spARO Steering Committee Meeting Minutes

Monday, May 19, 2025 | 2:00-3:00 PM EST

Committee Introduction

The committee introduced the new chair and reviewed the structure, roles, and responsibilities of the spARO Steering Committee. Clarification was provided regarding the distinctions between spARO representatives and full committee members. The committee also addressed ongoing confusion about member assignments, and it was agreed that outstanding issues would be followed up in subsequent communication from the chair. Members were encouraged to review the committee's handbook and familiarize themselves with expectations.

Science Advocacy Initiative Planning

The committee discussed launching a new initiative aimed at supporting scientists through advocacy, building on previous social networking activities held at conferences. Ideas for events at the upcoming ARO conference were explored, including workshops on engaging with policymakers and training in science communication skills. It was decided that members would continue brainstorming additional ideas before the next meeting, after which a subcommittee would be formed to develop the initiative further.

Conference Engagement Strategies

Efforts to improve trainee engagement at the upcoming MidWinter Meeting were a central focus. The committee agreed to increase the visibility of spARO membership by clarifying signage at the ribbon table and sending targeted follow-up emails to registered trainees. Adjusting the scheduling of spARO sessions to avoid evening time slots was considered, as well as expanding the program's online presence through platforms like Instagram or LinkedIn.

The committee also addressed ongoing confusion around spARO's identity and discussed possible solutions to improve awareness among trainees, such as email campaigns, printed materials, or rebranding efforts.

The committee revisited the idea of implementing a student volunteer program to help offset costs for undergraduate attendees. Although this initiative was proposed last year, there was insufficient time to implement it before the MidWinter Meeting. The Executive Office will develop a detailed proposal outlining the structure of the program, including the application and approval process, and share it with the committee when complete.

Next Steps

- All committee members brainstorm one idea for the new advocacy initiative before the next meeting.
- Communications Committee members explore opportunities for community outreach and discuss the potential development of a spARO social media presence, such as an Instagram account, during their upcoming meeting.
- spARO Sessions committee members to discuss potential changes to session timing and topics for the next MidWinter Meeting.
- Executive Office to follow up about implementing a student volunteer program for the 2026 MidWinter Meeting.