MINUTES
AAR Board of Directors
2015 Winter Meeting
Downtown Hilton
Atlanta, GA
Friday January 24-25

Present: Asma Afsaruddin, John Fitzmier, Eddie Glaude, Jr., Melanie Harris, Susan Hill, Greg Johnson, Serene Jones, Michael McNally, Jin Park, Mayra Rivera, Kristy Slominski, Tom Tweed, Linda Moody (electronically present for Finance Report Sunday)
Absent: None
Staff: Steve Herrick, Deborah Minor

1. Welcome and Introduction
President Tom Tweed called the meeting to order at 9 a.m., and thanked members of the Program Committee who had returned to Atlanta for their second AAR duty in a fortnight.

2. Approval of Minutes
Motion 1: To Approve Minutes of November 2014 BoD Meeting.
Approved Unanimously

3. Tasks and Procedures for 2015 and AAR’s Guiding Values
In keeping with his presidential theme of “valuing the study of religion,” the President led a discussion of guiding values and procedures for Board of Directors work this year, based on a culling of value language from AAR by-laws, statements, and other documents.

4. Executive Reports
A. Operations
Jack Fitzmier reported on a very successful Annual Meeting, saluted the continued effectiveness of much of the new governance structure, efforts of the Public Understanding of Religion, and discussed a number of discussions in the Committees about fostering a welcoming environment and safety for all AAR participants.

Motion 2: To place emergency and harassment contact information on the back of Annual Meeting participant’s name badge. (Friendly Amendment: to also place the following statement: The AAR seeks to foster an environment that is safe, inclusive, and respectful.) Approved Unanimously

b. JAAR Editorial Replacement

Motion 3: To Adopt the JAAR Editor Search Committee’s 22 January 2015 recommendation to extend offer to an applicant, contingent on the satisfactory negotiation of the appropriate terms, including an appropriate institutional base and adequate editorial support. The BOD also accepts
the Search committee’s recommendation that if those conditions cannot be satisfactorily met, the current Search Committee be dissolved and the search reopened. The Board expresses its gratitude to members of the search committee (Kim Connor – chair, Roberto Lint Sagarena, Ted Vial, Jane Iwamura, and Andrew Rippin) for their excellent work.

Approved Unanimously

5. Development of Policy on Public Statements: Discussion of ARC and Member Proposals and Feedback

The Board engaged a nexus of issues related to academic freedom and the particular case of Stephen Salaita in the context of a larger discussion about a need for a clear AAR Policy on Public Statements. The discussion took up specific recommendations from the Academic Relations Committee, and from AAR members, including those seeking support for Professor Salaita, calling for a Committee on Academic Freedom. After considerable discussion, the Board sought first to establish some beginning principles and procedures that could ground a fuller Policy on Public Statements and also help us respond responsibly to these particular concerns but also establish how the Board should respond to future requests to issue public statements on this or any other issue.

Motion 4: To adopt the following guiding principles and procedures and to create a Board subcommittee to complete the Policy on Public Statements and draft for board approval at its next meeting a visual representation of the process.

Principles/Guidelines

1) The AAR may issue a public statement when an issue is directly and clearly identified as consistent with the Mission Statement and with Article 2 of the by-laws, which reads “The purpose of the AAR derives from two principal goals: (i.) To promote understanding of and critical reflection on religious traditions, issues, questions, values, texts, practices, and institutions. To this end, we foster communication and exchange among teachers and scholars, and the public understanding of religion. (ii.) To serve the professional interests of Members as students, teachers, and scholars.”

2) When an issue is brought to the attention of the Board of Directors, the Executive Director and President consult with the Executive Committee and relevant parties (which might include committees of the board, working groups, and outside expertise, as necessary), and the Executive Committee recommends the appropriate response. If a public statement is to be made, the Executive Committee will propose a statement and the President and the Executive Director submit it to the Board of Directors for review and disposition.

It is understood that the Executive Director or President, and they alone, are authorized to speak on behalf of the AAR Board of Directors.

Unanimously approved

MOTION 5: A subcommittee of the Board of Directors, prior to its next meeting shall: 1) develop a Preamble for the AAR Policy on Public Statements; 2) Clarify procedures for the policy; 3) Develop a visual flowchart of the process.

Unanimously approved

MOTION 6: A subcommittee of the Board of Directors, prior to the Board of Director’s next meeting, shall: 1) Make a recommendation regarding the formation of an Academic
Freedom Committee; and 2) make a recommendation about whether the AAR's 2006 Statement on Academic Freedom needs revision.

Unanimously approved

Applying the new guiding principles about public statements, the BOD next returned to a discussion of the divergent recommendations received about Salaita case.

Motion 7: A) The AAR Board of Directors expresses its grave concern about the erosion of faculty governance and due process by the University of Illinois administration in the matter of Professor Salaita. We do so because the standard procedures promote, as our Statement on Academic Freedom (2006) indicates, both “free inquiry” and “respect” for students, colleagues, and the human beings we study.

B) The President and Executive Director will draft a letter for Board of Director’s consideration that captures the intent of the motion and responds in a timely fashion to those that submitted recommendations on this matter.

Aye:10 Nay:0 Abstentions:2
6. Executive Reports (Continued)

Technology
Chief Information Officer Steve Herrick made a presentation on the remarkable reach and complexity of our four web-based information systems, together with the people power and resources required to maintain and improve them. Keyed to the two budget forecasting scenarios that have informed budgeting discussions thus far, Steve clarified for board consideration some of the tradeoffs we might expect, even as we hope for sufficient resources to hire more staff, and acknowledging that the right hire will like be a long process.

Program
Chair Greg Johnson related that the Program Committee succeeded in reviewing 1/5 of the Program Units in addition to a number of new program unit proposals. Given that Annual Meeting time and space does not keep pace with demand, the committee has focused attention on transparency and process, including potential appeals, to help meet the challenges of making difficult decisions. So too is increased committee capacity. Anticipating a future appeals process, the Executive Director and Vice President will remain active on the Program Committee but remain uninvolved in actual decision making.

Motion 8: Adopt the unanimous recommendation of the Program Committee that the Program Committee membership be expanded from 10 to at least 12 members and that the terms of those Program Committee members elected by Program Unit Chairs be extended from 3 to 4 years. It is understood that this will require a by-law change.

7. Digest of Committee Reports to the Board
Vice President Glaude presented a digest of Committee Reports, which were also circulated in full to the Board, and with the additional input of the Member Advocate discussion ensued on a number of specific items, among them the Committee on the Status of Women in the Profession's concerns that current policies be revisited to encompass the many annual meeting venues, such as various group receptions, city streets between venues, etc, where safety and harassment can remain urgent concerns.

Motion: AM AAR staff should post the main routes for traveling among conference venues and hotels and encourage attendees to consult the relevant links (e.g., Convention Bureau) to plan for safety.
Approved Unanimously

Following this agenda item, the Board recessed and repaired to Jack and Martha Fitzmier’s gracious home for dinner.

Sunday 1-25-2014
Present: Linda Moody by Telephone
Absent: Serene Jones
8:35 Meeting Called To Order
8. Membership

a) Networking/Mentoring Event at Annual Meeting
President Tweed presented, and the Board engaged, preliminary ideas for a “pilot” networking and mentoring event at the 2015 Annual Meeting.

b) Update on Membership Task Force:
The Membership Task Force continues its work and awaits completion of a proposed member profile. The Board discussed the need to have a clearer sense of how our website is being engaged and by whom to help better allocate our information technology resources. It was discussed whether we should videotape or audiotape plenaries and special sessions, and whether we might push relevant content to interested publics as a more refined marketing strategy that might increase membership and meeting attendance.

Motion 10: Board requests that staff present a report at the next meeting, if not earlier, about social media, including quantitative data about web traffic.
Unanimously approved.

9. Contingent Faculty
The Board expressed gratitude for the fine leadership of Kelly Baker and David Watt of the Contingent Faculty Task Force and noted the particular energy that AAR staff has brought to this work. A best practices proposal (dated 1/16) from the Academic Relations Committee was received too late to give it due consideration but the board resolved to place the discussion on the agenda for our next face to face meeting in September.

Motion 11: Reports, Proposals, and Recommendations for Board consideration should be submitted to the Executive Director at least 30 days prior to that meeting of the Board.
Unanimously approved

10. Finance
Deborah Minor and Treasurer Linda Moody (by telephone) presented the Finance Report. The unusually early timing of our winter meeting meant that preliminary budget planning could not be based on completely firm revenue numbers, but AAR should finish the year roughly where anticipated. The Board then considered a budget document that involved two scenarios, one projection based on a normal revenues and one projection based on a less-than-normal revenues. In the case of the latter, senior staff identified a list of expense items and cuts to offset the projected lower than expected revenues in that less-than-normal year scenario. The AAR Staff were thanked for the hard work of this two-scenario budget, both because it involved extra work but also because it helped clarify costs and benefits of our specific decisions about what we value.

11. Looking Forward
a) Developing a Five-Year Plan
The Board affirmed the need for a five year planning process to begin this year.
Motion 12: The Board recommends pursuing a Five Year Plan and charges the executive committee to present a more detailed proposal about possible next steps for the Board’s April meeting. 
Unanimously approved

b) Assessing Governance Procedures 
The Board noted that it has been four years since the new Governance procedures were first introduced and discussed whether we might consider if some minor revisions might be needed.

Motion 13: After four years of a new governance structure, the Board affirms that the time is right to reflect upon and assess the governance procedures. The Executive Committee is charged to formulate a more detailed proposal about an assessment process, one that is clearly framed by and consistent with expressed AAR values, and to bring that recommendation before the Board at its next meeting.
Unanimously approved.

Motion 14. Motion to Adjourn
Unanimously approved.

Respectfully Submitted

Michael McNally, Carleton College
Secretary