

Western Regional Honors Council Spring Business Meeting

April 10, 2021

Minutes

1. Hacker called the meeting to order at 3:01 PM PDT/4:01 PM MDT.
2. Edgington presented the minutes of the March business meeting for discussion, potential revision, and approval.
 - a. Syrnyk motioned to approve the minutes; Lee seconded the motion; minutes were approved without revision.
3. Edgington delivered the membership and financial reports. The number of member institutions was 70 at the time of the business meeting, which is lower than the typical 100 or so members at the time of the WRHC conference. She noted that several more institutions have indicated that dues checks are en route. Although institutions may pay dues for 2021 through June 2021, with the conference over, there may be little incentive for them to do so at this point in the calendar year. Owing to the savings that have resulted from the shift to a virtual format for recent WRHC and NCHC conferences and to the fact that WRHC 2021 has generated enough revenue to reimburse WRHC seed money, the budget situation is not serious in spite of lower-than-normal dues revenue. The balance of the WRHC account for October 2021 is estimated to be approximately \$57,000. Members may request a copy of the complete financial report by contacting Edgington.
 - a. Hacker asked whether any travel stipends had recently been paid. Edgington indicated that none had been paid out this year with both NCHC and WRHC adopting virtual formats.
 - b. Polley wondered how WRHC's budget might compare to those of other regions. Hacker indicated that she believed WRHC to be somewhere in the middle of the pack relative to other regions but noted that other regions tend to spend more of their funds on regional conferences than WRHC does.
 - c. Lee motioned to approve the budget; Ketcham seconded the motion; the budget was approved.
4. Hacker expressed great satisfaction with the WRHC 2021 Conference, which attracted many registrants and attendees and engaged honors students, faculty, and staff in lively conversation throughout the day. She stressed that many attendees were present in each breakout room throughout the conference – a positive outcome that is not typical at a traditional face-to-face conference. Owing to the reduced registration fees, the event has made a more modest profit than some other conferences, but a profit has been generated. Hacker will prepare a formal conference report that will be published on the WRHC website.
 - a. Edgington expressed satisfaction with the high level of engagement among participants in the sessions she facilitated and offered her congratulations to Hacker et al. for an excellent event.
 - b. Polley noted that, however much we may wish to return to “normal” conferences going forward, a virtual format offers distinct advantages in terms of access and engagement, especially for institutions that lack sufficient funds to send delegates to conferences. She suggested that WRCH consider a biannual virtual conference or even a semiannual one to complement the in-person event. Donovan expressed agreement and urged the leadership to consider these options. Hacker agreed but advised against hybrid conferences, which are very difficult to manage.

- c. Zimmers applauded the event and noted that the lower registration fees were an incentive to participate. Zimmers also noted that virtual conferences are an important way in which we can limit our impact on the environment.
- d. Gómez appreciated the hybrid format of the keynote address.
- e. Nichols inquired about how many registrants the event had attracted and how this number compared to previous WRHC conferences. Hacker indicated that there had been 242 registrants from around 40 institutions. Lee, in addition to offering her congratulations for a successful event, indicated that the WRHC conference at MSU has attracted 300 registrants from some 50 institutions. Ketcham noted that there had been 264 registrants for the 2018 conference and 267 for the 2019 conference. The 2021 conference was, thus, comparable to recent in-person events.

5. Regional Conference Announcements and Updates

- a. Ketcham reported that planning for WRHC 2022 at UNM is intensifying. Ketcham and Gómez will co-teach a class for conference interns following MSU's example. A block of rooms has been reserved at the historic Hotel Andaluz, which offers easy access to the UNM campus and dining. Hybrid elements are under consideration. Ketcham will reach out to Hacker to discuss her experiences with that format. The theme will be Revolutions and Constellations. The conference will be held Friday, April 8 through Sunday April 10, 2022.
 - i. Lee commended UNM for choosing to offer a course for interns and expressed her eagerness to travel to the conference.
- b. Nichols reported that planning for WRHC 2023 at Montana is underway and that he and his team are eager to welcome delegates from the region in whatever format is then preferred. Discussions of the conference theme will take place this summer and he anticipates being able to share the theme and conference dates at NCHC 2021.
- c. No report from WSU regarding WRHC 2024.

6. Action Items

- a. Hacker explained how WRHC board succession had been affected by the lack of a 2020 conference and the change in hosting institution for the 2021 conference. She noted that Syrnyk, currently the at-large member of the board, has agreed to serve as president next year in her stead. Lee has agreed to continue to serve as past-president. Polley volunteered to serve as the at-large member for 2021-2022 and 2022-2023 until Syrnyk can resume that role. Ketcham will serve as vice president in the coming year as conference coordinator.
 - i. Donovan suggested that WRHC bylaws be revised to provide greater clarity regarding executive board roles and duties. Ketcham requested that this issue be added to the fall business meeting's agenda as a discussion item.
 - ii. Gómez motioned to approve the executive board; Nichols seconded the motion; the board was approved.
- b. The role of secretary-treasurer remains open. Edgington has been serving in the role on an interim basis and cannot continue to do so.
 - i. Hacker reminded attendees that serving in this role carries the benefit of paid travel to annual WRHC and NCHC conferences.
 - ii. An email will be sent to member institutions in the coming weeks soliciting volunteers for this essential role. In the meantime, directors and deans are encouraged to consult with their administrative staff to see if a staff member would be interested in the role.

7. Discussion Items

- a. Hacker reminded attendees that, at the fall business meeting, the membership voted to move forward with soliciting two student representatives. The board was not able to manage this new aspect of the organization this year, but is in full agreement that student representation is essential. Additional support beyond the board will be needed to make this initiative successful.
 - i. Ketcham recommended soliciting volunteers to help with this initiative together with volunteers for the secretary-treasurer role.
 - ii. Hacker recommended starting small and giving students agency in the process.
 - iii. Syrnyk reiterated that previous discussion yielded recommendations that representation be split between two- and four-year institutions, large and small honors programs and colleges, etc.
 - iv. Taylor requested that two-year institutions be given full consideration.
 - v. Syrnyk will follow up with Lyon, who originally raised the discussion item.

8. News and Announcements

- a. Donovan reported that *Scribendi* received close to 500 submissions this year and opted to publish 54 works by 46 students from about 40 institutions. Copies will be mailed to member institutions shortly. *Scribendi* will resume its former practice of sending one of the two member copies in the spring and one in the fall to pique interest in the review for which submissions are currently open. Judges are needed for literature and fine arts submissions; interested parties should contact Donovan (ldonovan at unmc dot edu) or Ketcham (ketchama at unmc dot edu) directly. Current EIC Megan Kornreich and managing editor Zoe Perls were introduced along with incoming EIC Alex Dickey, managing editor Sierra Martinez, digital editor Flannery Cowan, and communications editor Spenser Willden. Donovan reminded attendees to encourage interested students to consider *Scribendi's* exchange options.
 - i. Polley asked whether judges needed particular qualifications in literature or art. Ketcham indicated that they do not.
 - ii. Nichols asked staff for any editorial advice they might wish to share. Dickey noted that the editorial staff is looking for works that reveal new perspectives and that are true and real.
- b. NCHC updates
 - i. Ketcham reported that another virtual Place as Text institute is planned and advised attendees to consult the NCHC website.
 - ii. Badenhuisen noted that the basic characteristics of fully developed honors programs and colleges will be reviewed and updated (e.g., to include DEI language). The western region is well represented in this work by Donovan, Perez, and Torti.
 - iii. Syrnyk highlighted ongoing Partners in the Parks talks on the third Thursday of each month at 3:00 PM EDT and advised attendees to consult the NCHC website for details.
 - iv. Hacker encouraged attendees to consider submitting proposals for NCHC 2021.
- c. News from regional honors programs and colleges
 - i. Donovan noted that Marshall, interim dean at UNM, will be retiring at the end of this year.
 - ii. Hacker introduced Dave Lunt, faculty fellow at SUU. Lunt offered his congratulations to Hacker for her work on this year's conference and for her new role as Assistant Dean of Students but noted that she will be sorely missed in honors both at SUU and in the region.

9. Hacker adjourned the meeting at 4:13 PM PDT/5:13 PM MDT.