



February 23 – 24, 2022

AAG Council Meeting Minutes

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Opening

Present

Emily Yeh, President, University of Colorado Boulder; Marilyn Raphael, Vice President, UCLA; LaToya Eaves, Treasurer, University of Tennessee; Joseph Oppong, Secretary, University of North Texas; Gary Langham, Executive Director, AAG.

National Councilors: Pablo Bose, University of Vermont; Meghan Cope, University of Vermont; Wei Li, Arizona State University; Elizabeth Edna Wangui, Ohio University.

Student Councilor: John (Jack) Swab, University of Kentucky
International Councilor (Observer): Diana Ojeda, Universidad de los Andes

Regional Councilors: East Lakes, Marcia England, Miami University (Ohio); Great Plains/Rocky Mountains, Shannon O’Lear, University of Kansas; Middle Atlantic, Tracy Edwards, Frostburg University; Middle States, Steven M. Schnell, Kutztown University of Pennsylvania; New England St. Lawrence Valley, Richard Kujawa, St. Michael’s College; Pacific Coast, Yolonda Youngs, California State University San Bernardino; Southeastern, Selima Sultana, University of North Carolina Greensboro; Southwestern, Colleen Myles, Texas State University; West Lakes, Heike Alberts, University of Wisconsin Oshkosh.

AAG Staff: Jill Treby, Chief of Staff; Amanda McKnight, Chief of Programs; Candida Mannozi, Chief Operations Officer.

Yeh welcomed everyone and thanked them for their ongoing service on the AAG Council.

Adopt the Agenda

Eaves moved to adopt the Council Meeting Agenda. Li seconded the motion. The motion was adopted unanimously.

Adopt the Consent Agenda

Consent Agenda

- Summary of Development Activity 2021 – Langham, Treby
- Journals Operations report – Sultana
- Communications and Membership – Langham, Treby
- Projects and Programs – Langham, McKnight
- Council Listing – Yeh, Langham
- 2022 Elected Officials – Yeh, Langham

Youngs moved to adopt the Consent Agenda. Cope seconded the motion, which passed unanimously.

President’s Comments

Yeh mentioned her latest AAG Newsletter column in which she explained to members how Council reached the decision to move to a virtual Annual Meeting, as well as how Council deliberates and works. She thanked all the AAG staff for their hard work on the new database and website. She also

mentioned the faculty strike in the UK currently underway and her solidarity with these colleagues. She stated looking forward to the Council discussions on reducing the carbon footprint of AAG meetings and on divestment of fossil fuel investments.

Vice President's Comments

Raphael greeted everyone and stated her regrets that we are meeting in another virtual Annual Meeting. She hopes for in-person meetings later this year and next year. In her role as Vice President, she prepared for the virtual format of the Department Chairs Luncheon and her desire to ensure a good experience for the 75 Chairs who will attend. She mentioned that the discussion topics suggested by the Chairs point to the impact of Covid on departments and the need to share resilience strategies. She would like the AAG to consider how to become more relevant to its members and how to be relevant in the post-pandemic world.

State of the AAG

Langham thanked everyone for their service on the AAG Council. He reminded the Council that the AAG is about halfway through a once in a generation transition. The new member database and website rollouts have met with an excellent response. He stated that the website will continue to evolve with new releases, based on AAG business needs and feedback from users. He indicated that the modular nature of the website allows the AAG staff to add and change content and features on the site swiftly and easily.

Langham welcomed and thanked Chief of Staff Treby and Chief of Programs McKnight for their support in the short time since they joined the AAG, indicating that they are already proving to be invaluable members of the Senior Staff Team. Langham previewed a few of the keynote speakers and guests at the upcoming Annual Meeting. He mentioned that the Meridian Place renovation is being reviewed after a hiatus due to the pandemic outbreak in 2020 and that revisions to these plans include a possible solution to universal access for the front and rear of the building. He indicated that Treby is working with a real estate company to explore all possible plans for Meridian Place and a return to in-person work for AAG staff and will bring the full range of these scenarios and associated costs to the Council in April.

Langham praised the JEDI Committee for the responsible approach taken to their significant charge, their care in regularly rotating their terms of service, the transparency in their operations and for offering opportunity to other AAG members to contribute to their work. He indicated wanting to review all Committees' processes to ensure similar standards.

He mentioned the need to plan for the next 3-year Strategic Plan in the course of 2022.

Langham thanked the Council for supporting the AAG in its lawsuit against the meeting cancellation insurance providers, which was successfully resolved with a payout to the AAG for its 2020 meeting cancellation. This news was met with general acclaim.

Finance

Teri Martin, AAG Director of Finance and Accounting, joined the meeting.

February 22 Finance Committee meeting: FC recommendations to Council

Eaves updated the Council on the discussion during the recent AAG Finance Committee meeting:

- The Audit came back clean with no findings and with compliments to AAG's Teri Martin for her management of AAG's finances.
- Membership numbers are slightly up, around 9,000.
- The AAG's Investment Advisor gave a positive report on the market's performance in 2021, and stated that AAG investments rebounded swiftly from the 2020 Covid-induced downturn.
- Eaves reported that the Finance Committee was confident with both the Audit and the FYE2023 Budget and recommends the Council approve both.

Eaves mentioned that the Finance Committee discussed divestment of fossil fuel holdings and that Langham demonstrated to them an assessment tool to assist with that process (asyousow.com). The Finance Committee agreed to form a subcommittee to study divestments and bring a set of recommendations to the Council for which holdings to sell or reallocate.

Eaves reported that the Finance Committee also discussed the hybrid and virtual meeting options the AAG is considering, from the perspective of their financial impact on the organization.

Langham praised Teri Martin for her 19 years of stewardship of the AAG's finances and the annual high marks we always receive from our auditors, even as complex audit standards keep changing. He stated that the AAG's Investment Advisor gave a positive report on the AAG's investments performance in 2021, which rebounded from the previous year's pandemic-induced downturn.

Langham reported that instead of the projected \$805,000 loss the Council had pre-approved for FYE2021 due to the Covid pandemic, the austerity measures taken by Langham and AAG staff and the Paycheck Protection Program loans helped the AAG end the year with an unexpected but welcome \$743,000 in the positive. Langham stated that the AAG will have \$1.16M in cash on hand for some of the decisions awaiting Council later in this meeting.

Langham also mentioned that this year the AAG will pivot to more aggressive fundraising (e.g., planned giving and foundations). The AAG will also explore additional diversification of revenue streams through year-round virtual offerings, having already invested in the virtual platform. He also mentioned that AAG staff are collaborating with some AAG members on an upcoming NSF proposal for \$500,000 to support further offerings via the AAG's virtual platform.

Update on AAG Investments, Endowment, Audited Financial Statement

Oppong moved to approve the AAG audited financial statement. Li seconded the motion, which passed unanimously.

FYE2021 Budget

Yeh asked about the decrease in Audiovisual expenses for Denver 2023 vs. New York 2022, indicating that she would like to ensure enough budgeted funding for the hybrid and other experiments for the 2023 meeting that the Climate Task Force is recommending.

Oppong moved to approve the FYE2023 Budget. Bose seconded the motion, which passed with 17 votes in favor and 1 abstention.

Strategic Planning allocation

A vote on this allocation of funds was deferred to the next day. Langham outlined the possibility of an in-person Council meeting in April to work with Consultant Michael Tey and AAG staff on the AAG Strategic Plan.

2020 Event Cancellation update

Having updated the Council in his earlier remarks, Langham asked whether there were any questions about the 2020 cancellation lawsuit outcome. There were none.

Langham updated the Council on the 2022 New York hotel force majeure cancellations, indicating he expects more communication from the two venues after the conclusion of the Feb. 25 – March 1 AAG virtual Annual Meeting.

Summary of Development Activity 2021

Langham gave an overview of the Development and revenue diversification plans at the AAG. Treby indicated the need to develop a culture of individual and planned giving at the AAG, besides also raising larger sums from other funding organizations. She pointed to the virtual platform as a great way to attract sponsors and advertisers, who can partner with the AAG to fund our programmatic efforts.

England and Li agreed with focusing on planned giving activities going forward. Treby also indicated that the AAG Development Advisory Group is seeking a member with Foundation experience, and asked Councilors to please recommend persons with that expertise.

Publications

Jennifer Cassidento, AAG Director of Publications, joined the meeting.

Mannozi and Sultana introduced the key decisions for Council under this section of the Agenda.

Journals Operations Report; Review Editorial Terms and Openings

Eaves asked whether adding Brian King to the Annals had its intended effect. Cassidento confirmed that the addition of King has indeed been very beneficial to help streamline the review process for the increased number of submissions to the Nature and Society and to the Human Geography sections.

Vote on refreshed editorial board for Annals Geog. Methods Editor Ling Bian

Mannozi pointed the Councilors to the proposed refreshed editorial board submitted by Ling Bian and asked for their comments. Cope pointed out the lack of proposed board members with qualitative research methods expertise. Several others agreed. The dominance of PhD-granting institutions was also noted. ***There was a consensus to ask Bian to propose a different revised board,*** to include members with qualitative *and* mixed-methods research expertise, and also candidates who

are not affiliated with PhD-granting institutions. The AAG was asked to place calls on the Knowledge Communities for these board openings and Councilors agreed to suggest candidates to Cassidento.

GeoHumanities Editor applications: select interviewees

Sultana reported on the Publications Committee's review of the 12 candidates for the GeoHumanities Editor opening, and the criteria they used to evaluate them for the position.

After some discussion, Bose moved to approve Christou, Ferretti and Inwood to be interviewed, Yeh seconded the motion, which passed unanimously.

Swab brought up the lack of diversity in AAG memorials published in the Annals, which had been noted in previous years as well. There was ***consensus to audit the process by which memorials are published in the Annals, with recommendations to be proposed by AAG staff and the Publications Committee and brought back for discussion at one of the next AAG Council meetings.***

February 24, 2022

Council reconvened at 10:00 AM

Governance Audit

Langham and McKnight welcomed everyone back and thanked the special Council task force that worked on revisions to the AAG Bylaws and the Officer Role descriptions. McKnight also anticipated that a new set of Policies, a Councilor Handbook, and additional Councilor role descriptions will be forthcoming for review and adoption at a future Council meeting.

Revised Bylaws

Governance audit consultants, Donna Dunn and Michael Anderson of Tecker International, joined the meeting.

Dunn explained that District of Columbia statutes no longer recognize a constitution as a valid governance document for any non-profit incorporated and registered in the District, hence the need for revisions to the AAG Constitution and Bylaws. The process of revising these documents was taken as an opportunity to also streamline the AAG Bylaws to include only fundamental mandates. Much of the content of existing Bylaws will, instead, be moved to a new set of AAG Policies, which can more easily be amended or updated to reflect the organization's evolving processes. Dunn noted that the revised Bylaws before the Council had also been reviewed by the AAG's law firm.

Discussion, questions and suggested edits to the revised Bylaws revealed the need for the Council to review the new AAG Policies document at the same time as the revised Bylaws. Langham suggested delaying the vote on the revised Bylaws to allow AAG staff to work on the changes proposed by the Councilors and bring both Bylaws and new Policies documents back to the Council for a later vote. He indicated the pending Councilor Handbook and remaining Councilor and Officer role descriptions would also be presented to the Council soon.

AAG Officer Roles

Anderson introduced the new Officer role descriptions and explained the benefits of having these roles, core competencies and responsibilities clarified. He explained that these role descriptions will assist the Nominating Committee as they search for candidates to stand for election for these positions, as well as supporting the annual self-evaluations of the Council and the evaluation of the Executive Director.

Revisions were suggested to several of the role descriptions, which will be returned to the Council for review and approval at a later meeting.

Proposed 2022 Council meeting dates/formats

Langham shared results of the poll on 2022 Council meetings and it was decided that **April 25 - 26** (two full days) would be used for an in-person Strategic Planning meeting and Council meeting. The in-person Council Orientation and Fall Council meeting will be held on **Sept. 15 - 16, 2022**. There will also be a virtual Council Meeting on **November 3 - 4** (over two half-days or less).

Regions update: websites, meetings, finances, elections

Langham mentioned the series of services and support the AAG offers Regions including the annual \$1,500 payments, as well as two additional funding opportunities Regional Divisions can apply for in the amount of \$2,500 and up to \$10,000. Langham also reminded Councilors that the AAG has been offering its platform for use in the election of the Regional Division Councilors and expressed his hope that all Regional Division Councilor elections can be managed this way.

Youngs asked that information on the additional funds and the application process be shared with the Regional Councilors and Regional Division boards. Mannozi indicated that as soon as this content is migrated to the new AAG website, it will be promptly shared with the Regional Division Boards and Councilors.

JEDI Framework

Langham stated what a pleasure it has been to work with the AAG JEDI Committee and to see their practices in rotating terms and transparency. He indicated wanting to review AAG committees to ensure similar practices are being implemented universally.

Staffing and timeline for JEDI Framework implementation

Langham stated that he and McKnight have been implementing the 32-Point JEDI Framework by weaving these activities into AAG Program staff goals. He also indicated wishing to obtain approval from the Council for additional funding to hire a JEDI Director to lead these efforts in close coordination with McKnight and him.

Approve allocation for 3-year JEDI Framework implementation

Langham asked Council to discuss his request to allocate up to \$1,000,000 from reserves to be used over three years to support the implementation of the JEDI framework. He indicated that approximately half of that sum would cover salary and consulting fees; the rest would be used to

pursue the proposed truth & reconciliation initiative, travel, event sessions and related JEDI activities. Li asked a general question about funding for AAG staff hiring.

Yeh asked about support for Specialty and Affinity Groups (especially physical geography-focused ones) to implement JEDI in their activities. She was reassured that this is part of the proposed JEDI Plan.

Eaves moved to approve allocating up to \$1,000,000 from reserves to be used over three years to support the implementation of the JEDI framework. Li seconded the motion, which passed unanimously.

Climate Change and AAG

Langham proposed that the Council review the task force's proposals and offer any new ideas for reducing the carbon footprint of AAG meetings. He suggested that after this discussion, Council should ask the staff to estimate the relative costs and feasibility of implementation for a selection of preferred proposals. Those estimates will be returned to Council at its April meeting, for review and decisions going forward.

Langham then shared with the Council some initial proposals from the AAG staff for the Denver 2023 meeting, that would offer 5-10% fully hybrid sessions, over 50% streamed sessions, and 1-2 rooms dedicated to beamed-in external sessions.

New options also being discussed by staff are:

- Watch Parties (view only) at academic departments allowing access for remote viewers
- Group registration/discounts allowing access to remote presenters and viewers
- Fully hybrid sessions for in-person and beamed-in presenters and viewers

Task Force – interim report

Yeh summarized the Climate Action Task Force's latest activities, including conducting a member survey and analyzing the responses. She pointed out that only the 784 fully completed responses were analyzed. She reported that 94% of respondents think it is important for AAG to take a leadership role in addressing climate change and of these 77% prioritized divestment of fossil fuel investments and 68% prioritized reducing carbon emissions associated with the AAG Annual Meeting. 84% prioritized AAG engaging in climate advocacy and making policy recommendations.

She was pleased to hear that there are plans for over 50% of Denver sessions to be streamed, as that was a high priority for the survey respondents. She did point to the challenge of respondents not being open to high meeting costs for a virtual platform, which strains against the reality of the costs for virtual meetings incurred by the AAG.

She stated that the task force hopes to finalize its analysis by the next Council meeting and to have a more robust set of recommendations at that time. At this juncture, the task force recommends decoupling events registration from membership renewals. They also recommend adding donation functions to the meeting registration or membership renewal processes, and forms of support for

student registrations.

For the 2024 Hawaii AAG meeting, the task force strongly recommends an alternate meeting Hub on the East Coast, in a city easily reachable by public transportation. The task force also recommends the 2026 meeting conduct another Hub experiment, to be elaborated based on the 2024 experience.

As for Nodes, the Climate Action Task Force recommends allowing self-organized nodes starting in 2023, with registration costs at the virtual registration rate to be collected by the node organizers. For 2024, the task force also recommends establishing a challenge grant for up to 5 participating nodes.

Task Force – Insights report

Langham gave a brief overview of the staff-elaborated report which used the full set of responses and provided some additional graphics to help visualize the responses.

General discussion: Langham indicated that increasing the variety of membership renewal options is his top priority with the forthcoming website releases and indicated that Treby will be developing proposals for a variety of incentives for member sign-ups. As for divestments, he shared with Council an assessment tool he recently found that ranks investment portfolio indices and flags them if a purportedly fossil fuel-free index contains over 9%. He indicated Council had already approved a 20% divestment of fossil fuels investments and that he will therefore proceed to divest starting with the lowest-ranked funds first.

After general discussion, Kujawa encouraged the AAG staff to explore the trade-offs for future meetings considering accessibility, equity, and other aspects. He also pointed out that the response rate to the survey was very low, compared to total member numbers.

Langham reiterated that the AAG staff will scope out various options as proposed by the task force and Council, keep costs in mind, and stay open to additional considerations and member concerns.

Committees, Specialty & Affinity Groups

Elect New Treasurer

Eaves moved to nominate Marcia England as next AAG Treasurer. Oppong seconded the motion. It was approved unanimously. England expressed looking forward to expanding her service on the AAG Council.

Need Council volunteer for the Committee on the Status of Women in Geography
Youngs described her positive experience on the Committee on the Status of Women in Geography and her role as Council liaison there. Sultana volunteered to serve as Council liaison after Youngs' term-end. This offer was met with general acclaim.

New Community Geographies Collaborative SG petition

The petition for the creation of a new Community Geographies Collaborative Specialty Group was introduced to the Council. ***After some discussion, Eaves moved to approve the formation of the***

Community Geographies Collaborative Specialty Group. Sultana seconded the motion, which received unanimous approval. This new Specialty Group is approved for an initial 3-year term.

Communications and Membership

Membership report

Langham gave an overview of the Membership report provided to the Council. He pointed out that the total member numbers have remained stable since 2020. He underscored his belief that the AAG will greatly benefit from Treby's career and expertise in membership growth and marketing.

Membership Development Initiative update

Treby reported that the Membership Development task force, composed of current and former AAG staff and a marketing consultant, organized focus groups for community college, physical geographers, and non-academic geographers. They discussed the AAG's current services, what the AAG could improve upon and what else it might offer these member communities, as the organization wishes to grow in numbers and participation.

Li asked about the optional demographic data being asked of AAG members on the new AAG Member Dashboard. Langham explained that the AAG will campaign members annually to submit demographic information about themselves to help the AAG better serve its members and meet their various needs. He hoped that the JEDI Committee and the Council would encourage participation in these efforts.

Youngs asked about the possibility of creating a trial membership category for students or other financially challenged communities to allow them to sign up for an AAG meeting at a member rate. This would allow them to interact with the AAG, give them exposure to some of our offerings, and eventually encourage them to convert to a full membership.

Raphael asked about sharing with AAG members some of the information gathered in the Membership report in the Council packet. Langham and Treby agreed with this suggestion.

Cope also suggested the addition of multiple-year memberships and auto-renewals, which Langham and Treby replied are planned for forthcoming AAG website releases.

Projects & Programs

Virtual Webinar series

McKnight reported to Council on the very successful year of virtual webinar and workshop offerings the AAG organized in 2021. She pointed out that these events totaled about the same number of registrants as for the 2021 Annual Meeting. She and Langham believe this response indicates that this AAG experiment has revealed itself as a promising new initiative to deliver year-round virtual offerings to members.

McKnight indicated there are plans already underway for more such virtual offerings in 2022. At the same time, she noted that the senior staff will be discussing how to prioritize and structure the webinar series going forward. She thanked all the Councilors who've been involved in the AAG webinars for their support in launching this successful initiative.

2022 AAG Annual Meeting highlights, networking app demonstration

Treby walked the Councilors through the Wonder app, a new platform the AAG is offering meeting attendees to allow for more networking and conversation during the virtual meeting week. She invited the Councilors to join her there after the conclusion of the Council meeting.

Council Listing

2022 Elected Officials

Li expressed her pleasure at the 2022 AAG election results. Sultana noted that two members of the upcoming Nominating Committee are affiliated with the same department.

Conclude any pending items

There were no pending items to conclude, as Langham had identified additional funds in the FYE2023 Budget to cover the costs of the Strategic Planning meeting, so he would not be asking Council for approval of additional funds.

New Business

Eaves reminded the Council that incoming AAG Vice President Rebecca Lave had suggested the Council discuss the impact of Covid on tenure decisions. Langham stated he has already been working with her, the AAG President, Vice President and Past President as well as the Healthy Departments Committee on this question.

Adjourn

There being no further items to discuss, Langham and Yeh adjourned the meeting at 3:06 PM.