ARO Council Meeting

July 22, 2026 11:30 AM - 1:00 PM

Attendees: Kristin Johnson, Amanda Lauer, Lisa Cunningham, Katharine Fernandez, Ronna Hertzano, Sonja Pyott, Sunil Puria, Konstantina Stankovic, Shelby Payne, Matt Kelley

1. Executive Office Updates

Kristin Johnson provided several updates from the Executive Office. Award of Merit submissions have closed and the committee is reviewing them. Poster and podium abstracts are open for submission, along with travel award and poster blitz applications. Symposia and special session selections have been completed: of 13 symposia, 9 special sessions, and 7 young investigator symposia submitted, 6 symposia, 2 special sessions, and 2 young investigator symposia were accepted. A job search mixer submitted by DMAC was not accepted as part of the regular program but may be accommodated elsewhere in the program, potentially in partnership with spARO.

Regarding the 50th anniversary, the ARO archives have been located. Photos and videos had already been digitized and are on external hard drives that have been shipped to the Executive Office. A Google form is being created to collect images and memories from members for the 50th anniversary celebration.

The Nominating Committee met efficiently and completed most of its work in one session. The only remaining task is for Ronna and Sunil Puria to select two appointees for the Nominating Committee.

Kristin also announced that ARO Scholars has officially received a $20,000 award from the Burroughs Welcome Fund.

Decisions Made: None.

Action Items:

- Kristin Johnson to discuss the DMAC job search mixer with Shelby Payne for potential inclusion elsewhere in the program, possibly in partnership with spARO.
- Kristin Johnson to create a Google form for members to submit images and memories for the 50th anniversary.
- Ronna and Sunil Puria to select two appointees to the Nominating Committee before invitations go out in August.

3. Senior Member Voting Rights

Lisa Cunningham raised the issue of senior member voting rights, noting that a former ARO president and Award of Merit recipient (Judy Dubno) had again inquired why senior members are not permitted to

vote in elections. Kristin reviewed the previous Council rationale: senior membership is self-selected, technically intended for retired members, and carries significantly reduced dues. Because many senior members are not actually retired and use the category primarily for registration and dues discounts, the previous Council had maintained that those who wish to vote may remain as regular members.

Sunil Puria expressed support for allowing senior members to vote, noting their institutional knowledge and continued contributions. Konstantina Stankovic cited examples of active senior members who continue to contribute meaningfully to the field. Amanda Lauer suggested that rather than Council deciding, the question could be put to the full membership via a bylaws amendment on the ballot. Kristin Johnson noted that changing the bylaws would require a majority vote of the membership.

Konstantina Stankovic also proposed an endowed scholarship model, similar to the Ed Rubel scholarship at the University of Washington, where trainees of prominent senior ARO members could team up to raise funds for named scholarships to support trainee travel to ARO. Kristin Kristin noted this as a promising idea for the Finance Committee to consider.

After discussion, the Council agreed to take more time to consider the issue thoroughly rather than making an immediate decision.

Decisions Made: Council agreed to table further discussion of senior member voting rights for a future meeting to allow for more thorough consideration.

Action Items:

- Kristin Johnson to share the endowed scholarship idea with Amanda Lauer and the Finance Committee.

4. 2027 Budget

The Council reviewed the 2027 administrative budget, which includes meeting costs plus management fees and other annual expenses. The budget projects a significant shortfall of approximately $270,000 for the year. Kristin Johnson explained that much of the deficit is attributable to high food and beverage and audiovisual costs at the San Francisco venue, which is a union property with higher labor rates and additional fees. The Council noted that this follows the 2026 meeting in Puerto Rico, where food and beverage costs were substantially lower.

Several specific cost areas were discussed:

- The Council dinner, previously moved off-site per a decision at the on-site Council meeting in 2025, is budgeted at approximately $10,000 Including committee chairs in this dinner adds to the cost, and because it is off-site, it does not contribute to the food and beverage minimum.
- The presidential reception is part of the food and beverage budget. Lisa Cunningham indicated she would be comfortable canceling it if it helps preserve other meeting amenities.

- Non-member speaker funding is budgeted higher than actual requests received, so that line will likely come in under budget.
- Council hotel rooms are budgeted conservatively at the nightly rate, though some may be complimentary.

Lisa Cunningham made a motion that Amanda Lauer and Kristin review optional expenses with Finance Committee Chair Meghan Drummond and determine whether they should be retained, moved into the food and beverage minimum, or eliminated. The Council reached consensus to proceed with this review.

Amanda Lauer noted that while small cuts may help, the deficit is largely structural due to the expensive venue choice. The Council also discussed that attendance projections for 2027 were kept flat with 2026 (the lowest in recent years) due to ongoing concerns about immigration, visas, and the molecular biology meeting in deafness scheduled shortly after ARO 2027.

Kristin provided positive news that the Vanguard investment account is performing well, with total funds over $2 million when combined with the checking account. The organization will not need to dip into investments for 2027. The Council also discussed that registration and membership dues were kept flat for 2027, with a new industry registration category added.

Decisions Made:

- Council approved by consensus Lisa Cunningham's motion that Amanda and Kristin review the optional food and beverage expenses and determine whether to retain, relocate, or eliminate them.

Action Items:

- Amanda and Kristin to meet with Meghan (Finance Committee Chair) to review the 2027 budget and identify further reductions.

5. 50th Anniversary Planning and Outreach

The Council discussed strategies to promote the 50th anniversary meeting and drive attendance. Ronna noted that she and Konstantina will have opportunities to reach out to clinicians through AOS, ANS, and ASCO, and will attend the CORLIS meeting at the end of August to distribute materials. Kristin agreed to have marketing create a flyer and slide that can be used at other conferences and sent via email.

Several ideas for the anniversary celebration were discussed:

- A photo slideshow or timeline display in the poster hall
- A "50 reasons to come to ARO" campaign
- Council members holding "ARO" signs with personalized messages

- Regular email communications (potentially weekly) leading up to the abstract submission deadline
- Leveraging Instagram, Facebook, and LinkedIn for engagement
- A special call for historically significant past posters (noted as logistically challenging but potentially user-driven)

Konstantina suggested electronic versions of flyers with QR codes rather than printed materials. The Council agreed that a combination of printable and digital materials would be most effective.

Decisions Made:

- Council agreed to develop both printable and digital promotional materials for the 50th anniversary.

Action Items:

- Kristin to have marketing create a flyer and slide for 50th anniversary promotion.
- Kristin to launch the email campaign with the photo upload form.
- Kristin to request blurbs from Council and committee chairs about their favorite aspects of ARO for promotional materials.
- Ronna and Konstantina to coordinate outreach to AOS, ANS, and ASCO and distribute materials at CORLIS.

6. Strategic Planning Survey

Summary: Matt Kelley joined the meeting to discuss the strategic planning survey that he and Mike Bowl had drafted. The Council reviewed several questions and identified areas needing clarification:

- The ethnicity question was deemed unnecessary for this survey, as demographic data is available from registration systems and the post-meeting survey. Council agreed to remove it. The country of residence question was retained because the survey will be sent to non-members as well.
- The questions about the main session recordings were found confusing. The Council clarified that these questions should specifically address the virtual attendance package (main session recordings only, not live streaming), which is available to those who do not attend in person. The Council noted that live streaming is prohibitively expensive (approximately $300,000) and that committee feedback indicated little interest in virtual attendance. However, the survey should still gauge whether non-attendees would participate virtually.
- The ranking question about barriers to attendance was retained, with the understanding that respondents should rank rather than select all options.
- The final open-ended question was revised to: "What change could ARO implement that would make you more likely to attend?"

Kristin will make the edits and send the updated survey to Matt Kelley and Mike for final review.

Decisions Made:

- Council agreed to remove the ethnicity question from the strategic planning survey.
- Council agreed to clarify the virtual attendance questions to focus on main session recordings.
- Council agreed to retain the ranking format for the barriers-to-attendance question.
- Council agreed to revise the final open-ended question to: "What change could ARO implement that would make you more likely to attend?"

Action Items:

- Kristin to update the survey and send to Matt and Mike for final review.

7. JARO Editor-in-Chief Search

Katharine Fernandez inquired about the JARO editor-in-chief search. Kristin reported that one application has been received from Mike Bowl. The Council is waiting to see if additional applications come in before evaluating candidates. Lisa Cunningham noted that another potential applicant has stated they would be applying soon.

Decisions Made: None.

Action Items:

- Kristin to monitor for additional JARO editor applications and report back when more than one candidate is available for evaluation.

Summary of the Meeting

The July 22, 2026 ARO Council meeting focused primarily on the challenging 2027 budget, the strategic planning survey, and 50th anniversary outreach. The Council established quorum after Sunil Puria joined the call. Executive updates covered symposia selections, the located ARO archives, and the ARO Scholars Burroughs Welcome Fund award.

The most significant discussion concerned the projected $270,000 deficit in the 2027 budget, driven largely by San Francisco union venue costs. Lisa Cunningham moved that Amanda Lauer and Kristin Johnson review optional Council expenses (the dinner and presidential reception) and determine whether to retain, relocate, or eliminate them. The Council reached consensus on this approach. Amanda noted that the deficit is structural and will require future venue planning changes rather than small cuts alone.

The Council also revisited senior member voting rights after Judy Dubno raised concerns again. No decision was made, with members offering differing perspectives. Amanda suggested putting the

question to the full membership via a bylaws amendment, while Kristin noted that those wishing to vote may remain in regular membership.

The strategic planning survey was reviewed with Matt Kelley, who joined partway through. The Council agreed to remove the ethnicity question, clarify virtual attendance questions, and reword the final open-ended question. Kristin will finalize edits and send to Matt and Mike for final review.

For the 50th anniversary, the Council developed an outreach strategy targeting clinicians through AOS, ANS, and ASCO, with Ronna Hertzano and Konstantina Stankovic leading conference-based outreach. Marketing materials including a flyer and slide will be created. The Council also discussed creative promotional ideas including a "50 reasons to come to ARO" campaign and member-submitted photo memories.

Decisions Made (Consolidated)

- Council approved by consensus Lisa Cunningham's motion that Amanda Lauer and Kristin Johnson review optional food and beverage expenses and determine whether to retain, relocate, or eliminate them.
- Council agreed to remove the ethnicity question from the strategic planning survey.
- Council agreed to clarify the virtual attendance questions to focus on main session recordings.
- Council agreed to retain the ranking format for the barriers-to-attendance question.
- Council agreed to revise the final open-ended question to: "What change could ARO implement that would make you more likely to attend?"
- Council agreed to develop both printable and digital promotional materials for the 50th anniversary.
- Council agreed to table further discussion of senior member voting rights for a future meeting.

Action Items (Consolidated)

Kristin Johnson/Executive Office:

- Discuss the DMAC job search mixer with Shelby Payne for potential inclusion elsewhere in the program, possibly in partnership with spARO.
- Create a Google form for members to submit images and memories for the 50th anniversary.
- Launch the email campaign with the photo upload form.
- Request blurbs from Council and committee chairs about their favorite aspects of ARO for promotional materials.
- Have marketing create a flyer and slide for 50th anniversary promotion.
- Meet with Amanda Lauer and Meghan Drummond (Finance Committee Chair) to review the 2027 budget and identify reductions.
- Update the strategic planning survey and send to Matt Kelley and Mike Bowl for final review.
- Share the endowed scholarship idea with Amanda Lauer and the Finance Committee.