

**Western Social Science Association
Executive Council Meeting Minutes
September 14-15, 2012, Grand Hyatt Hotel, Denver**

Members Present: Daniel McInerney, Heather Albanesi, Ross Burkhart, Les Alm (President-Elect), Tom Isern (President), Kristina Lyebecker, Prabha Unnithan (Vice-President), Mary Jo Tippeconnic Fox, Theodore Ransaw, Reynold Nesiba, Geoffrey Hale, Victor Heller (Immediate Past President)

Ex-Officio: Kate Herke (Newsletter Editor, Conference Manager, & Administrative Associate), Larry Gould (Executive Director), Gary Linn (Coordinator of Member Recruitment and Retention), Scott Alan Carson (Editor, *Social Science Journal*)

Member Absent: Heather Nicol

The meeting began on Thursday, September 14, 2012 at 7:30 a.m. with breakfast and discussed the following items.

1. Hyatt Hotels and Unite Here Dispute: The Council heard from David Lewin, General Manager of the San Francisco Hyatt, where WSSA is scheduled to meet for our Annual Conference in 2014. He furnished Council members with a fact sheet that detailed the Hotel's side in the dispute with a labor group, Unite Here. He specified that while the Hotel was under "siege" at times of any given day, Unite Here's "Called for Boycott of Hyatt" is not a job action and not a strike. The National Labor Relations Board does not recognize Unite Here's activities. Four organizations had pulled out of meeting at the San Francisco Hyatt as a result of Unite Here's call for a boycott. Council members asked several questions regarding the atmosphere around the Hotel as a result of the dispute. Lewin suggested that hotel guests experienced very few problems, urged us to meet there in 2014, and said it is possible the conflict might be resolved by then. Further discussion was postponed to the next day (see Item 14 below).
2. Executive Director's Financial Report: Gould reported that the Association's finances continued to be in good shape (see attached Report). The Report will also be posted on our website. In general, we lose money at the Annual Conferences and make money through the Journal. WSSA now has an insurance policy. We have also acquired a lawyer and an accountant to assist with those aspects of our operations.
3. *Social Science Journal* (SSJ) Editor's Report: Carson reported that in keeping with our policy of rotating members of the Editorial Board, he was recommending the removal of Janis Johnston, Ruben Martinez, Marianne Neilson, Daphne Pederson and Dhirendra Vajpeyi as Associate Editors and the inclusion of Darren Sherkat, Heather Albanesi, Adam Chamberlain and Thomas Maloney as replacements. This was unanimously approved.

Carson reported further that SSJ's impact factor was improving along with the quality of submissions he was receiving. Rich Greene has decided not to continue as Book Review Editor

and Carson was coordinating that journal section now along with the Book Exhibit at the Annual Conference. He has announced a forthcoming special issue of SSJ on Social Science and Health and was inviting papers for the same.

Unnithan moved and Hale seconded a motion (which carried unanimously) that the roles of SSJ Editor and Book Review Editor be separate and candidates sought for the latter position.

Unnithan mentioned that he is interested in proposing a special issue of SSJ on social sciences in South-East Asia and had discussed the matter with Carson who is supportive. Selected papers would be drawn from an International Conference on Behavioral and Social Science Research (ICBSSR) to be held at University Tunku Abdul Rahman in Malaysia in November which Unnithan would be attending and from a Call for Papers to be disseminated by the end of 2012. Council was broadly supportive of the idea since it would place WSSA in a position of helping enhance the development of the social sciences in an emerging region of the world and expand our organization and SSJ's international reach.

4. Social Science Research and Congress: Unnithan began this discussion by noting that there were budget proposals in the U. S. Congress to reduce and eliminate funding for the social sciences, especially political science. He wanted to know if Council was interested in WSSA taking a position on this issue since it affected the vitality of the social sciences. Discussion ensued about various ways of stating our opposition to these proposals publicly including possibly joining the Consortium of Social Science Associations (COSSA). It was decided unanimously that Unnithan and Burkhart will compose a short letter on the topic for mailing to members of the Congressional Budget Committee. Hale offered to assist with the letter.

5. Discussion of Student Awards and Implementation: Isern and Gould discussed the new awards that last year's Council had approved and how to implement them. As a result of the discussion, the following grants and awards are to be implemented as mentioned below:

A. Local Participation Grants

These are meant for local area students who are traveling **less than 250 miles** to the Annual Conference site. WSSA will provide free Conference registration (which includes automatic WSSA membership, subscription to the *Social Science Journal*) and, a ticket to the President's Luncheon for those nominated. Grantees must participate (by way of either presenting a paper or a poster, or by serving as a member of a panel) in the Conference program. Any authorized Dean of a higher education institution within the designated local area may certify up to five students from his or her institution to receive these grants. The list of certified students must be forwarded to the WSSA Administrator by January 15 of the Conference year. The WSSA Administrator will be responsible for the distribution of these grants to the students whose names have been forwarded by authorized Deans.

B. Travel Grants

These are meant for students who are traveling **more than 250 miles** to the Annual Conference site. WSSA will make a grant of \$500 each toward defraying the awardees travel expenses. Grantees must participate (by way of either presenting a paper or a poster, or by serving as a member of a panel) in the Conference program. The student will complete an application letter that confirms his or her participation in the upcoming Conference and the need for the amount of the grant to defray travel expenses. Recipients for travel grants will be selected by a Grants & Awards Committee that will be constituted and chaired by the Vice-President of WSSA. Up to ten (10) awards may be made by this Committee. The list of grantees will be forwarded to the WSSA Administrator by February 15 of the Conference year. Grantees will also be recognized at an appropriate WSSA function during the Conference. Checks for the grant amount will be issued by the WSSA Administrator following participation by grantees in the Conference program.

3. Dissertation Paper Award

This is meant for the author of a selected paper to be presented at the Annual Conference which is based on a dissertation in progress or completed before January 15 of the Conference year. WSSA will provide a stipend of \$1,000 for the winner. The awardee must participate by way of presenting the dissertation-based paper in the Conference program. To be considered for this award, a candidate will complete an application letter that confirms his or her participation in the upcoming Conference and provide an endorsement from his or her dissertation advisor or chair that the paper is based on a dissertation. The winner will be selected by a Grants & Awards Committee that will be constituted and chaired by the Vice-President of WSSA. The winner's name will be forwarded to the WSSA Administrator by February 15 of the Conference year. If selected as a Wicks Award winner, the awardee agrees to forego any other WSSA grant or award that Conference year. The winner of the Wicks Award will be recognized in the Conference Program and at an appropriate WSSA function. [It was later suggested by Isern and approved by Council acclamation that this award be named after the late John Wicks, a former President of WSSA see Item 16 below.]

6. Conference Set-Up, Planning and Section Coordinators: Gould and Alm will arrive the Sunday before the Conference begins (April 7, 2013) at the Denver Grand Hyatt and work on setting up.

Deadline for paper and poster presentation proposals to be submitted to Section Coordinators for the Conference is December 1, 2012. The panels from each Section are due to Alm as soon as possible after that.

Tony Robinson of the University of Colorado-Denver will lead a Political Economy tour of downtown Denver.

Alm reported that he has contacted all Section Coordinators and that the current revised list is correct except for Social Psychology. Albanesi has agreed to coordinate this Section temporarily.

7. Membership Campaign: Linn reported on WSSA's ongoing efforts to recruit new members and to retain existing members. He encouraged Section Coordinators to pass on contact information regarding members to those who succeeded them. Given that anyone who participates in an Annual Conference automatically becomes a member, their contact information should be retained for at least for three years. Attendees who do not wish to be contacted again may use the "unsubscribe" option. There was discussion about the best way to recruit new members, especially graduate students and those from the local area graduate institutions.

8. Communications, Student Workers for Annual Conference and Newsletter Assignments: Herke described several issues with the current organization of the WSSA website (wssa.asu.edu). Chris Hiryak has been doing a great job as our Webmaster, but WSSA has no formal connection to his university (Arizona State). Currently, no central clearinghouse exists for what is posted on the website. Discussion followed about the possibility of setting up our own website with a commercial hosting service and having a Communications Coordinator. Ransaw mentioned that it may be possible to produce a WSSA app. Herke added that she would work to place issues of the Newsletter on the website as soon as they were published. It was decided that Gould will collect information on webhosting and naming conventions for websites. Hale proposed and Heller seconded a motion that up to \$10,000 be authorized for the purpose of purchasing a domain name and setting up a website. Motion carried unanimously.

Herke mentioned that ten paid student workers were needed for the Conference. Some may also receive Conference registration waivers. Specific assignments included working the Association of Borderlands Studies desk, general registration desk, and for information technology assistance. Someone was needed to take photographs to post on various media platforms.

Herke asked for contributions to the next WSSA Newsletter. Several ideas were floated and assignments were made.

9. Rocky Mountain American Studies Association (RMASSA) Articulation: McInerney noted that the RMASSA, a group representing 21 campuses in the Western region with American Studies programs will be meeting along with WSSA's American Studies section. It was unanimously resolved that a mechanism be encouraged for continuing this association beyond the Denver 2013 Conference. Resolution was moved by Linn and seconded by Hale.

10. Virtual Conference Presentations: Linn began the discussion by noting that as the Section Coordinator for Chronic Disease and Disability Studies, he had received requests from potential Conference participants regarding the possibility of presenting "virtually." This would be accomplished via videoconferencing software such as Skype. The virtual participant would register for the Conference as usual. It would be particularly helpful for scholars with disabilities

that might make travel difficult. This item was tabled for the next day. [It was decided the next day that Linn should gather information and report on how major organizations that specialize in studying disability “certify” disability so as to enable a scholar to present virtually.

The meeting was adjourned to the following morning. Hotel staff conducted a tour of the facilities of the Grand Hyatt for the Annual Conference. Gould, Herle, Isern, Alm, Unnithan and Ransaw participated.

The meeting reconvened on Friday, September 15, 2012 at 8:00 a.m. with breakfast. We were joined by the WSSA Archivist (for life) Nina Burkardt. Council discussed the following items.

11. Proposed Human Ecology Section: Gould distributed a letter from Zachary Smith, Regents Professor at Northern Arizona University and President of the Society for Human Ecology proposing that a new section on Human Ecology be created within WSSA. He offered to serve as the first Section Coordinator if such a section was to be approved and begin operating in 2014. The sense of the Council was that Dr. Smith be invited to make a presentation about the proposed section during the April 2013 meetings.

12. Nominations Slate: Heller provided the names and brief biographical details of nominees for President-Elect (Prabha Unnithan), Vice-President (Theodore Ransaw) and three slots on the Executive Council (Barbara Bonnekessen, Michele Companion, Gary Linn). Gould suggested that there should be more candidates than the minimum for the positions available. The sense of the Council was that two or three more nominees be added to the current slate for Executive Council. [In November, after the meeting, Heller reported that Linn had withdrawn his candidacy, and two new nominees, Lynda Dickson and Yu-Feng (Winnie) Lee, had been added to the slate. Executive Council approved the revised slate by email vote in late-November.]

13. Recognition of Native American Heritage and Invocation at Annual Conference: Isern and Tippeconic Fox led a discussion regarding recognition and honoring Native Americans as the indigenous group of the US and the West during our Annual Conference. An invocation during the President’s Reception was one possibility suggested. An honorarium of \$300 and a gift of around \$500 were also suggested. Hale moved and Nesiba seconded a motion to authorize Isern, Tippeconic-Fox and Ransaw to constitute a Committee to explore options in connection with this issue.

14. Continuation of Hyatt & Unite Here discussion: A free-flowing discussion of the issues that arose from this dispute and the presentation by Lewin yesterday began. Unite Here, although invited by WSSA, chose not to make a presentation about their side of the dispute to us. Gould noted that even if one Section of WSSA refused to participate in a given Conference, there would be serious monetary losses. Hale argued that the focus should be on making sure WSSA does not suffer financial damage. Gould presented three options for the 2014 Conference. First,

we could continue to go to San Francisco, but seek a release from our guest room pickup number, since some of our members will refuse to participate as a result of the dispute. Second, we could send a letter cancelling our contract (due to financial liability); but this might result in a court battle. Third, we could ask Hyatt to move our San Francisco meeting date to 2018 or 2019; however, while Hyatt may be willing to do so, guest room rates will definitely go up. Following considerable discussion, Nesiba moved and Hale seconded a motion to authorize Gould to negotiate with Hyatt regarding the matter. Motion carried unanimously. [Gould reported in December 2012 that we will not be meeting at the San Francisco Hyatt in 2014, but will do so in 2017.]

15. Emancipation Proclamation Project: Ransaw and Isern reported that there had been no progress with idea to commemorate the Emancipation Proclamation at the Denver 2013 Conference. No further communication had been received from Dr. George Junne who had mooted the idea and had suggested several possible ways of celebrating this important historical event. Isern will check with Junne on this matter.

16. Discussion of Bequest from John Wicks: Dr. John Wicks of the University of Montana was an economist with a PhD from the University of Illinois. He had served as President of WSSA in 1972-74 and had been instrumental in changing the name of the then Rocky Mountain Social Science Association to our current form. Gould reported that, after Wicks' recent passing, we learned that he had bequeathed 20% of his estate to WSSA. This is worth around \$300,000 and we would receive it in about two years. Discussion about what to do with this bequest resulted in the Council agreeing unanimously that the amount would become an endowment and that we would name one of our awards, the Dissertation Paper Award after him. He would also be memorialized in the Association's Newsletter.

17. Future Conference Sites: Gould introduced the topic by noting that following resolution of the 2014 Conference site issue, we would be meeting in Portland, Oregon in 2015; Reno, Nevada in 2016; and in Albuquerque, New Mexico in 2017. [In December 2012, Gould reported by email that we would be meeting in Albuquerque, New Mexico in 2014 and San Francisco, California in 2017.] There was a general discussion about where we would meet in subsequent years with several Western cities in the US and Canada being mentioned. Gould reiterated that conference sites were chosen on the basis of the following criteria: the presence of a large single hotel or two nearby hotels (at the level of Class A); reasonable guest room pricing; the presence of an airport with flight connections to major cities and reasonable access to the conference hotel; a minimum of 21 meeting rooms for simultaneous breakout sessions; and, how accommodating the hotel staff are.

18. Commemoration of the 50th Anniversary of the *Social Science Journal*: Gould noted that 2013 would mark the 50th Anniversary of the founding of our flagship publication, SSJ. Carson mentioned he would write a commemorative editorial for the January 2013 Edition of the Journal. Unnithan, as immediate past Editor of SSJ, expressed interest in joining Carson in

writing this editorial. Burkardt, in her role as WSSA Archivist, said she would look into mentions of SSJ in our Association's archive which is maintained at the Denver Public Library.

The Executive Council meeting concluded with lunch.

Respectfully Submitted,

Prabha Unnithan

Vice-President/Secretary