spARO Steering Committee Meeting Minutes

Tueday, June 17, 2025 | 4:00-5:00 PM EST

Minutes:

May Committee Meeting Minutes Approval

It was confirmed that the minutes from the May meeting had been circulated via email and were ready for approval, with no objections raised.

Executive Council and Newsletter Updates

There were no new updates shared from the Executive Council or management team at this time. A newsletter blurb related to spARO and the upcoming conference was discussed, with plans to finalize and circulate the content later in the week.

Trainee Network Resources Overview

The committee reviewed the purpose and benefits of spARO, the trainee division of ARO, which includes graduate students, postdocs, residents, technicians, and clinicians. It was emphasized that all trainees interested in ARO's scientific focus are automatically included in spARO. The committee discussed ways to improve messaging around this, including highlighting virtual events, the mentorship program, and networking opportunities.

Trainee Engagement Initiatives

Efforts to enhance engagement among early-stage trainees and postdocs were discussed. The committee proposed hosting two virtual events annually—one in the fall and one in the spring—to support networking and mentorship outside the annual meeting. It was agreed that a poll would be sent to student members in August to gather input on event topics and formats. Further brainstorming on specific programming ideas was scheduled for the next meeting, with a note to coordinate efforts with other committees to avoid overlap.

Committee Progress and Reports

The meeting included updates from several committees. No updates were available from the Buddy System committee, while the Clinician Scientist committee is planning a meeting in July. The Communications Committee shared updates on a Mini Grant Review discussion and potential outreach to local schools. The Education Committee continues work on a speaker list project. The Membership Committee has not yet met. The Program

Committee has begun reviewing symposium submissions, and the Travel Awards Committee has held its first meeting.

Travel Awards and Outreach Efforts

The current travel award system remains open for 2–3 months, typically receiving 250–300 applications. The committee discussed the possibility of organizing a trainee-focused event related to travel awards. Plans for professional outreach initiatives, including follow-up from a recent spARO Town Hall, are underway, with meetings scheduled to continue discussions. Clarification will be sought from the editor-in-chief of *JARO* regarding the inclusion of commentary-style articles by trainees.

Next Steps

- Samantha to leave link to spARO newsletter blurb open for edits through June 18th.
- Samantha to email JARO Editor-in-Chief for clarification on JARO x spARO initiative.
- Committee to continue discussion on revitalizing spARO sessions and coordinating with the Program Committee.
- Samantha to email Education Committee and Program Committee chairs about scheduling a coffee hour on abstract writing before the September 8th deadline.
- All spARO members to advertise within their networks about the earlier abstract submission deadline (September 8th) for the upcoming meeting.