  - President
  - Secretary
  - Program Unit Director
  - At-Large Director 2
  
- Class of 2010
  - President Elect
  - At-Large Director 3
  - Student Director
  - Regions Director
  
- Class of 2011
  - Vice President
  - Treasurer
  - At-Large Director 1
  - Member Advocate

### VI. Meetings of the Board

Under the current system, the AAR Board of Directors meets twice per year – once on the Friday of the Annual Meeting and once in the spring (in the city where the Annual Meeting is scheduled to meet in the following fall.) Under the new system, the AAR Board of Directors would meet three times per year – once in the fall (in person), once in the winter (via conference call or videoconference), and once in the spring (in person). Under the new system, the Board would NOT meet on the Friday of the Annual Meeting. That day would be reserved for our Leadership Summit, during which AAR Committees and Working Groups would meet. (This gathering would be similar to the experimental Leadership Summit we did in Atlanta in the spring of 2009. More on this below.) The in-person

meetings of the AAR Board would take place in Atlanta or, given the geographical dispersion of Directors, at some central location.

## VII. Committees of the Board

The AAR currently has nearly two dozen standing committees, task forces, juries, and advisory committees. In an attempt to clarify and streamline our governance structures, our Task Force developed two rubrics under which we arrange these varied groups: 1.) Committees of the Board and 2.) Working Groups. Committees of the Board, as we use the term in this report, are committees that are critical to the operations and governance of the AAR. These include the Executive, Finance, Audit, Nominations, Program, and Planning Committees. Working Groups, on the other hand, are groups that are critical to the programming and advocacy of the AAR. These include most of our current committees, juries, task forces, and advisory groups. (See Appendices Two and Four for listings of the current and proposed arrangements.) We propose that the President (following a slightly modified form of our current practice) appoint members of AAR Working Groups. Appointments to Committees of the Board will be made as follows. Each fall the Executive Committee will prepare a slate of candidates to fill open positions (for the following year) on Committees of the Board. This slate will be brought to the entire Board for its consideration. After discussion, when the final slate has been formulated, the Board will vote to appoint the slate of candidates to Committees of the Board. See Appendix 5 for a graphical representation of these Committees. Committees of the Board will include:

**Executive Committee:** Chaired by the President, this body would act on behalf of the Board between meetings. As is now the case, it would also serve as the Personnel Committee. Under the proposal, the Executive Committee will also take on the responsibility for monitoring the effectiveness of AAR governance structures. The Committee will coordinate a Board Orientation program, regular Board Self Reviews, and the Committee Self Review process (see below). Membership includes the President, President Elect, Vice President, Secretary, and the Treasurer. The Executive Committee will be staffed by the Executive Director.

**Finance Committee:** Chaired by the Treasurer, this Committee will oversee the financial aspects of the AAR including the annual budget, investments, and fiscal planning. Membership will include one At-Large Director and three AAR members (who are not Directors). The AAR's Director of Finance and Administration will staff this committee.

**Audit Committee:** Chaired by the President, this Committee will review the annual audit and, as appropriate, recommend its acceptance by the Board. The Committee will meet only once per year, in the fall, by conference call. The call would include, as needed, the AAR's Auditor, the AAR's Director of Finance and Administration, the Executive Director, and the Treasurer. Membership should not overlap with the Finance Committee and should not include the Treasurer. The membership will include the President, the President Elect, and the Vice President, plus one non-Board member (who may or may not be an AAR member) with significant experience in finance.

**Nominations Committee:** This committee is charged with the selection of candidates for all AAR Director positions. Over the past decade, the Nominations Committee has been extraordinarily successful at seeing that women and racial and ethnic minorities have been elected to our Presidential line. Although the work of the Nominations Committee is considerably expanded under the proposal (instead of preparing for two or three elections per year, under the proposal the Committee would have to prepare for four or five) it is expected that the Committee will continue to be diligent about the work of representation. With more Directors elected to the Board, we expect that the Committee will find additional opportunities to bring the rich diversity of the AAR membership to its Board of Directors. In our present bylaws, this important function of the committee is not mentioned.

We recommend that this role of the Committee – to ensure that the rich diversity of the AAR membership is regularly represented in our national elections – be made a part of the official charge of the Nominations Committee.

Under this proposal, the Nominations Committee will be made up of five members, as follows:

- A. Three AAR members who are not on the Board will serve on the Committee. Each will serve a three-year non renewable term. The terms of these three members will be staggered so that each year one of the three leaves the Committee and a new member joins the Committee. In his or her third year of service on the Nominations Committee, the incumbent will serve as Chair of the Nominations Committee. Under this arrangement, the Executive Committee and Board (which appoints persons to Committees of the Board) will have the opportunity to choose at least one member of the Nominations Committee each year.
- B. The immediate past President will serve a single year term as his or her fourth year in the Presidential line. He or she will bring experience of recent governance issues to the Committee and will be well acquainted with AAR members who are potential Directors.
- C. During his or her second and third year of service, an At-Large Director will serve a two year term on the Nominations Committee. This will allow the At-Large Director to become familiar with Board culture and deliberations prior to joining the Committee (during their first year of Board service). The inclusion of this person adds to the Board's input to the Nominations Committee and also brings to the Committee a person who has been elected by the entire AAR membership. This person will be appointed to the Committee as are all other members of Committees of the Board, that is, by the Executive Committee working with the Board.
- D. The Executive Director will staff this committee.

**Program Committee:** The proposal entirely re-conceives the current Program Committee. (The current model has the following membership: The Presidential Line, the Secretary, and three AAR members. The Executive Director chairs the Program Committee.) Under the proposal, the Program Unit Director would chair the Program Committee. Membership would include the Vice President, one At-Large Director, and six other AAR members (who are not Directors), at least four of whom must have had significant Program Unit experience (Program Unit Chair or member of a Program Unit Steering Committee.) The Program Committee will meet in the late fall, just after the Annual Meeting, in Atlanta, and once at another point during the year. The Executive Director will staff this committee.

**Planning Committee:** Chaired by the Executive Director, membership will include the Regions Director, the Student Director, one At-Large Director, and two AAR members (who are not Directors). This Committee is charged with planning in all its phases, including the identification of strategic goals and objectives, the development of time lines and action plans, and the measurement of progress.

### VIII. AAR Working Groups: Committees, Task Forces, and Juries

Serving under the rubric of "Working Groups," AAR committees, task forces, and juries would continue their important work for our members. However, in response to a number of concerns that have been raised, we propose several adjustments to our current practices:

**The appointment process.** We propose that we continue our practice of having the AAR President appoint members of AAR Working Groups. However, we think the current system needs to be modified by adding, as a requirement, consultation between the committee and the President about appointments to the working group. This now occurs unevenly across Working Groups but we think it

needs to be regularized. Under the proposed plan, this will become one of the President's annual duties.

**Terms of service.** Current practice in AAR Working Groups allows a group member to serve two three-year terms (provided they are appointed to a second term by the President). This has led to a number of infelicities. With these issues in mind, we propose that all Working Groups adopt a system in which members serve for a single, non-renewable term of four years.

**The assessment of Working Groups.** In 2001, the AAR Board adopted a plan whereby Working Groups would do regular self evaluations and whereby the Board itself would make judgments about the ongoing usefulness of Working Groups. This plan was never fully enacted. We propose that all AAR Working Groups do regular self evaluations (to be administered by the Executive Committee) in an attempt to improve efficiency, prevent overlap, and better serve the needs of our members. The 2001 plan also called for regular Board Self Review and an orientation plan for Directors. This proposal assumes that these reviews and orientations will be coordinated by the Executive Committee.

**The Leadership Summit.** It has been customary for all AAR Working Groups to meet in Atlanta during the winter or spring of each year. Given the large number of groups, this often meant that we had two or three groups in Atlanta for many weekends in a row. In February 2009, we experimented with a new plan: we had all our groups meet in Atlanta on a single weekend. This facilitated plenary sessions as well as useful joint meetings of some groups. This "Leadership Summit" was a great success. However, budget problems led us to cancel most face-to-face meetings for the winter / spring of 2010. We propose that the Leadership Summit be revived on a different model. All AAR Working Groups will meet on the Friday of the Annual Meeting. (Under this proposal, the AAR Board will not be meeting at that time.) This Friday event might feature a common luncheon or breakfast, as well as other plenary sessions. This version of the Leadership Summit would be much more cost effective. Under the old plan, the AAR provided group members with transportation, food, and lodging in Atlanta. Under the proposed plan, the AAR would provide group members with some meals on Friday and two nights lodging at the Annual Meeting, but not transportation costs (assuming that group members would already have planned to attend the Annual Meeting).

## IX. Special Features of the Proposal

**Changes in the "Presidential Line":** Under the current system, the persons in our Presidential Line serve in several capacities. They are members of the Executive Committee, the Program Committee, and in the Past Presidential year, they serve on the Nominations Committee. Members of the Presidential Line are also subject to service on task forces and special committees.

This proposal reshapes the expectations of the Presidential Line in the hope of 1). Reducing the overall time commitment (from four to three years); and 2.) of educating and preparing persons for service as President. In regard to this second intention, we propose that a member of the Presidential line serve as follows: In the first year (as Vice President), he or she would serve as a member of the Program Committee. This is intended to give members of the Presidential Line experience in how our Annual Meeting is structured and governed. In the second year (as President Elect), he or she would work with the Executive Director to manage the flow of information from Committees of the Board and AAR Working Groups to the Board. This would involve reading their reports and providing the Board, prior to the meeting, an Executive Summary of all recommendations, actions, and so forth. We think this would do two things: improve Board deliberation of committee reports, and give the President Elect better preparation for leading the Board meeting. In the third year (as President) he or she would function much as under the current system (i.e., lead Board meetings, chair the Executive

Committee, offer a Presidential Plenary Address at the Annual Meeting, arrange for Plenary Speakers, and appoint members to Working Groups (though on a modified basis; see above).

Under the current system, in his or her fourth year of service, the Past President is expected to participate in all Presidential Line duties (Executive Committee, Program Committee, Board Meetings, etc.) and to sit on the Nominations Committee as well. We propose that under the new system, we ask the immediate Past President to serve only on the Nominations Committee.

**Accountability and Accessibility.** Our Governance Task Force has spent a good deal of time discussing how AAR members relate to the structures of authority and power in the AAR Board of Directors. In an effort to build both accountability and accessibility into our Board structure, we propose several changes to current practice:

**1. The creation of a Member Advocate.** As described above, the Member Advocate will ensure that issues of representation and diversity are before the Board and that the particular concerns of individual members and other groups are brought to the Board's attention.

**2. Board "town hall meetings" at AAR gatherings.** We propose that the AAR Board develop a system whereby Directors (and in particular, the Member Advocate) attend regional gatherings and make themselves available to discuss the AAR programs and direction in town hall sorts of gatherings. This could also be done at the Annual Meeting as well. We are not sure whether every region needs a visit by a Director every year, or whether the entire Board would be available to visit with members at the Annual Meeting. But we do think that a program of this sort would go a long way to help keep communication flowing between members and the Board of Directors.

**3. Website links.** We propose that the AAR website list contact information for each member of the Board, and that we encourage members to use these links to contact their Board members as necessary.

**4. Posting of Board, Committee, and Task Force Minutes.** We propose that the minutes of each meeting of the Board, Committee of the Board, and working group be posted on the website as soon as possible after the meeting. This would mean that the process whereby we approve the minutes would need to be accelerated. Instead of waiting until the next meeting to officially approve minutes, groups would receive the minutes via email soon after a meeting, and would be expected to make corrections and accept the corrected minutes by email.

**The nominations process for Student Director, Regions Director, and Program Unit Director.**

Under this proposal the work of the Nominations Committee will be expanded considerably; indeed, its work will approximately double. In order to assist the Committee in its expanded work, and with an eye toward the importance of three groups (student members, the Regions, and the Program Units, each of whom has a Director's position on the proposed Board), we think it necessary to grant a particular form of authority to these groups. In advance of annual AAR elections, each group will pass to the Nominations Committee a slate of FOUR candidates who, in their judgment, are qualified and willing to serve as AAR Directors. The Graduate Student Committee will supervise the construction of the slate of nominees for students, the Regions Committee will do so for the regions, and the Program Unit Chairs (working with the Executive Office) will do so for the Program Units. Upon receipt of these slates, the Nominations Committee will choose TWO from each slate to run for general election as Student, Region, or Program Unit Director respectively. Our rationale for this move is to allow each of these three groups to have a degree of control about their representation on the Board, but also to allow the Nominations Committee (which must balance a large ballot of candidates with reference to race, gender, ethnicity, sexual orientation, field of study, etc.) some freedom as it assembles a strong and diverse ballot of candidates.

## **X. Board Consideration, Bylaws Changes, and Transition Planning**

**Consideration by the Board.** The Governance Task Force will recommend this plan to the Board for its consideration at the November 2009 Board meeting. If the Board approves the plan, or does so with various amendments, the Executive Office, working with the Task Force will, between November 2009 and April 2010, prepare a set of bylaws consistent with the Board-approved plan. The preparation of these new bylaws will be done in consultation with legal counsel or outside consultants as necessary. The new bylaws will be presented to the Board of Directors at its April 2010 meeting for adoption.

NB: If the Task Force’s proposal were not to be considered or adopted by the Board at its November, 2009 meeting, we would hope to bring an amended proposal to the Board at its April, 2010, meeting. If it were approved, we would have new bylaws prepared and ask the Board to approve them—by email, in a conference call, or in a special meeting—over the summer of 2010. This would allow ample time for the new bylaws to be considered at the Atlanta Annual Meeting (see below).

**Changes to the bylaws.** Our current bylaws stipulate that the entire AAR membership must be informed of proposed changes to our bylaws at least 30 days prior to the Annual Business Meeting, at which time the changes will be voted on. (The Annual Business Meeting is held at the Annual Meeting.) In accordance with this stipulation, in the late summer or early fall of 2010, the Board-approved bylaws, as well as a full description of the proposed Governance plan, will be communicated in writing to all AAR members. The new bylaws will be voted on at the Annual Business Meeting in the 2010 Annual Meeting to be held in Atlanta.

**Implementation and Transition.** Assuming that our Board approves this proposal and that the membership votes to adopt new bylaws, it is our hope that the new Board could be fully in place by January 1, 2011. Making the transition from the old Board to the new Board will bring challenges. As a prelude to discussing implementation and transition details, it is instructive to see what would have to transpire, in terms of appointments and elections, to move to the Board structure that we are proposing.

We know how many 2010 Board members would automatically serve on the new 2011 Board: 2010 Vice President (Espin or Maduro, depending on the fall 2009 election outcome) would become the President Elect in 2011; 2010 President Elect (Kwok Pui Lan) would become the President in 2011, 2010 Student Director (either Lawson or Peppard, depending on the fall 2009 election outcome) would be in the second of her two year term. Under the proposed plan, we might consider asking 2010 President (Taves) to complete her service at the close of 2010. (In this, she would be the first of the Presidential Line not to serve a fourth year as Past President.) The current terms of both the Secretary (Desjardins) and the Treasurer (Thibodeau) expire at the end of 2010. Hence, NINE Directors would need to be selected for service on the new Board: Vice President, Treasurer, Secretary, Regions Director, Program Unit Director, and four At-Large Directors. Prior to elections, the 2011 Board roster looks like this:

President	Kwok Pui Lan
President Elect	Maduro or Espin
Vice President	Needs to be elected / appointed
Treasurer	Needs to be elected / appointed
Secretary	Needs to be elected / appointed
Student Director	Peppard or Lawson
Regions Director	Needs to be elected / appointed
Program Unit Director	Needs to be elected / appointed

At-Large Director 1	Needs to be elected / appointed
At-Large Director 2	Needs to be elected / appointed
At-Large Director 3	Needs to be elected / appointed
Member Advocate	Appointed by the Board

Obviously, we cannot hold elections for the proposed new Director positions until after the Atlanta meeting, in November of 2010, when the membership votes on the new bylaws. But if the bylaws are approved, we will have two months to fill the empty Board seats.

Our Task Force has discussed several plans to accomplish this work. Each has merits and liabilities, and each involves various compromises. At this point, however, we think the most prudent course is to work on the following plan:

1. In order to preserve a healthy sense of momentum and recent history on the AAR Board, and to ensure that two key Directors on the new Board (the Treasurer and the Secretary) have properly staggered terms, we recommend that the current Treasurer (Thibodeau) or the current Secretary (Desjardins) be invited to remain on the Board for an additional, single year term (2011). This would prevent, in the future, the Board from losing both the Treasurer and Secretary in the same year.
2. We recommend that we hold fall elections on our normal timetable, that is, prior to the 2010 Annual Meeting in Atlanta. The current Nominations Committee will prepare a slate of candidates for the following Director positions: Vice President and Secretary (depending on the outcome of the recommendation in the previous paragraph.)
3. We recommend that during the two-month period following the fall 2010 elections, the Directors who have been already elected to serve on the 2011 Board, namely, the President, President Elect, Vice President, Student Director, and Secretary (depending on number 1. above), in conjunction with the then sitting Executive Committee, appoint the following seven Directors to serve on the 2011 Board: the Regions Director, the Program Unit Director, the Treasurer, and four At-Large Directors (one of whom will be appointed to serve as the Member Advocate).
4. We strongly recommend that the majority of these Directors be appointed from among members of the 2010 Board. Further, we recommend that these appointments not all be to three-year terms, but be arranged in such a manner as to begin appropriate staggering of terms. For example, the four 2010 Directors chosen as At-Large Directors should be appointed as follows: two to a one-year term, one to a two-year term, and one to a three-year term. The Regions Director should be appointed to a one-year term. The only place where accommodations might need to be made is in the case of the Program Unit Director. This person would, on our proposal, become the chair of the Program Committee. He or she would need to have some experience on Past Program Committees, and this may suggest that the appointment be made from among the larger AAR membership. Also, the Executive Director, who currently chairs the Program Committee, might be asked to continue in that chair for a single year so as to allow the new Program Unit Director to get up to speed.
5. Finally, we recommend that a New Nominations Committee be appointed soon after January 1, 2011. This new Committee would begin preparing a slate of candidates for the 2012 elections that would seamlessly continue the term of office scheme contained in the Task Force's proposal.

## **XI. Conclusion**

The Task Force thanks the Board for its support and patience during the months of our deliberations. We are eager to discuss this proposal with the Board and look forward to discussing the future of our Academy.

**Appendix One**  
**Current Structure of the AAR Board of Directors**

President  
President-Elect  
Vice President  
Past President  
Secretary  
Treasurer  
Student Director  
JAAR Editor  
ACLS Representative

Regionally Elected Directors: New England Maritimes  
Eastern International  
Mid Atlantic  
Southeast  
Southwest  
Midwest  
Upper Midwest  
Rocky Mountain Great Plains  
Pacific Northwest  
Western

Standing Committee Chairs: Academic Relations  
International Connections  
Nominations Committee  
Public Understanding of Religion  
Publications  
Status of Racial & Ethnic Minorities in the Profession  
Status of Women in the Profession  
Teaching and Learning

Total of 27 Directors

**Appendix Two**  
**Current AAR Committees, Task Forces, and Juries**

**Committees**

Academic Relations  
Career Services Advisory  
Executive  
Finance  
Graduate Student  
International Connections  
Nominations  
Program  
Public Understanding of Religion  
Publications

Regions  
Status of Racial & Ethnic Minorities in the Profession  
Status of Women in the Profession  
Teaching and Learning

### **Ad Hoc Committees and Task Forces**

Theological Education Steering Committee  
Governance Task Force  
Job Placement Task Force  
Religion in the Schools Task Force  
Status of LGBTIQ Persons in the Profession Task Force  
Sustainability Task Force

### **Juries**

Awards for Excellence in the Study of Religion Book Award Juries  
History of Religions Jury  
Research Grants Jury

## **Appendix Three Proposed Structure of the AAR Board of Directors**

President  
President Elect  
Vice President  
Treasurer  
Secretary  
Student Director  
Program Unit Director  
Regions Director  
Member Advocate  
At-Large Directors (3)

Total of 12 Directors

## **Appendix Four Proposed Committees, Task Forces, and Juries**

Committees of the Board	Executive Finance Audit Nominations Program Planning
Working Groups	Academic Relations Career Services Advisory Graduate Student International Connections

Public Understanding of Religion  
 Publications  
 Regions  
 Status of Racial & Ethnic Minorities in the Profession  
 Status of Women in the Profession  
 Teaching and Learning

Task Forces / Ad Hoc Committees

Theological Education Steering Committee  
 Governance Task Force  
 Job Placement Task Force  
 Religion in the Schools Task Force  
 Status of LGBTIQ Persons in the Profession Task Force  
 Sustainability Task Force

Juries

Awards for Excellence in the Study of Religion Book Award Juries  
 History of Religions Jury  
 Research Grants Jury

**Appendix Five  
 Proposed Director and Committee Assignment Grid**

	Executive	Audit	Finance	Nominations	Program	Planning	No. of Assignments
President	C	•					2
President Elect	•	•					2
Vice President	•	•			•		3
Secretary	•						1
Treasurer	•		C				2
Student Director						•	1
Regions Director						•	1
Program Unit Director					C		1
At-Large Director			•				1
At-Large Director				•			1
At-Large Director					•		1
Member Advocate							0
AAR Executive Director	S			S	S	C	4
AAR Dir of Finance and Admin		S	S				2
AAR Member (Not a Director)			3	3	6	2	
Outside Consultant		•					
Immediate Past President				•			
Members (not including Staff)	5	4	5	5	9	5	

**C = Chair**

**S = Staff**

**● = Membership on Committee**