**Executive Committee Meeting**

**Southern Regional Honors Council**

**Online via Zoom**

**Wednesday, March 18, 2020**

**3:00-4:30 (EDT)**

**Call to Order**

SRHC President Kirsten Bartels (Northwestern State U.) called the meeting to order at 3:03pm (EDT). Present were the following Executive Committee members: Rusty Rushton (Vice President, UAB); Nicholas Parham (Student Vice President, Northwestern State U.); Stacy Eldridge (Past President, Northern Virginia Community College); Patrick Bahls (Past-Past President, UNC Asheville), David Coleman (Executive Secretary-Treasurer, Eastern Kentucky University); Paul Fitzgerald (Web Manager, Northern Virginia Community College), Kathy Cooke (Faculty-Staff At-Large Rep., University of South Alabama), Steve Elliott-Gower (Faculty Staff At-Large Rep., Georgia College and State University). Guests included SRHC 2020 Birmingham organizing team Rebecca Freeman (2020 Conference Organizer, UAB) and Mike Sloane (UAB).

Secretary’s note of clarification: This meeting was held online with a shortened attendance list because of the cancellation of the 2020 SRHC annual meeting in Birmingham due to the COVID-19 crisis.

**Proposed Dues Increase**

Members of the committee had consulted via email and agreed that with the cancellation of the Birmingham conference and its General Business meeting, the issue of the proposed dues increase set before the SRHC membership at the Fall 2019 SRHC Business Meeting in New Orleans during NCHC should be tabled until the SRHC annual meeting in Charlotte in spring 2021. The committee’s rationale for this move was to allow a full and open discussion of the issue by as many member institutions, faculty, and students as possible. Kirsten asked for a formal motion to table the issue until Charlotte 2021. *Kathy moved. Patrick seconded. Motion approved.*

**Elections**

With the cancellation of the 2020 annual SRHC meeting in Birmingham, the committee moved the SRHC elections for new 2020 officers to an online format. Kirsten asked David to provide a report. David reported that SRHC membership had approved (via online vote) a streamlined elections format for the two constitutional amendments as well as the newly nominated slate of officers for open SRHC positions. David distributed ballots electronically and voting will continue through Friday, March 20. The slate of nominated candidates is as follows:

Vice President: Dr. Salvatore Musumeci, Catawba College

Secretary: Dr. Jon Blandford, Bellarmine University

Treasurer: Dr. David Coleman, Eastern Kentucky University

Faculty/Staff At-Large: Dr. Heather Waldroup, Appalachian State University

Student Vice President: Dalton Powers, Virginia Wesleyan University

Student At-Large (3): Ariana Medina, Cleveland State Community College

Daniel Wilkes, The Citadel

Alexander Brodie, Appalachian State University

**Conference Update**

The committee discussed at great length the principal issues that remained unresolved following the cancellation of the 2020 Birmingham meeting because of the COVID-19 crisis. The main issues, and the consensus reached on each, were as follows:

1. Mike reported that the Birmingham Sheraton had begun to move toward recognizing the SRHC’s *force majeure* invocation of the “Impossibility” clause of our contract with them. To help this negotiation along, SRHC leadership had ***agreed to offer the contract for our 2022 meeting to the Birmingham Sheraton*** as an inducement to respect our *force majeure* claim and not seek the $102,000 they had initially claimed we would owe them in the event of conference cancellation. The SRHC already has a contract in place to hold SRHC 2021 in Charlotte, NC. We had previously agreed on Chattanooga as conference host for 2022, but David had spoken with Linda Frost of UT-Chattanooga, who informed him that she had not yet begun hotel contract negotiations there and would be happy to push Chattanooga back to 2023 if a 2022 meeting in Birmingham helped SRHC out of the 2020 contract with the Birmingham Sheraton. The committee’s consensus was to empower Mike to continue negotiations with the Birmingham Sheraton and to sign a contract with them for the 2022 meeting if (and only if) they recognized explicitly and in writing that the 2020 contract was null and void because of our legitimate *force majeure* claim.
2. The committee also discussed what to do in terms of ***naming a conference organizing team for 2022*** in the event that we secured a 2022 contract with the Birmingham Sheraton. Mike and Rusty suggested approaching other honors programs or colleges in the area to see if any might be willing to take on these duties. All agreed that we could not ask UAB or anyone on its team to carry the work of conference organization twice within two years. There was no consensus reached on this question, but if a contract is signed, *SRHC leadership will need to move quickly to have this question answered clearly by the time we meet again in Dallas at the fall 2020 NCHC*.
3. The committee discussed the question of ***refund of registration money*** that had already been paid for the for the 2020 conference. All agreed that refunds of any sort would be possible only if the 2020 contract with the Birmingham Sheraton were explicitly recognized as canceled (otherwise we would have to keep the money in anticipation of legal action against the SRHC on the part of the Birmingham Sheraton). The consensus that emerged from a lively discussion of registration payments was that we should produce a form on which Honors Directors and Deans could request refund of a percentage of the registration fees paid for their student and faculty registrants. The rationale for the partial refund (rather than full refund) was that the SRHC had already spent some non-refundable money on a number of issues involving a number of vendors. It was agreed that there should be an explicit and fairly short time-window for institutions to inform us that they are requesting a refund. The committee agreed to charge Rebecca, David, and Mike with determining the specifics of the refund policy in a way that is most fair to member institutions and to the SRHC.
4. The SRHC will also offer to allow students to “present” their work via an ***online conference site***, and committee members shared ideas concerning what sort of format this might take. The committee charged Paul with developing a password-protected online virtual conference form accessible via the SRHC webpage, and with developing a specific set of instructions to be sent to honors directors and deans with explicit instructions on how to collect such submissions and send them to him. Again, the committee recommended a fairly short timeline and due date for such submissions.

**Treasurer’s Report**

David reported that we received 2019-2020 institutional dues payments from 103 institutions (down 1 from 104 at this point last year), along with 26 individual dues payments. The balance of the main SRHC Treasury account currently stands at $35,545.02. Kirsten asked for a motion to approve the Treasurer’s Report. *Stacy so moved. Patrick seconded. Motion approved*.

**SRHC Partners in the Parks Stipends**

All summer 2020 NCHC Partners in the Parks programs have been cancelled due to the COVID-19 crisis. David reported that so far in this cycle he has awarded five SRHC Partners in the Parks stipends. David proposed that he will work with Deans/Directors of the student recipients. If the student had already spent that money on a non-refundable expense, SRHC will not pursue reimbursement. Otherwise, we will expect students to return the money. The consensus was to support this approach.

**Transition of Officers**

Kirsten called upon David to speak to express the committee’s gratitude to Past-Past President Dr. Patrick Bahls, who will be rotating off the Executive Committee after four years of stellar service. David presented Patrick (albeit “virtually”—to be mailed later) with an engraved gavel as a token of our appreciation.

Likewise, Mike on behalf of the UAB conference organizing team recognized the outstanding service of SRHC President Dr. Kirsten Bartels, presenting her (again “virtually”—to be mailed later) and engraved crystal gavel.

David indicated that he would pass along our gratitude to the other five Executive Committee members who were rotating off: including David Kime (NKU) as well as students Callie Elliott (Gardner-Webb), Mora Rehm (EKU), Troy Shirley (UAB), and Cat Stanfield (UTC).

With the adjournment of this meeting the Presidential gavel passes to our new SRHC President Dr. Rusty Rushton.

***Adjourned 4:31pm EDT***