



**ASTR Executive Committee  
Midwinter Teleconference  
February 14, 2019  
3-4pm Central**

**MINUTES**

1. Roll Call

Present: Marla Carlson (President), Jimmy Noriega (VP for Conferences), Patricia Herrera (VP for Awards), EJ Westlake (Treasurer), Scott Magelssen (Secretary), Rhonda Blair, Elizabeth W. Son, Sarah Bay-Cheng, Aparna Dharwadker, Baron Kelly, Shayoni Mitra, Hala Baki (GSC Rep to EC)

Administrators Present: Laurie Krueger (Manager), Arzu Alimohd (Assistant Manager)

Not Present: Esther Kim Lee (VP for Publications), Rose Malague, James Harding, Doug Jones, Kate Bredeson.

**1. MOTION: To Approve the Consent Agenda circulated in advance of meeting (Fall EC Meeting Minutes and appendices, 2019 Election Slate, Committee Appointments). Moved by Aparna Dharwadker. Seconded by EJ Westlake.**

1. Discussion

The majority of the individuals on this year's election slate do not represent historically marginalized groups except in the member-at-large positions (the slate could appear stacked in favor of non diverse people), though in a larger context last year's slate was significantly diverse, and the outcome of last year's election does bring a balance to the demographic makeup of the EC for the next two years. Questions were raised as to the general demographics of the organization relative to the makeup of the EC, as well as to how ASTR might ensure issues of diversity and representation are part of the nominating committee's charge in future.

Scott Magelssen read aloud a list of five ASTR members who were asked to stand for election, but declined with regrets. These names were: Kirsten Pullen (Illinois), DJ Hopkins (SDSU), Renée Alexander Craft (UNC), Brandi Wilkins Catanese (Berkeley), Soyica Colbert (Georgetown).

Marla Carlson and Scott Magelssen filled EC in on the history of this year's nominations, including a choppy last few years of nominations, a very late start this year, and that Nicole was inheriting a committee without a lot of guidance and institutional memory (while also heading up nominations for ATHE).

While it is a good idea, to avoid cronyism and cliqueness, to bring fresh emerging scholars onto the Nominations Committee, these individuals are often also at a disadvantage when it comes to knowledge of how the leadership is structured and what responsibilities each position involves. Marla added two people with institutional memory and ASTR leadership experience (Patrick Anderson, Susan Bennett) to the Nominating Committee in December to help with the transition into the future, in which we will try to improve nominations with clearer guidelines and cumulative advice from past committees.

The EC agreed that we will address these issues in the Spring EC Meeting. We will also hope to have more precise demographic information about the General Membership from the Membership Committee.

**Vote: 12 Yes. 0 No. 0 Abstentions. The motion carried unanimously**

2. Transnational Scholar Award (tabled at Fall EC Meeting)

The discussion of the proposal for the Transnational Award, made by Outgoing President Daphne Lei, had been tabled at the fall meeting for this midwinter teleconference.

**MOTION: To Table discussion of Transnational Scholar Award to Spring EC Meeting. Moved by Jimmy Noriega. Seconded by EJ Westlake.**

**Vote: 12 Yes. 0 No. 0 Abstentions. The motion carried unanimously**

3. Update on Negotiations with the Westin

Marla Carlson apprised the EC of the situation with negotiating cancellation fees with the Westin San Diego Gas Lamp District. Westin had originally demanded \$91,000 in fees but offered us either a discounted fee of \$60,000 or a willingness to rebook us in the hotel for a future conference with 2018 cancellation fee reduced to \$30,000.

ASTR's response on 23 January was a willingness rebook in 2021, but because November of that year was already booked up, we would need to use the last weekend of October. Further, we were not willing to wait until 2022 to book, since the Westin's contract with the hotel workers' union would have expired by then, and the current ASTR leadership, to whom this challenge belongs, would no longer be in office in 2022.

Westin's compromise this morning (Feb 14) was that they agree we need to find mutually agreeable terms and that we should be able to cancel the conference without charge if there are strikes that prevent us from meeting (involving crossing the picket line). Westin does not agree to our request to drop all cancellation fees, but they'll waive the \$21,000 that they were still expecting. They refuse to consider the \$11,000 that they already have from us as deposit as a deposit toward 2021, instead insisting upon treating this as a cancellation penalty.

Marla Carlson asked for motion to accept the Westin's offer (or refuse, or counter offer) and noted that 83 percent of respondents to the survey of the membership were in favor of rebooking in the Westin to avoid financial difficulties.

**MOTION: To accept Westin's offer of 14 Feb 2019 as articulated by Marla Carlson, above. Moved by Rhonda Blair. Seconded by EJ Westlake.**

Discussion: The question was raised whether we could get something better by continuing to negotiate. We'd consulted HelmsBriscoe, the firm that negotiates contracts for MATC, and they said that if we took Westin to court over their insistence on the cancellation fee, they would likely lose. Laurie Krueger points out that going to court over this would incur costs.

Westin has been flexible about the timeline for a decision, but they want an answer by March 29 and really we don't want to drag this out too much longer because we need to start planning on ASTR 2021, either in San Diego or in one of the alternate cities being considered by Marla, Jimmy, and EJ.

Would agreeing to Westin's terms make it more difficult for us in the future to negotiate contracts with Marriott properties and other hotels? Laurie Krueger offers that it would actually be in our favor to show a major hotel brand that we're willing to work with them, as this might make it easier to negotiate with them in future years.

Laurie Krueger also recommends as a matter of good form that we consider bringing Conference Direct in on the new negotiations, since they were the firm that negotiated San Diego 2018 and they did not get their cut when we canceled.

**Vote: 12 Yes. 0 No. 0 Abstentions. The motion carried unanimously**

Laurie Krueger will speak with Briana Baker. Ewald will request a formal proposal and reworked contract from Westin and they will begin working in on that. We can take up the conversation about bringing Conference Direct into the conversation in the next Phone Check-in.

#### 4. Update on ASTR 2019 Conference in Arlington

Jimmy Noriega reported the site visit team (two program co-chairs and one Ewald member) will visit the Arlington hotel tomorrow. They have some tours organized as well.

The program co-chairs have received a 20 % drop in plenary submissions and a 15% drop in working sessions submissions from last year. The reason for the lower numbers may be the ASTR cancellation this past fall or the fact that ASA is meeting in Hawaii the same time.

The program committee have enough good submissions to fill the conference program, but the lower yield of submissions might indicate we have a lower overall attendance in 2019.

We will discuss the awards luncheon ceremony in the spring. The site visit team will get details that inform this discussion.

Can we figure out a better way for the large organizations like ASTR, ASA, NCA, etc. to not keep meeting on the same weekend? Marla will reach out to ASA.

#### 5. Nuts and bolts regarding Spring EC Meeting in Minnesota

Please remember to send your rooming preferences to Arzu Alimohd. Please make your travel arrangements.

EC Members: Arrive in Minneapolis-St Paul in time to meet for EC meeting on Saturday morning, departing Sunday afternoon. Officers: plan to be in town Friday evening for Officers' working dinner.

Ewald Offices are 30 minutes from MSP airport. Airport recommends arriving 2 hours before your departure time (90 minutes absolute minimum)

The spring reports will be made available in the Leadership area of the website.

#### 6. Adjournment

**MOTION: to adjourn. Moved by Rhonda Blair. Seconded by Baron Kelly.**

**Vote: 12 Yes. 0 No. 0 Abstentions. The motion carried unanimously**

#### Appendices

**Appendix 1**  
**ASTR-Ewald Phone Check-In March 7, 2019**  
**Notes**

1. Update on ASTR 2021/negotiations with Westin (Laurie)
  - We'll be working with Conference Direct again on negotiating this contract with the Westin (Conference Direct negotiated the 2018 contract for us. It was our last remaining Conference-Direct negotiated contract). In light of the situation, it's the right thing to do, so Conference Direct get the commission they lost when we broke contract with the Westin.
  - We're in conversations regarding finalizing the 2021 contract. We'll work to get Westin to honor the 2018 guest-room rates. There is a \$23 per room difference between the 2018 rate and what they're putting in the 2021 contract. We'll see what they come back with.
  - Westin wants us signed by March 29.
  - MARLA can make clear in her quarterly report that we are "in negotiations." She will mention the member survey. And she can mention the date change (end of October/Early November).
  
2. Update on elections (Scott)
  - We are still missing 3 EC member candidates' bios/statements/photos and all the committee on conferences nominees' bios/statements/photos.
  - We need to get the slate up in front of the membership ASAP. We're 8 months out from 2019 Conference as of today.
  - SCOTT will make gathering the remaining bios and statements a top priority for later this morning. SCOTT will send this material to ARZU to get posted to the membership
  
3. Update on website; Update on thank you letters (Marla)
  - New pages under the Resources tab will allow committees to share their work in a public-facing way.
  - Content will be submitted by committee chairs to Scott and Scott will forward to Ewald to post on the pages.
  - Names and committee appointments are up to date on the chart, but these should be updated on the website. Marla forwarded these changes to Mei Li this morning.
  - Marla has sent out thank you letters to folks rotating off committees. MARLA will finish up these in due course. Some folks she thanked on New Paradigms wrote back that they didn't know they were on new Paradigms (and didn't want to be thanked for work they didn't do).
  - Patricia has already thanked chairs of awards committees.
  
4. EWALD will check the membership status of individuals with committee appointments on the chart to make sure they are all members in good standing, and contact those who need to renew.

5. Spring EC meeting (room assignments, EC meeting needs) (Laurie, Scott)

- EJ has paired folks up for guest rooms. EWALD will get confirmations about room assignments out to EC soon.
- Reports to the EC are trickling in
- ASTR EC will meet in the large conference room downstairs or the smaller conference room upstairs depending on the needs. Either will work.
- There will be space for break out sessions in the afternoon (e.g., to talk about bylaws changes).
- Hotel shuttle can bring EC members from Hotel to Ewald offices and back on Saturday and Sunday
- EWALD will make reservations for Officers Dinner 7pm Friday night. Someplace not noisy. Maybe we can just eat at the hotel restaurant.
- SCOTT will check with EJ whether Officers pay for their own meals Friday evening. MARLA, SCOTT, AND EJ will revisit what Officers and EC members pay for and what ASTR pays for, and how costs might pose impediments to leadership (or look profligate to general membership).
- We should think about reconstituting the finance committee to discuss financial policies, rather than letting EC decide that for which ASTR will reimburse them. MARLA will appoint members to the Finance Committee in consultation with EJ.