Minutes
AAR Board of Directors Meeting
San Diego, California, September 14-15, 2019

September 14, 2019

Present: (Board Members) Laurie Patton, Marla Frederick, Randall Styers, Leela Prasad Zayn Kassam, Amir Hussain, Rachel Toombs, Kimberly Connor, Kathy Downey, Kathryn McClymond, Kerry Danner, José Cabezón, Alice Hunt; (AAR Staff Members), Elizabeth Hardcastle, Robert Puckett, Nicholé Jefferson.

The Board meeting began at 9:02 a.m. with introductions and an agenda review led by President Laurie Patton.

Motion 1: Approve Agenda. Passed unanimously.

President’s Report (Laurie Patton): President Laurie Patton reflected on the turmoil of our current times, using Toni Morrison’s writings for inspiration and guidance, including three themes: stillness, creativity, naming. How can the AAR contribute to creating and supporting a context for these traits to emerge and flourish? Who we are as a guild in relationship to our publics? She then reviewed the accomplishments of the past year, including population of committees, RSO realignment, statements on public events, the creation of a new task force on tenure and promotion and the professional conduct procedures development.

Executive Director’s Report (Alice Hunt): Executive Director Alice Hunt began with a statement of AAR values to open the conversation – academic excellence, professional responsibility, free inquiry, critical examination, diversity, inclusion, respect, and transparency. She introduced staff members who joined the meeting: Chief Finance and Administration Officer, Nicholé Jefferson, Governance and Executive Office Specialist, Elizabeth Hardcastle, and Chief Scholarly Engagement Officer Robert Puckett. She also acknowledged Katheryn McClymond for receiving the Hart award, to be presented at Friends of the Academy reception. She discussed staff hires and departures and the organizational restructure. She acknowledged members who passed away during this year and considered ways to memorialize them at the upcoming Annual Meeting. Alice relayed the request for guidance from the Governance and Leadership Development Committee around the nominations process. She described a new, more streamlined and transparent process for Program Committee openings nominations and elections. As requested from the February 2019 board meeting, she inventoried all that the AAR is doing regarding public(s) understanding(s) of religion(s). The inventory of PUR activities comes with the need to think about how to get information out there—the public interface piece. We want the AAR to be a resource for those who are looking for PUR-related materials. How does the AAR communicate effectively and structure our messaging around PUR and the AAR
website? This task will fall to the Chief Public Engagement Officer. She discussed staff roles. She invited the board to suggest other PUR ideas.

Executive Director Hunt discussed the work staff currently is doing on an invited proposal to the Luce Foundation around Advancing Public Scholarship, inviting board input on the initiatives in the proposal.

**AAR’s Mission in the Regions (Kathy Downey):** At our last board meeting, the idea was raised to have a task force develop a mission statement for the regions; not mission for regions but how the AAR describes the relationship. Regions Director Kathy Downey presented the following language: *AAR fosters its mission through energetic cultivation of accessible regional intellectual networks and identities to serve members where they live and work, and to respond to local publics and concerns.* Kathy also shared a statement describing more deeply how regions offer member benefits. After discussion around language, Laurie proposed a friendly amendment

**Motion 2: To adopt the Regions mission statement for AAR use in describing work and relationship to the regions. Passed unanimously.**

**FY20 Budget (Randall Styers, Nicholé Jefferson):** Treasurer Randall Styers shared outcomes of the finance committee meeting and its operations. Chief Finance and Administrative Officer Nicholé Jefferson talked about the budget moving forward and noted our move to a new audit firm. The Finance Committee brought forward their approval of both the proposed budget and the plan to achieve a balanced budget by 2023 which included provisions for increased revenue. The board held a full discussion of numerous aspects of the budget and the plan.

**Motion 3: Approve proposed budget and the plan to balance the budget in out-years with the request that the Finance Committee provide details at the November Board Meeting.**

Passed 10 yes; 1 no; 1 abstention.

**Appointments to Committees of the Board (Laurie Patton):**

**Finance Committee:** Nadine Pence

**Audit Committee:** Heidi Hadsell

**Governance and Leadership Development Committee:** Jin Y. Park (1-year additional term), Sylvester Johnson

**Motion 4: Approve the slate of candidates as prepared by the Executive Committee.**

Passed unanimously.
Guidance for the Governance and Leadership Development Committee (Alice Hunt):
Executive Director Alice Hunt discussed historical background and brought forward the committee’s request for guidance around nominations to the Board of Directors election. The board held a fulsome discussion. Current criteria include distinction in Service, Scholarship, and Teaching. AAR wants to empower, not protect its members. The board noted the importance of a significant AAR service record. Some administrative experience is also desired. The board wants the committee to be clear with candidates concerning time commitments. A concern was expressed around issues of diversity – gender, institutions, areas of expertise, etc. Those elected into the presidential line need to convey maturity in one’s career.

Bylaws (Laurie Patton, Alice Hunt):

Motion 5: To approve changes in bylaws as set forth in attached document. (Recommended changes) with one amendment: to change language in V. Section 3 describing the Student Director: The Student Director must be, at the time of their election, a graduate student.

Unanimously approved.

A request was made to consider other changes to the bylaws. The Board was asked to send proposed changes to the Executive Director no later than December 10th so that recommendations may be brought to the February 2020 board meeting.

RSO issue update (Laurie Patton, Robert Puckett): Following up on the board’s decision in February to move one organization from RSO status to Additional Meeting status, President Laurie Patton and Chief Scholarly Engagement Officer Robert Puckett reported amicable conversations with and outcomes for the organization. Other RSOs will be up for review with the Program Committee in January.

HEP Task Force Update (Marla Frederick): The Task Force held its initial meeting on Aug 6th on Zoom call. They identified 6 points to their charge and the Board discussed how to approach each from a practical, labor-sharing perspective to avoid redundancies and manage the workload and scope:

Assess processes and practices around hiring, promotion, tenure, retention, and ongoing evaluation for all faculty labor with a view toward drafting a best practices and processes statement for consideration by the board.

Focus on increasingly pressing questions of career transitions, the life cycle of a faculty member, and hiring candidates with diverse professional experiences and care-giving responsibilities.

Develop strategies for fostering cutting edge scholarship and work by all scholars with a view toward making recommendations about what counts as scholarship credited towards promotion.
Develop approaches for assessing quality and impact of public forms of scholarly communication, including recommendations for selecting qualified reviewers of public scholarship.

Assess the need for graduate programs to train fewer PhD’s, and to fund fully those PhD’s they do train.

Assess the need for training in all PhD programs that focuses on positive career trajectories in multiple work arenas.

The board provided insights and offered suggestions in an effort to support the ongoing work of the task force.

Professional Conduct Procedures (Laurie Patton): President Laurie Patton thanked the Board for input and help. She explained the vetting process the procedures went through. Next procedural steps include 1. the need for a slate/group of investigators (HROs) we could turn to when necessary; 2. the need to elect Ombudsperson; 3. the need to name alternative dispute resolution members. 4. the need to appoint members to the Committee on Professional Conduct. 5. the need to write a guide for complainants and respondents—a kind of flow chart. The initial roll-out of the Professional Conduct Procedures will be a two-year pilot program. At the end of the two-year period, the procedures will undergo review for possible revision. A suggestion was made that the Regions Director and the Student Director be included in the seven members of the committee.

Motion 6: Friendly amendments (replacing two appointed members with the Regions Director and the Student Director) to Professional Conduct Statement

Passed unanimously.

Conversation about Contingency (Laurie Patton): Statement on support for contingent labor in a preliminary statement:

Motion 7: that the AAR not use the term “alternative career” in describing career paths in any of its official programs, publications, or forums.

Passed unanimously.

The AAR Board encourages AAR staff to expand Employment Services to include multiple and diverse career paths, including opportunities from administration, libraries, professional schools, non-profit, civic, media, arts, and business sectors.

The meeting was suspended at 5:00 PM on Saturday, September 14, 2019.

The meeting resumed at 8:32 a.m. on Sunday, September 15, 2019.

September 15, 2019
Present: (Board Members) Laurie Patton, Marla Frederick, Randall Styers, Leela Prasad, Zayn Kassam, Amir Hussain, Rachel Toombs, Kathy Downey, Kathryn McClymond, Kerry Danner, José Cabezón, Alice Hunt; (AAR Staff Members), Robert Puckett, Nicholé Jefferson, Elizabeth Hardcastle

Absent: Kimberly Connor

The meeting recommenced with an agenda recap provided by the chairperson, President Laurie Patton.

**Board Conversation about the AAR Academic Freedom Statement (Laurie Patton)**

Point of conversation was made by President Laurie Patton concerning the 2016 Academic Freedom Statement. The board was asked to consider the AAR’s policy and practice of making statements on behalf of scholars. It was acknowledged that the AAR wants to support individual scholars, but is limited in what it is able to do. Concern was expressed for the potential burden created by the number of requests and possible polarization resulting from issuing statements. Suggestions were made, including the idea of creating an AAR resource board for scholars seeking support from the organization. President Patton suggested this idea be discussed further at the board meeting in November.

**Status Report on the AAR Literacy Guidelines (Alice Hunt and Amir Hussain)**

At-Large Director and member of the Religious Literacy Steering Committee, Amir Hussain, presented a review of the status of the guidelines, with acknowledgement that the edits from the last version were incorporated into the current document. The board members were thanked for providing their comments and suggestions. A question about formatting was asked, and assurances were given that the formatting changes will be addressed within the approved document.

**Motion 8: To accept the AAR Literacy Guidelines as presented.**
Passed Unanimously.

**Discussion of AHA Statement Regarding Interviews at Annual Meetings (Rachel Toombs)**

Student Director, Rachel Toombs, reported on the American Historical Association recent decision to no longer conduct interviews at their annual meeting. She referred board members to the AHA President’s statement regarding the cessation of interviews. The board discussed related issues. Appreciation was expressed to Student Director Toombs for bringing the matter to the board. A view of the AHA’s guidelines for interviews was presented to the board. President Patton commented that the charge of the Hiring, Evaluation, and Promotion Task Force addresses these concerns, and suggested the possibility of conversations with AAR staff members, graduate students, and task force members. Executive Director Alice Hunt noted that
employment services and the employment center at the annual meeting were run in collaboration with the SBL.

**2020 Presidential Theme. (José Cabezón)**

President-Elect, José Cabezón, informed the board of his 2020 Presidential theme: The Question of Religious Affiliation. President-Elect Cabezón remarked about the rich history of the AAR over the past 50 years, and the opportunity presented now about how we might look at history of the institution, examine what AAR has enabled intellectual, politically, and to also see what it has impeded. This theme would allow us to look critically, see how the organization has changed, and recognize the internal dynamic as we look to the future, as an opportunity to reflect as a society. It was noted that the Annual Meeting Program Books serve as a valuable archival resource, allowing members to see what the Program Units reflect about AAR history and the changes in the field over time.

José Cabezón suggested it would be helpful to know the religious affiliation, or lack thereof, of AAR membership. There was robust conversation about how such a question might be posed to member, most likely through a one-time survey. While the board supports the presidential theme and the general notion of such a survey, there was a question about on whose authority the survey would be sent out. It was agreed that the survey must be anonymous with no IP tracking. President Patton affirmed the board’s support of President-Elect Cabezón’s presidential theme.

**Report on Heading to the Annual Meeting. (Alice Hunt and Robert Puckett)**

Executive Director, Alice Hunt, provided a listing of the board’s activities at the Annual Meeting in San Diego. AAR Chief Scholarly Engagement Officer, Robert Puckett, gave a recap of the various scheduled events, and the board was encouraged to attend the Regional Officers’ Breakfast, the Program Unit Chairs Breakfast, and President Patton’s book panel as well.

Contingent Faculty Director, Kerry Danner, remarked about the desire to have a visual marker at the Annual Meeting to stand for the voices that are missing. She will work with Robert Puckett around what might be possible.

A break was called for at 10:19 AM by the chairperson, President Patton.

**Executive Session. (Laurie Patton)**

AAR staff members Robert Puckett, Nicholé Jefferson, and Elizabeth Hardcastle, were each thanked for their service and dismissed from the meeting. Only board members were present at the time the meeting reconvened. During this Executive Session, President Patton observed the following points: 1) the Bylaws require an annual evaluation of the ED, conducted by the President-Elect; 2) an evaluation is part of the process of professionalization that has been a
focus of the new administration under Alice. The review comprised an assessment by members of the Board and by the Staff, discussion of those assessments, and a documentary letter to be contributed to the file.

The meeting concluded at 11:30 a.m.

Respectfully submitted,
Kimberly Rae Connor, Secretary