Association for Research in Otolaryngology (ARO)

SPARO STEERING COMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES

Date:	July 16, 2026
Time:	2:04 PM EDT
Duration:	21 minutes, 19 seconds

Attendees

- **Shelby Ashton Payne** (Chair)
- **Allison Johnson** (Parthenon / Administrative Support)
- **Samantha Davis**
- **Megan Phebe Arnold** (Clinician Scientist Committee)
- **Shagun Shyam Sunder Ajmera** (Communications Committee)
- **Emily Fabrizio-Stover** (DMAC)
- **Ilkem Sevgili** (Global Professional Outreach)
- **Rose Rizzi** (Membership Committee)
- **Shakila Mahmuda Fatima** (Program Committee)
- **Leslie G** (spARO Sessions)
- **Nilay Gupta** (Accessibility and Accommodations / Travel Awards)

1. Chair's Update

- **ARO Council Meeting:** The upcoming ARO Council meeting is scheduled for next week.
- **Trainee Career Advice Hub:** Efforts continue toward launching a dedicated hub for trainee career advice. Shelby has scheduled an August meeting with faculty representatives Lavinia Sheets and Michael Roberts to discuss setting up a dedicated Slack workspace. The framework will feature faculty moderators alongside a spARO representative moderator to troubleshoot the service and amplify trainee voices. Members interested in contributing to this initiative are asked to email Shelby.

2. Committee Updates

Accessibility and Accommodations & Travel Awards

- **Status Update:** No new direct updates for accessibility initiatives.

- **Travel Awards Portal:** The submission portal is currently open. The deadline coincides with the general abstract deadline on **September 7th**. Members are requested to spread the word to their peers.

Clinician Scientist Committee

- **Special Session Initiative:** The committee met multiple times over the past month to brainstorm a special session focused on gene therapy, aiming to boost clinician scientist recruitment to ARO.
- **Webinars:** Following a successful webinar for audiologist clinician scientists a few weeks ago, another webinar is being planned for later in the fall. Committee representative Megan Arnold requested that members submit relevant topic suggestions.

Communications Committee

- **Outreach Initiative:** The outreach website is live, and the application form is nearing completion. The committee will soon review instructional slide decks meant to serve as educational resources for outreach participants. The goal is to have the initiative fully operational by the end of July.
- **Wikipedia Project:** A pitch was introduced to establish a Wikipedia page project dedicated to highlighting ARO Award of Merit recipients.
- **spARO Newsletter:** Samantha Davis raised an inquiry regarding the timing of the next spARO newsletter, noting the last edition was sent in April or May. Allison Johnson will track down the scheduling status, and Shelby will send a follow-up email to the Communications Committee (copying Allison) to finalize planning.

Data Management and Analysis Committee (DMAC)

- **Status Update:** No updates; the next DMAC meeting is scheduled for Monday, July 20th.

Education Committee

- **Upcoming Events:** Recent meetings focused on mapping out the next seminar series topics, booking speakers, scheduling the next "Cutting Edge Techniques and Models" session, and arranging a trainee coffee hour.

Global Professional Outreach

- **Virtual Seminar:** Ongoing planning is underway for a virtual seminar featuring global professors discussing diverse topics. Speaker confirmations are currently being finalized.
- **Personnel Support:** While the current plan of executing two events is manageable, the committee extends an open invitation for an additional member to join and ease operations.

JARO Journal Club

- **Editorial Staffing:** An application has finally been submitted for the vacant editor role.
- **Structural Layout:** Samantha Davis clarified that the Journal Club is intended to provide publication experience rather than serve as a recurring, high-frequency commitment for the same individuals. The inaugural article received positive faculty mentor feedback and will be submitted soon. Shelby will follow up with Audrey regarding any upcoming email distributions.

Long-Range Planning Committee

- **Survey Development:** The committee met recently to focus on optimizing the post-conference survey. They are also designing a brand-new survey tailored specifically for exhibitors and sponsors by reviewing formatting benchmarks from other partner societies. Trainee-specific inputs will be handled on a TBD basis.

Membership Committee

- **Status Update:** No updates; the next meeting is scheduled for next week.
- **Mentorship Program Transition:** Samantha Davis, Rose Rizzi, Maria, and Stephen will coordinate a transition meeting with previous program managers Ansley and Richard to keep the mentorship initiative moving forward.

Program Committee

- **Submission Deadlines:** The poster and podium submission portal is active. The submission deadline is **September 7th**. Selection and screening workflows will commence immediately following the closing date.

spARO Sessions

- **Status Update:** Planning traditionally begins in August. A meeting call will be issued to the group later this month to assemble in August.

3. General & New Business

- **50th Anniversary Photo Collage:** Nilay Gupta raised a previous proposal to have members ask their PIs for historical photos to generate a celebratory collage for the 50th meeting. Allison Johnson will connect with Kristin to check if a simple Google Form submission link requires formal Council approval. Shelby will also add this item to the agenda for next week's ARO Council meeting.
- **Safety Notice:** Attendees exchanged regional safety notes concerning the active wildfire smoke blanketing portions of the East Coast and Upper New York, advising those traveling to the upcoming Gordon Research Conference (GRC) to pack protective masks.

Action Items

- **1. Trainee Hub:** Interested members to email Shelby Payne to join the career hub framework setup.
- **2. spARO Newsletter:** Shelby Payne to email the Communications Committee regarding quarterly newsletter scheduling, copying Allison Johnson.
- **3. Mentorship Program:** Samantha Davis to loop Rose Rizzi into the coordination email with Maria, Stephen, Ansley, and Richard.
- **4. 50th Anniversary Materials:** Allison Johnson to sync with Kristin regarding photo submission approval; Shelby Payne to address picture collection at the next ARO Council meeting.