

**Communications Committee Meeting**  
**Monday, May 20, 2024, 2PM-3PM EST**

**Attendees:**

|                   |                                 |
|-------------------|---------------------------------|
| Mike Bowl         | Francisco Barros Becker         |
| Dietmar Wohlbauer | Ruben Stepanyan                 |
| Nicolas Grillet   | Kelsey Anbuhl                   |
| Marisa Zallochi   | Hainan Lang                     |
| Randy Kulesza     | Kristin Gordy, Executive Office |

**Apologies:**

None received

**Minutes:**

**Introductions and Committee Overview**

The meeting began with Mike Bowl from UCL Ear Institute introducing the new committee members. Each member shared their background and previous experience with ARO. Mike gave an overview of the committee and noted that the External Relations Committee (ERC) is now part of the Communications Committee. He explained that the Communications Committee has previously been filled by other ARO committee chairs. This did not foster a productive environment, so the Council made the decision to combine the ERC and Communications Committees as they had similar purposes and strategic goals per the ARO Strategic Plan. Mike expressed gratitude to the members for offering their time and commitment to the committee.

**Website Redesign and Committee Goals**

Mike discussed the recently launched committee handbooks and asked members to familiarize themselves with the handbook. He also discussed the *redesign of the ARO website* that the committee will take part in. Kristin explained the website redesign process, which will focus on mobile optimization and user-friendly navigation, with a goal to complete it by October. The *ERC Mini-Grant program* will continue under the new committee to empower ARO members, including students, postdocs, and researchers, to engage with their local community. In addition, the *ERC Speaker's Bureau* will continue under the Communications Committee. Further discussion is needed on how requests are matched with speakers and, more generally, how they are processed most efficiently. The committee will determine other goals to prioritize over the next 3 years.

**Communication and Outreach Efforts**

The committee aims to set short-term, medium-term, and long-term goals for communication and outreach efforts. The ERC and Communications Committee have merged, with overlapping strategic charges. The committee discussed some initiatives the committee could consider beginning to work on. Members discussed various ideas for increasing outreach efforts, including creating *new educational content for the ARO YouTube channel*, hosting symposiums, and educating communities on hearing health, hearing protection, and noise exposure. It was suggested that the *spARO members could be mobilized to work in their respective communities to educate and inform* regarding the issues of noise exposure and hearing loss. For publicizing noise-induced hearing loss the committee considered focusing on primary and middle school-aged students. With regards to hearing aid use and their potential to prevent/delay cognitive decline, it was suggested that care facilities could be a good starting point. Furthermore, it was discussed that content could be prepared for parents of children diagnosed with hearing loss to help inform them of their options. Finally, it was suggested that members could get involved in community-based projects to reach target audiences e.g. local museums, café scientifique, pint-of-science, etc. As an incentive, the ARO could *consider launching an 'Outreach Award'*. It was mentioned that the spARO membership would likely be keen on these ideas. It was noted that ARO should aim to leverage and publicize recent progress and developments relating to new treatments for hearing loss. However, this should be done in an impartial manner, so as not to be thought to favor any one business or entity. The idea of *creating sound bite content to*

***generate interest on Instagram*** was discussed (e.g. explaining that noise-induced hearing loss is evident in mice exposed to as little as 2 hours of noise). The Executive Office stated they are happy to partner with the committee and ensure scientific content is posted on the ARO Instagram account. It was noted that many of these new ideas dovetail well with the existing programs (Mini-grant and Speaker's bureau), and as such it was suggested that sub-groups could be formed within the committee to each lead on one of the topic areas.

Overall, the committee agreed that the ***ARO should be the voice and champion of hearing health in the USA and worldwide***. This could involve a longer-term goal of trying to elicit a debate at government level regarding noise exposure in public areas (e.g. sporting events, gyms, etc), with a view to bring about a change in policy.

**Action Items:**

1. All members to consider short-term, medium-term, and long-term goals for the committee's communication and outreach efforts and be ready to discuss them at the next meeting.
2. The Executive Office will send out a time survey to schedule a meeting in June.