

2016 Membership Committee Report
Thursday, March 24

Chicago Marriott Downtown

Present: Ron Berger, Pam Emanuelson, Xavier Escandell, Sheryl Grana, Jessica Hausauer, Erin Hoekstra, Megan Nielsen, Meredith Redlin, Diane Rodgers, Mike Stout, Ted Thornhill, Lisa Thrane, Akiko Yoshida.

Julie Pelton could not attend since she was scheduled in another session at this time. The same was true for several of the ex-officio members.

The outgoing North Dakota Director did not attend.

The Membership Committee supports the MSS Strategic Plan by working to increase membership and attendance at the yearly conference. Recruitment activities are undertaken with an eye toward increased diversity. The committee also works to improve retention of members.

Each State Director provided a brief update on sociology and recruiting efforts in his/her state. State Directors in states with active state-wide sociological associations reported attending meetings to promote MSS. Several states have associations that are inactive. Lack of travel funds and alarming cuts to departments have made recruiting increasingly difficult. New sources of recruits may include tribal colleges (mainly in Dakotas and Nebraska) and HBCUs. Committee members support exploring possibility of contacting former MSS participants whose membership has lapsed. Will recruit colleagues with interests linked to conference theme.

Work proposed for the upcoming year, and task assignments to accomplish the work.

Lively discussion about ways the Membership Committee could encourage inclusion of diverse types of sociologists. The committee applauds program targeted to high school sociology teachers this year. Recommends similar initiatives in future. Offering certificates may increase interest. Additional outreach to community colleges and to adjunct faculty (in collaboration with student reps since graduate students may also be teaching). Adding digital sociology conference and perhaps some virtual attendance options may attract a wider audience to include people who do not have access to travel funds. This may also bolster "attendance" from more international sociologists.

No Budget request for the next fiscal year.

Suggestions to the Board: Consider combining the two state directors for the Dakotas into one position. Consensus seemed to be that this was a good suggestion to take to Board of Directors. However, committee cautioned that this should be proposed in conjunction with an explanation of the history of problems recruiting State Directors and very small numbers of sociologists in two states (few MSS members). Additionally, membership committee members indicated that they would also invite the Board of Directors to consider adding another At-Large Director position. Since the at-large group is larger than any state in the MSS region, and continues to grow, that is seen as a source of potential membership growth.

Respectfully submitted,
Lee Miller, Secretary
Membership Committee Chair