

**WRHC Board Meeting**  
**July 17, 2020**  
**Minutes**

Present: Andersen, Edgington, Syrnyk

1. WRHC 2021

a. Potential virtual conference hosted by SUU

Syrnyk shared some best practices for virtual conferences for the board to consider in planning WRHC 2021. These include ensuring an appropriate mix of session modalities (e.g., some live sessions, some pre-recorded elements, some sessions to approximate in-person networking opportunities, etc.); extending the length of the conference to avoid fatiguing full days of sessions; and providing a recap or reflective session for participants. Andersen noted that a conference that is too long poses a danger of fragmentation and disengagement among participants. He emphasized that, particularly among undergraduates, it is difficult to sustain engagement but that indicators of a shared experience (e.g., gift bags) could help. Syrnyk proposed stickers as a popular option with students. Edgington mentioned efforts by institutions to send out items that students can hold or wear in photos and post on social media. Budget permitting, some sort of package for registrants leading up to the event could build anticipation and promote buy-in.

b. Theme

Andersen suggested that Hacker should have discretion in identifying a theme but that the planned theme for WRHC 2021 (Planet and Peoples: Conservation and Coexistence) could certainly be used. Syrnyk and Edgington agreed.

c. Membership considerations

Edgington raised the issue of whether or not participants in the virtual conference will be required to be confirmed WRHC members as has historically been the case or whether the virtual format might allow for participation by faculty and students from beyond the western region. Syrnyk suggested making contact with other regional honors councils to coordinate on planning issues such as this one. Members wondered if Hacker had had any communication with the interregional NCHC group since its last meeting. While members agreed that the cost of attending a virtual conference should be kept low and that potential costs such as web-hosting platforms (e.g., Ex Ordo) should not be passed on to participants, they felt that a nominal fee should still be charged to promote participation. Andersen suggested that, to the extent possible, WRHC should help offset costs to encourage attendance. Edgington proposed that, at a minimum, funds earmarked for disbursement as travel stipends in 2021 could be redirected for this purpose. Members agreed that, while keeping costs low should be a priority, every effort should be made not to host the 2021 at a deficit.

2. Conferences post-2021

a. Travel restrictions, budget constraints, etc.

Owing to concerns over ongoing travel restrictions and/or budget cuts affecting future travel, members discussed the place of virtual interaction in conferences post-2021. Edgington raised the issue of potentially long-term effects on conference attendance in the wake of the pandemic and connected these to the recent trend of

conferences seeking to offset their environmental impacts by offering, for example, possibilities for virtual panels complementing in-person interaction. Andersen and Syrnyk agreed that WRHC should carefully consider ways in which its events can embrace these positive trends while stressing the value of in-person conferences for their unique atmosphere of mutual interest and shared excitement and as sites of professional networking and personal connection.

### 3. Communication to membership

#### a. Timing of announcement re: WRHC 2021 and any other updates

Andersen suggested that the board not send out a survey regarding general interest in and/or ability to attend the 2021 conference as had been planned, but rather a shorter survey regarding interest in attending the virtual conference once more details of that event are known. Syrnyk and Edgington agreed.