American Academy of Religion
AAR Board of Directors Meeting
Newark NJ Feb. 20–21, 2016

M I N U T E S

Present: Serene Jones, Eddie Glaude, Jr., David Gushee, Jonathan Sarna, Greg Johnson, Ardy Bass, Grace Ji-Sun Kim, Mayra Rivera, Kecia Ali, Asma Afsaruddin, Michael McNally, Jack Fitzmier, Deborah Minor, Steve Herrick

I. Call to Order (Sat Feb 20, 9a.m.)
The meeting was called to order at 9a.m., and since the BoD was meeting concurrently with the summit of the “Status of committees, the agenda was modified to ensure the BoD could hear directly from the chairs of those committees.

II. Approval of 11/20/15 Minutes

Motion 1
To approve the 11/20/15 BoD Meeting Minutes
Passed unanimously as amended.

III. President=s Report
President Jones introduced the meeting by referencing how exciting is the year ahead in light of our strategic planning process. She reported the Executive Committee, which serves as the Planning Committee of the BoD, had met the previous evening with the planning consultant who gave a preliminary report on twenty-odd telephone interviews.

IV. Executive Director Report
Jack Fitzmier began his report by clarifying that he had just gone through a comprehensive review and will continue to serve as for a three year term commencing July 1, including an anticipated two years as E.D. and a third transitional year overlapping with a new E.D. He noted how fitting this timing is with the current strategic planning process. AAR staff is well underway with an archive project in concert with Emory’s theological library. There was discussion of a need for a protocol to help ensure that staff grant-writing efforts are related to BoD priorities, especially when AAR staff are approached by foundations.

Motion 2
When the AAR staff pursues a grant process, there should be a timely consultation with the Executive Committee.
Passed Unanimously

There was discussion of a number of concerns (administrative, clerical, academic, and equity) with the current Book Award process, and about how to more effectively and efficiently identify the most impactful books in various fields.
Motion 3
To form a subcommittee of the BoD (chaired by Mayra Rivera joined by Kecia Ali and Eddie Glaude Jr. and staffed by Sarah Levine), to revisit the process of Book Award selection in consultation with the present chairs of the book award juries, the Program Committee, and Cynthia Eller. This subcommittee will present their findings and recommendations to the BoD at its September 2016 meeting.
Passed Unanimously

A new JAAR initiative called Reading Religion aims to streamline and broaden and extend the reach of the book review coverage of our expansive field bet getting book-notes and reviews that are shorter and faster.

V. Treasurer=s Report
Treasurer Jonathan Sarna and CFO Deborah Minor presented financial statements which had been circulated in advance. The bottom lines of both the Statement of Position and the Revenue/Expense Report are positive, suggesting a good position and considerable care on the part of AAR staff budgeting. Still, revenue comparisons between Dec 31, 2015 and Dec 31, 2014 suggested signs for concern in membership revenue that can inform strategic planning discussions.

VI. CIO=s Report
CIO Steve Herrick reported that two fellows have been placed at the State Department, with another two in the security clearance pipeline, and a second call for AAR Luce Fellows in the offing, with areas of expertise identified by the State Department. Attending the Atlanta AM were thirty journalists, three participants from the FBI, and eight participants from the Correctional Chaplaincy Directors’ Association. There was discussion about possibilities and challenges of extending the corrections chaplaincy program to military chaplains in a one year pilot. Herrick also related the near completion of a more robust member profile interface on the website.

VII Program Committee Report
Chair Greg Johnson began is Program Committee report by thanking AAR staff Robert Puckett, Soraya Shahrak, and Kathleen McMahan for their effective support to a committee whose briefing book was 1,000 pages, and creative ideas for adding the number of ninety minute session to help relieve pressure on the program. By the September 2016, BoD, the Program Committee will be submitting at least a preliminary draft of an appeals process. In the meantime, the Program Committee has, in the interest of transparency, posted online proceedings on the AAR website. Regarding review of applications for affiliated Religious Studies Organizations (RSOs), the are in early stages of the new process for RSO review where the Program Committee takes the lead on preliminary evaluation. There was discussion of the specific RSO renewal recommendations of the Program Committee in light of the stated criteria.
Motion 4
To create a subcommittee of the BoD to look at RSOs and Additional Meetings (Jack Fitzmier, Robert Puckett, Grace Ji-Sun Kim, Greg Johnson, David Gushee) to flesh out the existing RSO eligibility criteria on places where those criteria remain unclear or difficult to operationalize, and to bring those elaborated criteria before the November 2017 Board Meeting. The Program Committee will flesh out the RSO Criteria on places where those criteria remain unclear or difficult to operationalize and bring revised proposed criteria to the BoD at or before its November 2016 meeting.
Passed Unanimously

Motion 5
To accept the Program Committees recommendation on the Renewal of 11 RSOs.
Passed Unanimously

Motion 6
Motion to renew the Center for Interdisciplinary Study of Monotheistic Religions
Passed unanimously

Motion 7
To decline the current proposal for renewal of RSO status from the Consortium of Christian Study Centers.
Passed unanimously

VIII Committee Report Digest
Vice President David Gushee presented portions of the Committee Report Digest, having circulated a document summarizing the work of the committees and their various requests for BoD consideration and action. He postponed the presentations about the Status committees, as they were concurrently meeting and as the committee chairs would soon be meeting directly with the BoD.

A) American Lectures on the History of Religions

Motion 8
To add, without ALHR having to make periodic repeated identical requests a special session at AM, according to the ALHR biennial schedule (2016/18/20, etc.) for a final ALHR lecture (or summary of the lecture course) to be delivered by the ALHR scholar then.
Passed Unanimously

Motion 9
To direct the Book review editor of JAAR to commission a book review for each ALHR volume when it is released by Columbia University Press.
Passed Unanimously
B) Contingent Faculty Task Force

Vice President Gushee spoke of the active energy and urgency of the concerns of this task force. Although there were no current request for Board action, there was hope and expectation that the BoD signal its permanent commitment to the issues. The matter was taken up again on Sunday, together with a BoD resolution (see below).

C) Graduate Student Committee and Regions Meeting

**Motion 10**
To increase support for GSC members, providing four complementary room nights at AM
Passed Unanimously

D) International Connections Committee

**Motion 11**
To approve the ICC=s revised charge adding a new final sentence as follow:
The International Connections Committee fosters attention to the worldwide scope of scholarship in religion and the international composition of the Academy=s membership. To fulfill its charge, the committee sponsors special programs, communicates with scholars abroad, and extends hospitality to international attendees at the annual meeting. The ICC=s signature program is the Collaborative International Grant competition, for which ICC members evaluate proposals and serve as the grants jury.
Passed Unanimously

E) Public Understanding of Religion Committee
The board discussed the committee’s request that AAR invest in video equipment to be able to record the major sessions, and to bypass the often onerous restrictions of conference hotels. It was determined that staff would price out what this kind of equipment would cost, but that contractual agreements with hotels and convention and visitors bureaus, not to mention collective bargaining agreement concerns, typically obviate this possibility. Nonetheless, the strategic plan process can incorporate the committee’s larger concerns in overall public communications capacity-building.

F) Publications Committee
A request was discussed to help promote more possibilities of publications by emerging scholars.

XI Discussion of Committee Appointments and Procedures
The BoD discussed a self-review document by the Nominating Committee Self Review document and resolved to incorporate those ideas and concerns in the strategic planning process.
X Consideration of the Membership Task Force Report
Deborah Minor, together with Task Force member Kecia Ali, presented the *Membership Task Force Report and Recommendations*, which had been circulated in advance. The Membership Task Force, led by Warren Frisina, was roundly praised for the substantial contribution of their report, and in particular for how helpful the efforts would be to strategic plan data gathering and idea modeling.

IX Consideration of Policy Documents
A. Statement on Responsible Research Practices
A proposed Statement was pre-circulated that had been drafted by a Seminar, considered in provisional form at previous Board Meetings, and subsequently shared and discussed at a public session at the November 2016 AM

Motion 13
To adopt the AAR Statement on Responsible Research Practices with the amendment of the paragraph beginning AWhen scholarship involves human subjects, researchers MAY BE [strike: are] responsible for following the norms...”
Passed Unanimously

X. Meeting opened to Chairs of Status Committees
The BoD welcomed Nargis Virani, chair of Status of Religious and Ethnic Minorities in the Professions, Monique Moultrie, in-coming chair of Status of Women in the Profession, Kathleen Talvacchia, chair of the Status of LGBTIQ Persons in the Profession, and Julia Watts Belser, chair of the Status of People with Disabilities in the Profession for conversation. As formal proposals were to be received the following day, the chairs used the opportunity to express their appreciation for the face to face summit, for the connectivity and mentoring that transpires through the Status of committees, for the careful attention to representativeness and their constituencies in recent presidential committee nominations, and for the practice of presidential line visits to the committee meetings at the AM, and for the effective work of Kecia Ali as the Status Committee Director.

The chairs raised up two themes that had commonly emerged in each committees meetings. The first was communications, and the concern that too often the left hand of the AAR network doesn’t know what the right hand is doing and that connectivity among groups be fostered to ensure more robust exchange of ideas. The second theme was safety. The chairs expressed gratitude for the lawyer’s reviewing and recommendations to update and improve the existing sexual harassment that can encompass concerns of transgender, religious and racial identity. The chairs impressed upon the BoD the gravity of these safety concerns, especially as they can most egregiously affect junior faculty and graduate students. The chairs applauded managerial changes at the AM and to policies, but were encouraging of efforts to change the entire culture toward a broader policy of professional conduct where everyone is responsible for enforcement.

The meeting adjourned for the evening.
SUNDAY Feb 21st
President Jones called the meeting was called to order at 8a.m

IX Consideration of Policy Documents (cont.)
B. Revised Statement on Academic Freedom
A subcommittee of the BoD (Jack Fitzmier, Asma Afsaruddin, Tom Tweed, Susan Hill) had drafted the revised statement, presented it to September and November 2016 BoD meetings and shared and discussed at a public session at the November 2016 AM. The draft was modified slightly from the previous draft the BoD had seen in November, in light of the public November AM session.

Motion 14:
to approve the 6 Dec 2105 version of AAR Statement on Academic Freedom
Aye - 10
Nay - 1
Abs - 0

XII Report from the Status Committee Summit
Kecia Ali presented a report that had been drafted and circulated from the Summit, adding her voice to the gratitude expressed the previous evening by the Status Committee chairs for the face to face summit process and the robust conversations that produced a number of requests for Board action. The concurrent timing of the summit and BoD meeting was suboptimal in terms of the BoD having time sufficient for a full consideration on every request for board action. The minutes show the Committee’s proposed resolutions below, interspersed with BoD motions.

Motion 15
To affirm on-going board support for the Status Committee=s mentorship program, and providing student rate for AM registration, and special recognition for mentors (ribbons, honor roll, website).
Passed Unanimously

A) Contingent Scholars
   Committees= Proposed Resolution 1: We request that contingent scholars be represented in board leadership.

   Committees= Proposed Resolution 2: We request support for the ongoing existence and work of the contingent faculty task force.

Motion 16
Given the urgency of concerns facing contingent faculty, the BoD supports the continued work of the Contingent Faculty Task Force, in its consultation with the Executive Director concerning the next phase of its work.
Passed Unanimously
B) Membership Data

Committees= Proposed Resolution 3: We request that AAR hire a statistician to acquire, process, and analyze on a regular basis data collected from members, lapsed members, Employment Center participants, and departments.

In light of BoD discussions about increasing adequacy of the current member profile and the data-gathering charge of the strategic planning process currently underway, this resolution is taken under advisement, with a particular eye toward ensuring planning data-gathering efforts are designed such that they thoughtfully and deliberately include contingent faculty to ensure that planning and ongoing membership data gathering processes reflect the views of diverse constituencies whose concerns may otherwise be under-represented.

Motion 17
The BoD charges the ED to produce a plan to collect and analysis basic data from members and to survey members to support the strategic plan that commits to include robust consultation with the Status Committees.
Passed Unanimously

Motion 18
To direct the ED to see to the completion of the Member Profile project by June 1
Passed Unanimously

C) Safety

Committees= Proposed Resolution 4: We request that the AAR adopt and publicize a Professional Conduct Policy in close consultation with the status committees.

Motion 19
To empower the ED to draft a proposal for creation of a Professional Conduct Task Force in consultation with the EC and the Status Director, to draft a Statement of Professional Conduct which shall include consideration of revisions of the Sexual Harassment Policy
Passed Unanimously

Committees= Proposed Resolution 5: We affirm and appreciate AAR=s decision to designate gender-neutral bathrooms at the Annual Meetings. We request that the Board commit to continue this policy and to further explore, in collaboration with the Committee on the Status of LGBTIQ Persons in the Profession, other avenues of ensuring safety of all trans members.

Motion 20
To approve Status of Committee Proposed Resolution 5: We affirm and appreciate AAR=s decision to designate gender-neutral bathrooms at the Annual Meetings. We request that the Board commit to continue this policy and to further explore, in collaboration with the Committee on the Status of LGBTIQ Persons in the Profession, other avenues of ensuring safety of all trans members.
Passed Unanimously

D) Communication

Committees= Proposed Resolution 6: We request that the Board invite one current member of the status committees to serve on any newly formed task force or working group.

The BoD recognizes the importance of integrating perspectives of status committees in the Task Forces and Working groups and trusts the newly-configured Status Director position will enhance the desired communication.

Motion 21
To affirm the BoD commitment to the value of diversity and inclusion and to recognize the ongoing and indispensable work of the Status of Committees [SWiP, REM, LGBTIQ, PWD] in ensuring that the AAR lives up to those values.
Passed Unanimously

E) Concrete Request for the San Antonio AM

In addition to the written resolutions, Kecia Ali presented the status committees’ interest in AAR’s contracting with a hotline provider in San Antonio to coordinate emergency, safety, trauma support, and other services. The matter was discussed, together with staff input about best practices for emergency and other notification, and it was determined not to require board action but the AAR staff will respond with some more streamlined form of communication that does not compromise the clarity of safety-related communication via 911 or hotel security but that clarifies the resources available.

XIV New Business
There was no new business.

XV Adjournment
The meeting was adjourned at 10:45 a.m.

Respectfully Submitted,

Michael D. McNally
Carleton College
AAR Secretary
From Status Committee Summit via Kecia Ali

Contingent Scholars
We continue to be concerned with the status of contingent scholars in the academy, especially because the constituencies that our status groups represent—women, racial and ethnic minorities, LGBTIQ persons, and persons with disabilities—are overrepresented in contingent and non-traditional positions. These issues are particularly urgent in the face of the persistence of contingency issues, declining membership in the AAR, and the impact that these have on our constituencies.

Resolution 1: We request that contingent scholars be represented in board leadership.

Resolution 2: We request support for the ongoing existence and work of the contingent faculty task force.

Membership Data
The AAR needs a more robust data analysis to understand the changes taking place in the field, the declining membership numbers, and the dynamics of inequality that affect our constituents. The current level of membership data is limited to the presentation of raw data. It would be more effective for the AAR to cross-tabulate the data and include multi-variate analysis.

Resolution 3: We request that AAR hire a statistician to acquire, process, and analyze on a regular basis data collected from members, lapsed members, Employment Center participants, and departments.

☐ We request that the statistician work closely in consultation with the status committees on framing a survey to gather data to help the committees better understand the dynamics of inequality in the profession.
☐ We request that the statistician produce a report based on the findings for the committees= review that will include analysis of both quantitative and qualitative data, with the aim of addressing issues of discrimination.

Safety
Given the larger context of harassment on the basis of sexual, religious, racial, and gender identities and our desire to create a culture of accountability in the profession, the AAR needs a more comprehensive policy on the expectations of professional conduct.

Resolution 4: We request that the AAR adopt and publicize a Professional Conduct Policy in close consultation with the status committees.

Resolution 5: We affirm and appreciate AAR=s decision to designate gender-neutral bathrooms at the Annual Meetings. We request that the Board commit to continue this policy and to further explore, in collaboration with the Committee on the Status of LGBTIQ Persons in the Profession, other avenues of ensuring safety of all trans members.
**Communication**
To facilitate effective communication between the Board and the status committees so that the needs of the constituencies can be better represented, we urge the Board to integrate the work of the status committees with task forces and working groups.

**Resolution 6:** We request that the Board invite one current member of the status committees to serve on any newly formed task force or working group.