MINUTES

AAR Board of Directors
April 11, 2015
Conference Call, 1-3 pm EDT

Present: Asma Afsaruddin, Jack Fitzmier, Tom Tweed, Deborah Minor, Steve Herrick, Linda Moody, Serene Jones, Eddie Glaude, Jr., Michael McNally, Melanie Harris, Greg Johnson, Susan Hill, Mayra Rivera, Jin Park, Kristy Slominski

I. Call to Order.
II. Review of the Agenda
President Tweed called the telephone meeting to order at 1 p.m. EDT. He reminded attendees that a conference call full board meeting was something of an experiment, a significant cost savings but one that presents challenges to deliberation and reading the sense of the room. He asked for the help of the directors in making sure all voices are heard.

III. Approval of January 2015 BoD Minutes

Motion 1: to approve January 2015 Board of Directors minutes as amended.
Unanimously Approved

IV. Brief Executive Reports
A. President
In the interest of saving time, deferred until contextual remarks on subsequent agenda items.

B. Executive Director
There is considerable staff interest in attending to those members and potential members involved in “applied religious studies,” people with formal training in religious studies but working outside of the traditional academic setting. An exploratory team of eight scholars working in this niche, as researchers, staff at NGOs, and the like, will begin exploring the possibilities of AAR involvement with a conference call, and possibly a venue at the annual meeting.

C. Financial Officer
Deferred until budget discussion.

D. Chief Information Officer
There were blissfully few technical glitches in the paper review and registration process. A second staff developer, anticipated in the proposed budget, will bring much needed help in addressing a sizeable backlog.

E. President Elect Report on the ED’s Review
The Executive Committee is moving through the steps in the process of the five year comprehensive review of the Executive Director, including interviews with a broad range of stakeholders. The review team, the Executive Committee, will have a report ready for Jack Fitzmier and the BoD at its September meeting.
F. Member Advocate
The Working Groups are thankful to the Board for AAR governance and process innovations, as well as the staff attention to Annual Meeting safety as a continuing concern. Revisiting the Sexual Harassment Policy will be a task for the September meeting.

V. Action Items

A. Consideration of 2015-16 Budget
Deborah Minor and Treasurer Lindy Moody presented what they termed a very healthy balance sheet and a proposed budget that had been approved by the Finance Committee.

Motion 2 from Finance Committee to approve the budget as presented.
Unanimously Approved

B. Finalization of Policy on Public Statements
Susan Hill presented the process by which a subcommittee of the BoD deliberated by phone and exchanged a series of drafts of a proposed policy and flow chart that contextualized and operationalized the guidelines approved at the January BoD meeting. After review by the Executive Committee, the subcommittee’s draft received an addendum with language about the process in cases of academic freedom, so the AAR can act with dispatch when necessary.

Motion 3: to accept the Policy on Public Statements Public Statements Version 4 as amended (“two” business days, not “one”; “may interview the aggrieved…” instead of “shall interview the aggrieved”).
Aye - 10
Nay – 1
Abstentions – 0

A related discussion involved concerns about creating an autonomous Academic Freedom Committee as requested by the Academic Relations Committee. The concerns were both matters of the by-laws and process, and agreement emerged about the Executive Committee of the Board, as elected members, serving as an ad hoc committee.

Motion 4: In response to a request from Academic Relations Committee to establish a separate Academic Freedom Committee, the Board of Directors chooses not to establish a separate committee. In cases such where there is an alleged breach of academic freedom, the Executive Committee will serve as an ad hoc academic freedom committee, as described in the proposed policy on Public Statements.
Unanimously Approved

C. Proposal to Revise AAR’s Academic Freedom Document
After review of the current statement and considering a recommendation by the subcommittee working on the draft policy statement, the BoD agreed about the need to update the AAR’s Academic Freedom Policy. It discussed how best to consult broadly with the membership and the concerned committees.

Motion 5: To amend the statement on Academic Freedom and to charge a subcommittee of the Board of Directors to consult the membership broadly and bring a revised statement to the Board of Directors at its next meeting.
Unanimously Approved
D. Discussion of Best Practices for Contingent Faculty Document
A Contingent Faculty Best Practices document submitted by the Academic Relations Committee was discussed, together with a number of revisions that had been discussed in the Executive Committee. There was considerable interest in supporting and continuing these efforts, but also concern about a few passages in the proposed statement.

Motion 6: To affirm the importance of supporting contingent faculty and to recommend the formation of a subcommittee of board members, together with chairs of the contingent faculty task force and the academic relations committee, and that the subcommittee make revisions to the document and bring back a revised document for consideration by the BoD at its September meeting.
Aye -10
Nay -1
Abstentions -0

E. Approval of RSO Renewal Applications
Program Committee Chair Greg Johnson presented the renewal applications for affiliated Religious Studies Organizations. Discussion extended beyond the recommended slate, and it was determined that AAR might clarify the process and criteria.

Motion 7: To accept the slate of current RSO applications for renewal, and to ask the Program Committee to formally reflect on the process and criteria and make a recommendation to the board.
Aye – 10
Nay – 1
Abstentions - 0

F. Report on Possible Consultants for Five Year Planning
Three finalist consultants have been identified to conduct the AAR’s Five Year plan process, and a cost effective and efficient plan for meeting all three in New York City was recommended.

Motion 8: To approve the proposed meeting in NYC with 3 Finalist Consultants to be interviewed by the Executive Director, the Presidential Line, the chair of Membership Task Force, Warren Frisina, and Deborah Minor, and report back to the board.
Aye -10
Nay-1
Abstention: 1

G. Report on Assessment of Governance Procedures

Motion 9: To accept Executive Committee suggestion that a subcommittee of the Board evaluate the Governance Innovations (those in By Laws and those practices that have been developed in the Governance Yearbook) and bring recommendations to the BoD.
Unanimously Approved

The meeting adjourned as planned at 3pm EDT, postponing the following items for future consideration, possibly by electronic action.

H. A Proposal to adopt the use of a Consent Agenda
I. A Proposal for timely approval/posting of BoD Meeting Minutes
**Motion 10: To adjourn at 3pm EDT**  
Unanimously Approved

Respectfully Submitted,

Michael McNally  
AAR Secretary