BSA Board Call

June 7, 2021

11am-1pm

*In attendance*: Amy McPherson, Chris Martine, Emily Sessa, Heather Cacanindin, Jennifer Cruse-Sanders, Shelly Gaynor, Michael Donoghue, Cynthia Jones, Linda Watson, Chelsea Specht, Rachel Spicer, Imeña Valdes, Lucinda McDade

Meeting called to order 11:05am Eastern Time

1. Should we renew our contract with Wiley?

* Amy summarized Wiley transition up until now
* It is time to address the transition to OA
* There is a lot of consolidation happening in publishing (Wiley just bought Hindawi)
* Clear agreement that we are not returning to self-publishing
* The publications team strongly recommends that we stick with Wiley and accept this new offer
* Do we stick with Wiley or shop around? We can try to negotiate on the offer but there are likely few gains to be made
  + We are 3.5 years in on our current contract and so have another year to find another publisher
  + We need to tell Wiley by the end of this calendar year if we want to renew
  + Oxford is likely the only other option that we can consider. ASPB just went with them. Oxford has Annals of Botany which is a direct competitor. In previous negotiations, Oxford wanted us to cut staff.
  + What happens if we cannot increase the number of articles published that they are projecting? *They lay out a plan to increase article output by 8% annually* in a gradual transition to change to fully OA.
  + What do *we* have to do versus what do *they* have to do to make this happen?
  + General agreement that doubling our output is unrealistic
  + Question about the additional copy-editing associated with publishing more international papers and who is responsible for that.
  + How are people paying for their OA fees (APCs)?
  + Does Wiley have agreements with partner institutions to waive or subsidize the APCs?
  + Discussion about our expenses and that they do not stay flat (300k vs 350k) over 5 years, especially if they are expecting production volume to increase substantially

**MOTION to renew our contract with Wiley -> APPROVED (unanimous)**

2. How to do proceed with outlining contract negotiation priorities

* Concerns about production output increase were raised above
* Concern about the suggestion to publish in more biotech and commercially-oriented areas and that this is a substantial shift from our main current areas
* 300k flat editorial office support is too low
* Guaranteed royalty is likely unlikely to move much
* Question about what this proposed decrease in revenue would mean for our budget? Best guess is about 175k per year.
  + It would be great if the society were not financially dependent on the journals (and thus could be more mission-driven).
    - Should this goal be articulated in the strategic plan?
    - Historically about 80% (now more like 70%) comes from journal revenue
  + General discussion about the appropriateness of drawing a small percentage annually from the endowment (2.5-5%) based on a running average.
    - Drawing 2.5% on $5M would yield $125k into the operating budget.
    - Drawing 4% on $5M would yield $200k
  + Discussion about a campaign to educate our membership about the role of the journals in supporting our operating budget
  + We did hire a development officer at one point, but it was not a financially sustainable position. Perhaps we could partner with a cluster of societies for these activities?
  + Special issues organized around regional botanical topics was noted as a promising idea.

3. Committee on committees and appointments

* History of how the changes to the committee appointment process came about was summarized.
* We have shifted to an application procedure to serve on specific committees and this was the first year that we implemented it. It was a big improvement over the past process although naturally not perfect.
* The committee met twice to discuss the candidates
* Three committees require Board approval to expand membership: GSRA, DEI, Education
* Suggestion that we also rewrite the policy document to have some flexibility on the numbers
* Incoming student rep should *not* be on a committee because that position requires a lot of work

**MOTION to expand three committees per the recommendation of the Comm on Committee outlined in report -> APPROVED (unanimous)**

* Suggestion for future improvements:
  + We largely slotted in people who had applied, into the open slots. There is a recommendation that we also consider reaching out to other people who have specialized experience.
  + Suggestion that we expand Comm on Comms to expand base of connections within the society
  + Suggestion that Comm on Comms members undergo implicit bias training
  + Why do we only have CVs from students?
  + Comm on Comms could meet before the call for service goes out to come up with a list of people to suggest that they apply.

[*Amy McPherson left meeting at 12:48pm*]

4. Staffing update

* Wanda Lovan is retiring this summer and we have an open search but we do not have many applicants
* Heather has asked our accounting firm about their outsourcing services as a stop gap measure.
* We also have a search open for an education position that is grant funded; looking for middle and secondary teaching experience and interviews will begin next week
* We could further advertise the accounting position; being in St Louis is highly desirable (signatures, etc.) but not explicitly required.

5. Revisiting the journal revenue and its role on supporting our budget, versus the endowment, with respect to the strategic plan. Noted that this could be a *strategy* to consider including in the strategic plan.

*Meeting adjourned at 12:58pm*.