spARO Steering Committee Meeting Minutes
Monday, October 21, 2024
3:00-4:00 Pm Eastern Time

Attendees:
George Ordiway (chair), Rose Rizzi, Audrey Drotos, Micheal Roberts, Samantha Stiepan, Jessica MacLean, Samantha Davis, Jarnail Singh, Charles Morgan, Nathaniel Nowak, Sumana Ghosh, Leslie Gonzales, Agudemu Borjigin, Matsya Thulasiram, Rhiannon McNeely (executive office)

Minutes:

Executive Office Updates
The meeting began with updates from the Executive Office that a final decision on the social offset donation campaign is still pending from the council. Due to time constraints, the initiative to involve volunteers at the conference was postponed but will be revisited for the 2026 meeting.

Accessibly and Accommodations Committee Update
There are plans for a pre-MidWinter meeting coffee hour on January 20, 2025, focused on tips for creating and providing accessibility-friendly presentations at the ARO Midwinter Meeting. The Accessibility committee also discussed plans to improve the accessibility of conference posters, including the idea of revamping the poster evaluation system and potentially recognizing the best posters during the awards ceremony. There was also discussion about offering an accessible poster template in the poster hall. The final decisions on these matters are expected in November.

Diversity and Minority Affairs Committee Update
The committee recently held a coffee hour on the ARO Scholarship Program, which included tips on making applications stand out.

Education Committee Updates
There are continued plans for future coffee hours and seminars, though no specific updates were provided. It was mentioned that additional input and support could be provided by other committees if needed.

Long Range Planning Committee Updates
The committee has not met since September but is discussing the importance of accessibility and affordability in future conference locations, as well as the need for a more streamlined survey process for attendees. It was also mentioned that at the 2025 MidWinter Meeting in Orlando there would be more food and coffee options, and that local food and nearby attractions would be featured on the conference website to help attendees plan ahead.

Membership Committee Updates
The committee is focusing on membership benefits such as free memberships for first-time student members and is working on updating the website to highlight important membership benefits.

Program Committee Updates
The committee is busy organizing podium sessions and encouraging trainees to express interest in moderating for the upcoming 205 MidWinter Meeting.

Travel Awards Committee Updates
The committee is in the processing of finalizing application reviews and identifying 2025 Travel Award winners.

Clinician Scientist Committee Updates
The committee has not met since June but plans to convene in November.

Mentorship Committee Update
The committee is planning a similar event to last year's mentorship session, while the Mentorship Program reported that pairings have been sent out but there were no further updates at this time.

Buddy System Updates
This is still being developed, with ideas to incorporate it into a WhatsApp group to help facilitate coordination for meals and social gatherings. This platform would also serve as a space for buddy system communications, with separate sub-channels for various topics.

spARO Sessions & Other Updates
Three out of four major events have been confirmed, with one pending confirmation from a guest speaker. The committee is considering a combination of mentor-mentee communication and work-life balance for the final session. The sessions will be held on February 4th and 6th, with a maximum of two hour-long sessions each day. The Young Investigator Luncheon is still on, but attendees will need to pay a small fee to encourage participation. The committee emphasized the importance of transparency and encouraged all members to complete the November meeting survey.