**ARO Development, Mentorship, and Advancement Committee (DMAC) Meeting**

**Date:** April 20, 2026

**Format:** Virtual (Microsoft Teams)

**Attendees:**

Melissa McGovern (Co-Chair), Kristin Johnson (Executive Director, ARO), Joseph Luberson, Reza Amanipour, Tenzin Ngodup, Timothy Balmer, Jarnail Singh, Carolyn McClaskey

**Absent:**

Angela Ballesteros, Avril Genene Holt, Yuan He

**1. Welcome and Introductions**

**Summary:**

The meeting was called to order by Melissa McGovern. Members introduced themselves, including new committee members. No procedural questions were raised by new members before moving into the agenda.

**Decisions Made:**

- None.

**Action Items:**

- None.

**2. ARO Council Strategic Planning Request (2026–2029)**

**Summary:**
The committee reviewed a request from ARO Council asking committees to respond to the new 2026–2029 strategic planning framework. DMAC task groups were asked to review the planning document and provide short written responses addressing how their activities align with Council's priorities. These responses will be compiled and submitted as a unified DMAC response.

**Decisions Made:**

- DMAC will respond to Council's strategic planning request using input from each task group.
- Responses will consist of brief (1–3 sentence) answers to the questions outlined in the planning document.

**Action Items:**

- All DMAC task groups to review the Council strategic planning document and draft short responses.
- Melissa McGovern to compile task group responses and submit a consolidated DMAC response to Council by the end of May.

**3. Overview of DMAC Task Groups and Leadership**

**Summary:**
The committee reviewed current DMAC task groups, confirmed leadership assignments, and discussed expectations for task group leaders. Leaders are responsible for coordinating meetings and serving as liaisons between task groups and the full committee. Members who had signed up for the Travel Awards task group were asked to reassign themselves due to changes in funding that have prompted removal of this secondary Travel Award review.

**Decisions Made:**

- Task group leadership assignments were confirmed.
- Members previously assigned to Travel Awards will reallocate to other active task groups.

**Action Items:**

- Task group leaders to schedule meetings and communicate plans to the committee.
- Members assigned to the Travel Awards task group to select a different task group.

**4. Job Search Mixer Task Group**

**Summary:**

The committee discussed plans for a Job Search Mixer to be held during the ARO meeting to facilitate intentional networking between job seekers and hiring institutions. Carolyn McClaskey, serving as task group leader, asked logistical questions regarding space, budget, food, and approval processes. Kristin Johnson outlined the need for Program Committee approval, budget planning (including food and beverage costs), and an estimated mid-July timeline for proposal submission.

**Decisions Made:**

- The committee agreed to move forward with planning a Job Search Mixer for the upcoming ARO meeting.
- Budget considerations, including food and venue costs, will be incorporated early in planning.

**Action Items:**

- Job Search Mixer task group to define the event format, duration, and estimated attendance.
- Carolyn McClaskey to prepare a preliminary proposal and budget request.
- Kristin Johnson to request venue menu information to support budget planning.

**5. Pre-ARO Virtual Session**

**Summary:**

The committee discussed the future of the pre-ARO virtual session. While the session has been offered in previous years as an introduction to the meeting, members noted the availability of recorded content and suggested rethinking the format. Ideas included focusing the session on job search preparation, networking strategies, and reducing redundancy with existing materials. Kristin Johnson noted that this initiative is under broader review as part of ARO's strategic planning and requested spARO input.

**Decisions Made:**

- Planning for the pre-ARO virtual session will proceed cautiously pending strategic review.
- The committee will explore alternative or revised content rather than repeating prior formats.

**Action Items:**

- Pre-ARO Virtual Session task group to discuss alternative session concepts aligned with current member needs.
- Kristin Johnson to provide updates on spARO feedback and strategic direction.

**6. Special Session Planning**

**Summary:**

The committee reviewed plans for submitting a Special Session proposal for the upcoming ARO meeting. The submission process, timeline, and flexibility of Special Sessions were clarified. Potential themes discussed included early career support, funding challenges, non-NIH funding sources, career paths outside academia, and mentoring. The submission window was confirmed to open April 22 and close in late June.

**Decisions Made:**

- DMAC will pursue submission of a Special Session proposal.
- The session theme will be determined by the task group based on relevance and feasibility.

**Action Items:**

- Special Session task group to develop session concepts and identify speakers.
- Task group to prepare and submit a Special Session proposal by the submission deadline.

**7. ARO Scholars Program**

**Summary:**

Reza Amanipour provided an update on the ARO Scholars Program. A funding proposal has been submitted to the Burroughs Welcome Fund, with a decision expected later in the year. The committee discussed upcoming review of summer research plans and potential additional funding sources, including the Hearing Health Foundation.

**Decisions Made:**

- The ARO Scholars Program will continue pending funding outcomes.
- Summer research plans will be reviewed prior to stipend distribution.

**Action Items:**

- Reza Amanipour and Melissa McGovern to follow up with the Hearing Health Foundation regarding potential funding.
- Task group to review submitted summer research plans in mid-to-late May.
- Kristin Johnson to coordinate stipend payments once plans are approved.

**8. Manuscript Task Group**

**Summary:**
Carolyn McClaskey reported that the manuscript stemming from a prior DMAC special session is nearing completion. Progress has been slowed by personnel changes and availability challenges, but the manuscript is expected to be finalized within the next one to two months. Additional committee assistance was offered but deemed unnecessary at this stage.

**Decisions Made:**

- The manuscript will proceed to completion with the current task group.

**Action Items:**

- Carolyn McClaskey to convene a final meeting and move the manuscript toward submission.

**9. Closing and Next Steps**

**Summary:**
The committee confirmed next steps related to strategic planning responses and task group work. Kristin Johnson agreed to resend meeting series invitations to address access issues. Task group leaders were asked to include the co-chairs on meeting invitations when possible. The meeting adjourned with no additional business.

**Decisions Made:**

- None.

**Action Items:**

- Kristin Johnson to resend the DMAC meeting series invitation.
- Task group leaders to include DMAC co-chairs on task group meeting invitations.

**Summary**

The DMAC meeting focused on orienting members for the new committee year, responding to ARO Council's 2026–2029 strategic planning request, and reviewing the status of ongoing task group initiatives. Key discussions included planning a Job Search Mixer, reevaluating the pre-ARO virtual session, developing a Special Session proposal, advancing the ARO Scholars Program, and finalizing

a pending manuscript. Emphasis was placed on aligning committee activities with broader ARO priorities and improving intentional networking and career development support.

**Decisions Made (Consolidated)**

- DMAC will submit a consolidated response to ARO Council's 2026–2029 strategic planning request.
- A Job Search Mixer will be planned for the upcoming ARO meeting.
- A Special Session proposal will be developed and submitted.
- The ARO Scholars Program will continue pending funding decisions.
- The pre-ARO virtual session format will be reevaluated.

**Action Items (Consolidated)**

- **All DMAC Task Groups:** Review Council strategic planning document and submit brief written responses.
- **Melissa McGovern:** Compile task group responses and submit to Council; follow up with the Hearing Health Foundation.
- **Carolyn McClaskey:** Lead planning for the Job Search Mixer; finalize and submit the DMAC manuscript.
- **Kristin Johnson:** Provide venue and budget information for the Job Search Mixer; resend DMAC meeting invitations; coordinate stipend payments for ARO Scholars.
- **Reza Amanipour:** Continue managing ARO Scholars funding efforts and review summer research plans.