Mid-Atlantic Region of the American Academy of Religion
2018-2019 Regional Development Grant Proposal:

***Community Building Workshop Series: Pathway Forward Towards A More Vibrant,
Innovative, and Engaging Community of Scholars in the Mid-Atlantic Region***

AAR Member Contact/Prepared by:

Alicia B. Panganiban
Vice President of the MAR-AAR
Princeton Theological Seminary

Submitted by Regional Officers: Alicia B. Panganiban (MAR-AAR Vice-President, Princeton Theological Seminary), Gerald S. Vigna (MAR-AAR President, Alvernia University) and Matthew Vaughan (MAR-AAR Regional Director, Union Theological Seminary). In collaboration with MAR-SBL and MAR-AAR-SBL Women's Caucus: John Herbst (MAR-SBL Regional Director, Virginia Peninsula Baptist Association) and Julia Berger (MAR-AAR/SBL Women's Caucus Co-Chair).

Project Description of the Project

Abstract

The Mid-Atlantic Region of the American Academy of Religion (MAR-AAR) is seeking funds to begin an ongoing regional community building initiative that offers space to brainstorm, share, support, and encourage new thinking in order to create a culture of honor and move towards a more collaborative, constructive, and supportive environment while challenging and rethinking modes of relating and generating knowledge. We recognize the importance of building relationships and the role of constructive collaborative relationships in academic and professional development. Thus, we seek to reimagine our annual regional conference and construct meaningful and sustained modes of scholarly collaboration through this workshop series project.

This project will be carried out in collaboration with the Mid-Atlantic Region of the Society of Biblical Literature (MAR-SBL) and MAR AAR-SBL Women's Caucus. Through a series of strategic planning and community building workshops, this initiative seeks to foster a more vibrant, innovative, and engaging community of scholars in the Mid-Atlantic region. With a strong regional community of working together, we expect to have optimum results in growing regional participation, in developing the scholarly and professional lives of the members, and in efficiently carrying out the tasks in the region.

Purpose & Aims
In light of the over-arching vision stated above we have articulated the following aims for this project:

1. **Promote innovative programming and scholarly collaborations.**

   We aim to promote innovative sessions and strategies that will improve scholarly endeavors, collaborations, and foster dynamic relationships. Thus, we plan to open this workshop series not only to those in current leadership positions or existing chairs, but also to prospective co-chairs and organizers of working groups and conference sessions. We seek to recruit not only outstanding scholars in theology and religion, but also those with a commitment in creating a vibrant community, solving problems, serving as catalysts for change. We seek out team players who want to help one another develop creative solutions for the region.

2. **Create a culture of honor**

   We aim to expand the participation of undergraduate and graduate students and seek to expand the meaningful involvement of graduate students and recent PhD graduates in the idea generation process and to develop new scholars research agenda interests. We also aim to encourage veteran scholars to remain active and plan events to honor/recognize these scholars. We seek to foster an intergenerational and interreligious dialogue and exploration, in order to highlight not only distinguished scholars, but also a diversity of ideas and expertise.

3. **Build a more engaging community**

   We aim to generate a new vision of a 'community of scholars,' re-thinking existing modes of interaction and engagement in order to build a more engaging community. We aim to plan forward/plan for transformation to outline possible efforts to transform the region, offer an updated vision of what should our community of scholars look like, and consider the relevance of changing certain ways we do things to build a more engaging community.

4. **Develop scholarly and professional lives of members**

   In the long run, we aim to tap unto the importance and power of community in cultivating, producing, and sharing new problem-oriented research. One does not come up with breakthrough scholarship in a bubble – it is with the help of colleagues that one develops new and important ideas. The creation of any first-rate scholarship is a collective endeavor.

5. **Increase participation and revenues**

   With more scholars actively involved in the region in organizing and leading conference sessions and working groups, we expect a corresponding increase in attendance at future regional annual conferences. We aim to increase attendance from 170 participants from 2018 to 250 in year 2019 and hopefully 300 in year 2020. We aim to no longer operate in deficit, but with a surplus.

Background and Rationale:

The idea for strengthening the region's programming and community engagement arose from a series of meetings: MAR-AAR business meeting, Women's Caucus leadership team meetings, and AAR-SBL joint regional officers meeting. The allotted time for the business meeting is not sufficient to address questions, problems, and challenges raised. There is a need for face-to-face meetings in addition to online meetings. Thus, we would like to take advantage of meeting before and/or during national and regional conferences with a focus on framing, developing, and fostering greater community engagement. Moreover, although the recent regional annual meeting has seen an increase in attendance, overall regional attendance needs to further increase in order to operate with a positive bottom line figure.

Subsequently, the Mid-Atlantic region encounters the same challenges as those experienced by the Southwest region in 2015, namely a need to reimagine regional conference and to build a stronger network of scholars in light of the rapidly changing demographics in North America. See American Academy of Religion – Southwest Region Regional Development Grant Proposal presented last June 1, 2015: "How Might the Region Become a Stronger and More Meaningful Presence in the Scholarly and Professional Lives of its Members? A Workshop to Re-Imagine Our Time Together During and Between Annual Meetings."

Just as the Southwest Regional Development 2015 Grant Proposal has been a model for the MAR, we hope that our regional developmental workshop series in strategic planning and community building may serve as a blueprint for other regions. While similar to the Southwest Developmental Grant Proposal, our proposal places emphasis on community building and in place of a one day workshop, we propose a series of in-person meetings for team building and strategic planning. We hope other regions will feel encouraged and empowered to hold workshop meetings to build a more vibrant, innovative, and engaging community of scholars.

Statement on Project or Activities

This Community Building Workshop Series will comprise of three meetings which will be spaces for community engagement in framing, exploring, and focusing in reimagining our MAR programs among 50-60 constituents (35 AAR members and 25 SBL members):

1. A three-hour team-building workshop and strategic planning session during the AAR-SBL national annual conference at Denver on November 18, 2018.

   Creating a space for informal conversations, spontaneous interactions and ideas which can evolve to something significant/relevant to the life of the community and individual lives of scholars. Current co-chairs and prospective co-chairs are invited to attend this three-hour session. This meeting will begin with team-building games, then progress to spending time brainstorming in an atmosphere that really encourages brainstorming. Often at academic events, scholars are focused on presenting their own positions rather than trying to collectively generate new perspectives or to absorb new ideas. Our aim for these meeting is

to bring together exceptional scholars who are committed to serving AAR in the region and have a willingness to help others. The workshop will culminate in a planning session in order to develop, advance, expand initiatives for the 2019 and 2020 conferences. We seek to bring together as many perspectives to the table as possible and then refine strategies until a consensus is reached. Additionally, our aim is to become more knowledgeable not only about the challenges facing our but also to identify actionable solutions in a way that engage co-chairs and others in leadership positions in the decision-making process. We plan to serve breakfast and/or lunch to encourage more intimate fellowship.

2. A three-hour preconference workshop/kick off on the annual regional meeting in 2019.

    Creating a community that provides support, encouragement, and accountability especially to current co-chairs, hospitality committee members, and all those in service-leadership positions. Provide briefing and space for Question and Answer about the upcoming conference with focus on addressing existing challenges, ways of serving the region's members, and strengthening the annual regional meeting. This workshop meeting aims to further create a sense of shared purpose, reflect with a passion for solving pressing problems, create further possible A-ha moments, and more spark in the intellectual and social lives of scholars in the region. We hope to serve snacks at this meeting as additional means of social interactions.

3. A two hour post regional annual conference celebration workshop to seek feedback and evaluation of the recently concluded annual regional conference.

    Creating a critical community to reflect, share insights, and provide immediate feedback. Continue to build stronger exceptional scholar network and relevant agendas/sessions for the next annual regional conference. The feedback, advice, and support from co-chairs and prospective co-chairs throughout the entire process would be immensely valuable and integral to the success future of the region. Last year's one-hour meeting with existing co-chairs proved insufficient. We hope to serve light snacks to make it a livelier meeting.

Timeline for the Completion of the Grant

August 2018
Workshop Analysis (Purpose statement, workshop goals, participants profile, performance assessment, list of required resources, potential delivery systems, and workshop management plan) via individual assignments and online meeting of regional officers.
Invite existing co-chairs and possible facilitators. Recruit prospective co-chairs and hospitality committee members. Activate MAR-AAR-SBL website, academia.edu, and other social media platform.

September 2018

Workshop Design (task inventory: performance objectives, assessment instruments, exercises/activities, time frames, outcomes, questions, content, workshop planning, and media selection) via individual assignment and online meeting of regional officers.
Invite existing co-chairs and recruit prospective co-chairs. Request for RSVPs. Advertise and market the first workshop. Reserve room and catering arrangements.

October 2018
Workshop Development (concept focus, content, and methods) via individual assignment and online meeting of regional officers.
Finalize workshop program details and materials as well as list of facilitators and participants. Intensify marketing efforts. Arrange for media/technology services.

November 2018
Implementation and evaluation of the first workshop during annual national conference.

December 2018-Feb 2018
Analysis, design, and development of preconference and post conference annual regional conference workshop. Send reminders and details for this second workshop meeting.

March 2018
Implementation and evaluation of the preconference and post conference workshop during the annual regional conference.

Detailed Budget

Item	Cost
Hotel Meeting Room Workshop 1	$
Hotel Meeting Room Workshop 2	
Hotel Meeting Room Workshop 3	
Lunch for Workshop 1 ($ 48 per person X 60)	
Snacks for Workshop 2 ($ 25 per person x 60)	
Snacks for Workshop 3 ($ 25 per person x 60)	
Leadership Team Dinner ($ 100 X 10 persons)	
Workshop Materials	
Total	$
Divide expense with MAR-SBL	$
MAR-AAR Request for Grant	$