

End-of-year committee report

Midwest Sociological Society, Social Action Committee Report, Prepared by LaShaune Johnson (chair)

Committee meeting held March 24, 2016

In attendance:

- Stephen Hagan
- Deniz Yucel
- Kelly Dagan
- Ryan Sheppard
- Rochelle Rowley
- LaShaune Johnson

Items covered:

- A. The group discussed sessions in which they had a hand this year:
 - a. Hagan—presider over Session 157
 - b. Rowley—presider over Session 38
 - c. Dagan—presider over Session 155
 - d. Sheppard—presider over Sessions 225 and 251
 - e. Yucel—presider over Sessions 58 and 160, presenter at Session 116
- B. We discussed about how we might work to gain a higher profile in the **practitioner community** and to get them to attend MSS, but struggled to identify who we'd like to see attend, and what their practical needs are. **Action Items:**
 - a. Ryan is going to do some investigating into possible orgs in the Milwaukee area. Are there things they'd like to see happen?
 - b. LaShaune offered to organize a session around careers in non-profits, or how to use sociology skills outside of academia.
 - c. LaShaune is going to follow up with the Sociological Practice committee to see if they had made any strides in determining what their outreach would be in the community, and if there were possibilities for coordination.
- C. We discussed the possibility of **organizing a teaching session**. It was well attended in previous MSS meetings. If there is a natural fit with another group, we can reach out to them as well. **Action Item:**
 - a. Rochelle is going to be the organizer. Deniz, although rotating off of the committee, is happy to be a backup for this, if she is not already committed to lots of other sessions.
- D. We discussed the concern that some members had that they were not seeing the emails about the group, and that this might be slowing the progress towards some of our goals. Rochelle proposed creating a private group in **Facebook** to allow for year round communication. **Action Item:**
 - a. Rochelle created the group and sent out an invite.
 - b. As we transition to Rochelle's group, LaShaune will also send these meeting notes via email, as well add them to the group, to allow people time to get familiar with the Facebook group.
- E. The group also discussed using **social media** in other ways, but decided that a SAC twitter account (or something else) would be not something we were excited about starting. However, if a committee member (or one of their students) wants to take this on, we can discuss it again.
- F. Following up with some of the **suggestions from last year**—we did not do a post in the *Chronicle of Higher Ed* and we did not alert local media about our sessions. There is a lack of clarity of if the idea of Honorable Mentions was taken to the board in 2015, however, the

committee agreed that, regardless of if there is an official Honorable Mention category, we could certainly offer some of the nominees space on the table at our booth, or invite them to attend MSS, if they are interested.

- G. Although it didn't happen this year, the committee was still interested in the idea of contacting local news/sociology programs with a **press release** near the time of MSS, as a way to draw more attention to the role of SAC, and of sociology in the broader community. **Action Items:**
 - a. The Chair of the committee (in this case, LaShaune) will contact the local press in Milwaukee and local universities in the area to let them know about our awardees and about any relevant conference activities (if we organize a session or something).
- H. There was an **ad about the local awardees in the program**, but not a lot of labeling identifying who they were, and why they were listed. The group agreed that this ad was a good idea, but wanted to make sure that next year's half page ad has clearer labeling.
- I. We agreed that the **voting** worked well this year, using Google forms, and that we will do something similar next year. Stephen has offered to share his Google Forms template.
- J. Stephen Hagan recommended **expanding the awardee options**—that we make sure one is local, but we expand the location for the second one, allowing for more rural organizations/out of state organizations to be put in the pool. A local one may ultimately be chosen for both slots, but this may allow for some diversity. In order to address the location/size issues, some suggestions have been made below.
- K. One major discussion was around **communication with, and expectations of, the winners**. LaShaune has been in regular communication with our winners, but wasn't able to get any materials from them in time for the Social event Wednesday night, and, at the time of the meeting, didn't have anything for the booth in the Commons. We discussed the following ideas:
 - a. Reconsider the idea of "presence"—because staffing, location, and time are a barrier for really small organizations, we have thought that it might be nice to offer the option of creating a large poster for the groups and/or allow for some pre-recorded message to be shown. This might lessen the burden of the organizations for rearranging their staffing to get to the conference. It was suggested that we could ask for a bit of extra budget to cover the cost of printing and/or travel to the meetings for these groups. It was also suggested that we solicit the students of committee members to possibly help the organizations—if they are interested—in creating a poster that we can print for them. **Question for the group—should we do our voting a bit earlier to allow for a student group to get this done?**
 - b. Based on some of the email questions LaShaune got from the organizations, we may need to revise the letter to winners. Some are unfamiliar with meetings at professional organizations, and don't know what dress code, behaviors, materials, etc. are expected of them.
 - c. **Action Items:** We will adjust the letter to give a few "hints" about the conference (without being insulting). We will request a larger budget to allow for printing services and/or transportation. Once the winners have been selected, we will send, along with the other paperwork they have to sign for the money, the offer to help them work with our group to make a poster/video that can work as their "presence" if they are not able to be at MSS for long periods of time.
- L. A number of the members are rolling off this year. Stephen Hagan has volunteered to stay on for longer, if that is allowed. It will help with our "**institutional memory**", and help us not lose momentum for some of our ideas.
- M. Group members were asked to think about possible **committee members to recommend**. You can send them to LaShaune (LPJohnson@creighton.edu), or post them in the Facebook group, once you have talked to them.
- N. **LaShaune will continue to act as chair** until the meeting at Milwaukee. That means that:
 - a. She will run the voting for the organizations; will solicit the names and then tally the votes.
 - b. Coordinate with the winners to get their posters/videos made by student volunteers (if they don't already have them).
 - c. Contact local media about the MSS.

- d. Create the sign up sheet for sitting at the Booth in the Commons.
 - e. Make sure the ad comes up.
 - f. Submit meeting report and budget.
 - g. Other things, as necessary.
- O. Finally, the group discussed what should be the clear **expectations of SAC members** (barring illness or other legitimate conflicts). We agreed that this is the minimum:
- a. Nominating at least 2 organizations, and timely participation in voting for the organizations.
 - b. Attending the SAC meeting during MSS.
 - c. Presenting at/organizing/presiding over a SAC-related (or co-sponsored) session/workshop/roundtable/event for at least one year of the three years they are on the committee.
 - d. Participating in at least one hour at the SAC Booth in the Commons, or (wo)manning the table at the Social Hour event.
 - e. Actively promoting the SAC and its work in their personal/professional networks, in order to help achieve the goals of the MSS Strategic Plan.

Social Action Committee Budget Proposal for the 2017 MSS annual meetings in Milwaukee

Completed by LaShaune Johnson, 2016-17 Chair

The proposed budget (see table 1) is the result of discussions held by the members of the social action committee during our 2016 annual MSS meeting in Chicago.

Consistent with our charge from the board, we wish to make applied sociological knowledge more visible, specifically related to social action and grassroots organizations. Providing award winners for applied social action work remains an important component of this charge. We believe that the awards continue to be successful at promoting the overall mission of the MSS as well as its visibility at the regional and national level. Each SAC member will continue to contact their individual professional networks to facilitate that process. Further, the call for the general MSS membership to nominate candidates is also expressed in the Midwest Sociologist, as well as the MSS website. We also had a half page add in the program this year. It is in this context that **we request the MSS board continue to provide the funds for the two Social Action Awards for the 2017 MSS in Milwaukee. In the past, we have given two awards of \$1000 dollars** to non-profit organizations, preferably at the local or regional level of the annual meeting. We request the same amount for each award for the 2016 MSS Social Action Awards. Because our awards are often going to small organizations, with limited staffing and budget, some have struggled to participate in the conference because of the prices of travelling to it and/or the burden of taking off work. We would like to offer the organizations a small budget to cover transportation and/or printing (if coming to the conference every day is a burden) so that their organization can have an increased presence at the conference. **The organizations will be given clear instructions for what these funds are—travel to and participation in the Commons and the award ceremony and/or the creation of some kind of “virtual presence” (posters, videos run on a loop at the table on a laptop) at the Commons.** We would like to request \$75.00 for each organization, to pay for this.

As a result of the committee discussions related to the issue of visibility, all the SAC members believe that another important goal is to facilitate the conversation between the SAC Awardees/grass-roots organizations and the members of the MSS. Thus, we propose in our 2016 budget the allocation **of funds, \$175, to have a table/booth** available for the SAC winners (with full page ad) to distribute pamphlets of the organizations' work, and to answer questions passers-by may have. This was successful at the Chicago meeting (even with the aforementioned poor labeling in the program), and we anticipate it will be more successful this year. Both awardees may be more likely to attend with better exposure to the wider MSS audience with the provision of a booth/table. One of the attendees did a number of in-person “shifts” at the booth, and the other sent materials for SAC members to share.

Table 1 Summary of the funds requested:

2 x \$1,000 for the Social Action Awards -----	\$2000
2 x \$75.00 for the Awardees for transportation/printed materials-----	\$150
Booth for Social Action Awardees' Organizational Materials-----	\$175
Total-----	\$2325.00