spARO Steering Committee Meeting Minutes
Wednesday, November 20, 2024
3:00-4:00 Pm Eastern Time

Attendees:
George Ordiway (chair), Audrey Drotos, Micheal Roberts, Samantha Stiepan, Kelsey Anbuhl, Ilkem Sevgili, Jessica MacLean, Kristin Johnson (Executive Office)

Minutes:

Planned Parenthood and Equality Florida Booth Update

The Executive Office shared an update from the ARO Council that they have decided to decline spARO's proposal to give Planned Parenthood and Equality Florida complimentary exhibit booths at the upcoming MidWinter Meeting. Council is working on a written response that address all aspects of the spARO proposal. It was noted that Council discussed the proposal at length and the written reply will be sent to George as soon as possible.

Safety Survey

A significant topic of discussion was a survey to be sent out to members allowing them to voice safety concerns and prioritize what will help most. George will forward the survey to Kristin and she will handle the approval process with the Council at their meeting the following day.

Accessibility & Accommodation Committee Update

The Accessibility Committee is actively preparing for the MidWinter Meeting (MWM) by developing a new rating system for their Accessibility Award for Post Blitz posters. The committee is also creating its own poster that provides tips on making accessible poster presentations. Additionally, they are organizing a coffee hour in January to discuss accessibility issues and share further information.

Diversity and Minority Affairs Committee Update

The Diversity and Minority Affairs Committee is planning several activities for the conference, including a celebration of Black History Month and recognition of Black scientists. They have successfully secured donations to sponsor the event. The committee has completed ARO Scholars reviews as well as the second round of Travel Award reviews the committee completes yearly.

Education Committee Update

The Education Committee will host a coffee hour in January focused on the publishing process, filling the gap left by spARO deciding not to organize a publishing session this year.

Long Range Planning Committee Update

The Long Range Planning Committee is overhauling the evaluation process to ensure it is more impactful and actionable for future strategic planning, particularly in preparation for designing the 2026-2028 strategic plan. spARO will have the opportunity to edit/add/remove questions.

Program Committee Update

Poster Blitz planning will begin soon. This year there will be 2 concurrent Poster Blitz sessions which means the organizers must determine the best way to divide the abstracts between the two sessions. It was discussed that a review process may not be necessary if they can split in such a way that there is time for everyone to present. It was noted that the split will be contingent on the abstracts. The finalized list of abstracts for Poster Blitz sessions will be shared soon.

Mentorship Update

The mentorship task force is planning the mentor meet & greet event for the MWM. They will need to collect RSVPs for attendance. George noted that the task force has all the contact information for the mentor pairs. The task force will send out a google form for RSVPs. The event is schedule on Sunday, 2/23 from 7:30 to 8:30.

MWM WhatsApp Group Discussion

The group discussed the importance of maintaining security for the WhatsApp group. Concerns were raised about sharing the link publicly, leading to a proposal to vet individuals before adding them to the group. Interested individuals will be instructed to email ARO for an invitation link and instructed not to share it. The Executive Office will confirm that the requester is registered for the meeting before providing the link.

General Updates and Next Steps

Please note that the pre-MWM sessions scheduled for February 6th at 10:30A and 3:30P EST are confirmed while the sessions for February 4th at the same times are tentatively scheduled. The meeting concluded with a reminder to check emails periodically for new information and updates. George reminded everyone to complete the time survey for the December meeting.