

2.0: Membership: The Council discussed starting an ARO Fellowship. The benefits of being in a fellowship is the ability to obtain bridge grants. Someone must nominate you, been a member for 5 years, etc. L. Olson and S. Puria alongside the Executive Office will work to create a program draft for the Council to consider.

Another discussion was to create a multi-year discount for memberships where members can pay for multiple years for a small discount. This would provide a long-term membership incentive and continuity of membership. The Executive Office will explore models and system capabilities.

Another topic of discussion was exploring a one-day local student registration rate for the MWM. The Executive Office will explore the possibility and tracking mechanisms to measure the impact on ARO year-over-year.

3.1.3: ARO Historical Notes: All agreed that this section should be deleted from the policy manual. ARO used to have a historian, but it was not continued after the last historian's term. Moving forward, a historian that documents and maintains materials in a selective way would be helpful. Pictures and stories can be added to the newsletter, website, and other out-facing outlets. Dr. Barbara Canlon has agreed to be the ARO Historian and help the Executive Office lay out the program and next steps. She will contact the past historian to discuss retrieving the stored items.

- Awards for each year and pictures if available
- Major events during the meeting
- The most exciting science happening in the field or discoveries.
- Council members

We will create the ARO History section of the website and engage the ARO community to make this an engaging event that all members can contribute to. With the imminent website redesign, we have the opportunity to make this a robust part of the ARO community. Marketing strategies will be defined to ensure engagement and wide dissemination.

When there is a new Communications Officer appointed, there will also be a historian appointed to ensure this is an ongoing endeavor of the society. The title will be decided upon so that it appeals to all demographics within the ARO community.

4.3: NIDCD- All agreed that the last two sentences should be deleted; *Travel awards are also sponsored for Residents and Medical Students. In recent years NIDCD has also provided a Supplement to cover the costs of assistive listening devices for individuals with hearing impairment.* This statement is no longer accurate.

Additionally, the Council discussed the desire to explore additional grant funding. This will be a focus of the Council to identify and pursue these potential funders in the months to come. All agreed to approach potential funders attending the MWM to discuss potential partnership, desired benefits, and begin to establish critical relationships.

5.0 General Operations: All agreed that the sentence “the Chairs of the Membership Committee, Program Committee and a representative of the American Academy of Otolaryngology/Head and neck Surgery Foundation shall be ex officio non-voting member of the Council” should be removed. Also decided, if the bylaws do not state that the Program Committee chair must be elected, versus appointed, this position will shift into the listing of the voting board members. Also decided was that the editor should be removed as a council member as they are compensated for their activities and role.

5.3: Whistleblower Policy: This is a new policy presented to the board. The Executive Office explained that while it is a requirement of NIH grant funding, this policy is designed to provide the ARO community with a clear mechanism to report misconduct, fraud, or violations of laws and regulations within the organization. It serves to encourage reporting by assuring whistleblowers of protection from retaliation and adverse consequences. By fostering a culture of transparency and accountability, the policy helps ARO detect and address issues early, mitigate risks, and uphold ethical standards. Coupled with the code of conduct, it contributes to building trust and integrity within ARO while ensuring compliance with legal and regulatory requirements. The Council agreed that this policy is a critical addition to the policy manual.

The Council also inquired on the purchasing of Directors & Officers insurance each year. The Executive Office advised that this is purchased on their behalf and is a part of their annual budget each year. Additionally, the board would like to start having Council members fill out a conflict-of-interest disclosure each year. The Executive Office will draft the disclosure and place the review of the disclosure on an upcoming Council agenda for approval and implementation.

DIALOGUES Letter: Dr. Holt presented an update on a letter from Dialogue addressing systemic racism within corporate and professional cultures. The objective is to convene individuals interested in Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) and accessibility in hearing health. Initially, the group aimed to organize sessions at relevant conferences but has transitioned to monthly discussion forums. The board reviewed the proposed letter, endorsed by similar organizations and well-known researchers.

The Council deliberated on involving the ARO Diversity and Minority Affairs Committee (DMAC) for continuity and evaluation of these efforts. Evaluation methods were discussed, including past surveys sent to membership for data collection. Concerns were raised about overburdening the DMAC and the need for broader integration into the society. Suggestions included leveraging the Membership Committee to track demographic changes and the Awards Committee to monitor awardees. All agreed that defining success in diversity, equity, and inclusion efforts is crucial.

The letter has already shown results, focusing on outcomes across career stages, not just data. It is addressed to all professional organizations involved in hearing research. The Executive Office will share a digital copy with the Council and send it to the entire membership. Dialogue is asking recipients of the letter to have cross society dialogues, disseminate the letter, and that they be allowed to host a collaborative satellite session at a future MWM. The long-term goal for ARO is to incorporate these discussions into every ARO committee. The Executive Office will gather relevant statistics and update the table for Dialogue. Secondly, we will disseminate the letter to membership, with an official statement, as an indicator of AROs support as an initial step.

ARO Scholars: This program was launched on a small scale this year, providing attendance, travel, lodging, and a stipend for four reviewed and selected individuals. The overarching goal of this program is to send college students that are interested in auditory research to a summer immersive laboratory. This would include housing, a stipend to cover expenses while at the laboratory, travel, and attendance at the ARO MWM. The hope would be that each scholar would present at the ARO MWM on year two of their cohort.

The HHF is interested in funding this program, but this funding will only cover three students for the summer. Additional funding should be sought after for longevity and successful outcomes of this program. R25 grant should be pursued as there were 30 applicants and ARO was only able to provide 4 scholarships. This is compelling data. There are also generic mentoring grants to consider. ARO would need to identify a Principal Investigator, or a Multi-Principal Investigator will need to lead the initiative. All agreed that having a conversation with a program officer regarding the program is necessary. ARO could also consider doing a match to encourage funders. Additionally, there is a need to incorporate international students into the program and international funders should be identified and pursued. Dr. R. Kalluri will work with the committee to submit the in-progress funding proposal to HHF. The Council can then identify desired funders and a Principal Investigator for the R25 grant. The Council would also like the Executive Office to put together a proposal for researching grant opportunities and the writing of desired grants for consideration.

External Relations Committee: The Council discussed the current committee structure and charges. Historically, this committee was established to host an external event in the ARO MWM locale to build rapport with the community under the assumption that the MWM would continue visiting the same location. The ERC external event has an annual budget of \$10,000. This worked well when ARO went to the same locations for the meeting each year, but it no longer has the same return on investment. This committee oversees the ARO Mini Grant Program, and this should continue.

Currently, the ARO Communications Committee is comprised of all the chairs of the other committees, which hinders availability and impact as they are busy with their other committee obligations. After taking a close look at the Strategic Charges of both the ERC and the Communications Committee, it became clear that the two fit together quite well and the goals are even overlapping in some areas. Council discussed the importance of both committees and agreed that this

is a wonderful opportunity to continue the efforts of both with a more targeted approach. This merger also solves the issue of the Communications Committee being automatically filled by all ARO committee chairs. The Council ultimately agreed that the External Relations Committee will dissolve while its charges and goals will continue under the ARO Communications Committee. The Communication Committee is charged with being the external reputation building mechanism of ARO and disseminating all information across all communications and social media platforms. The existing ERC volunteers will receive an offer to finish out their current term on the Communication Committee. All other seats will be filled based on the Committee Volunteer Survey that will be sent to membership in mid-late February.

Council agreed to retain the \$10,000 budgetary line item that was previously earmarked for the event in the MWM host city in the ARO financials. Council agreed that the \$10,000 annual budget for the ERC Mini-Grant will stay in the budget. The Communications Committee will begin overseeing these applications starting in March 2024.

Also discussed was hosting an event at the actual meeting, on-site, to introduce ARO to the community and auditory research and to engage with the community that is hosting the ARO MWM as outreach to the public is critical to AROs ability to make a difference. Another idea discussed was putting together kits for members to take into their local schools as an outreach mechanism. All agreed that the Council should decide upon the committee structure and then empower the committee to develop strategies and action items.

The Council motioned, seconded, and unanimously approved the dissolution of f the ARO External Relations Committee and to include the volunteers and initiatives of the committee in the ARO Communications Committee.

The Council motioned, seconded, and unanimously approved the requirement of the ARO Historian and the Social Media Representative as part of the ARO Communications Committee.