

# **Minutes of the 72<sup>nd</sup> Eastern Colleges Science Conference (ECSC) Board of Trustees Annual Meeting, April 21, 2018, Ithaca College, Ithaca, New York**

## **Officers in Attendance**

Chair of the Board: Don Stearns (Wagner College)

President and Assistant to the Board Chair: Jay Pike (Providence College)

Secretary and Treasurer: Lance Evans (Manhattan College)

## **Other Board Members and Guests in Attendance**

Brandy Bessette-Symons (Ithaca College)

Suzanne Deschenes (Sacred Heart University)

Zofia Gagnon (Marist College)

Connie Greene (Niagara University)

Robert Greene (Niagara University)

Barry Hoopengardner (Central Connecticut State University)

Martin Kapper (Central Connecticut State University)

Ghislaine Mayer (Manhattan College)

Pauline Mosley (Pace University, guest)

Barbara Murdoch (Eastern Connecticut State University)\*

Helen Murphy (John Carroll University)

Brian Palestis (Wagner College)\*

Cyndy Scheibe (Ithaca College)

Stephen Slauson (University of Saint Joseph)

Mark Sweezy (University of Saint Joseph, guest)

Cyrilla Wideman (John Carroll University)

Bryan Wilkins (Manhattan College, guest)

\*Member, ECSC Travel Grant Program Committee

## **Action Items and Discussion**

The meeting was called to order by Don Stearns at approximately 1:20 p.m. with a welcome to all members and guests.

**1. Approval of the agenda and call for additional agenda items:** Don Stearns stated that any board member could introduce any agenda item for consideration. One member brought to the board's attention that Barnard College, host of ECSC 1950, is incorrectly spelled "Bernard College" in the conference program listing previous ECSC meetings. That correction will be made for the future, and the agenda was accepted.

**2. Nominations to the board:** The following individuals were nominated and unanimously elected to the board:

Pauline Mosley, Ph.D., Professor of Information Technology, Ivan Seidenberg School of  
Computer Science and Information Systems, Pace University (nominated by Don Stearns)

Bryan Wilkins, Ph.D., Assistant Professor of Chemistry and Biochemistry, Manhattan College  
(nominated by Lance Evans)

**3. Treasurer's report:** Lance Evans reported that ECSC has a current balance of \$15,509.91, not including any surplus amount coming in after income and costs are determined for ECSC 2018.

**4. Registration and banquet discounts considered for spring, 2019 conference:** On the recommendation of the ECSC treasurer, the board approved a proposal to extend the current per capita \$5 registration and \$7 banquet subsidies, with elimination of the \$100 institutional fee, for ECSC 2019, when the topic will be revisited.

**5. Report from the Travel Grant Program:** Brian Palestis (Member, ECSC Travel Grant Program Committee) reported that John Carroll University received a travel grant award for ECSC 2018. Given the current workload involved--only one institution applied for funding this past year—Brian relayed a proposal from Ron Priefer (the committee chair) to reduce the committee membership from the current five to three. Two current members (Barbara Murdoch and Brian Palestis) ended their three-year terms this year and agreed to not run for re-election under this proposal, while Ronny Priefer would run for re-election for another three-year term. (Anthony Kapolka and Walter Steiner were elected to serve three-year terms in spring, 2017). If approved, the committee would be reduced to three members while maintaining overlapping periods of service. The motion to reduce the number of committee members in this manner was unanimously approved; Ronny Priefer was unanimously re-elected.

There was some discussion of whether or not to use the travel grant monies to discount ECSC costs for all participants instead of considering each institution's request. Some rough calculations indicated that such a discount would amount to about \$10 per participant—not considered enough to encourage someone to attend ECSC who would otherwise not attend for lack of funding. By comparison, \$1,000 given to an institution would be more likely to encourage that institution to attend the conference.

The board agreed that the Travel Grant Program be posted on the ECSC web site, so that all interested institutions are aware of possible financial assistance to encourage presenters to participate at ECSC.

**6. Selection of ECSC abstracts for the conference:** There was some discussion regarding what is considered acceptable for an abstract submitted to ECSC for presentation consideration. The board agreed that the research should be empirical, drawing conclusions from observed and/or measured phenomena, involving hypothesis testing or discovery-based research that searches for patterns in nature. (Note: While mining data banks and using informatics in search of meaningful patterns is a form of discovery-based research, a presentation that provides only a review of a topic or is entirely theoretical with no new information addressing a question is not considered empirical.) If there is any question regarding a submitted abstract, the host committee is in the best position to request clarification. The board voted that the host committee make final decisions regarding the acceptance or rejection of each submitted abstract.

**7. Efforts to seek corporate sponsorship:** Stemming from a board discussion during ECSC 2017 (please see the posted board minutes for the 71<sup>st</sup> annual ECSC), Don Stearns contacted Michael Palladino (professor of biology and currently vice provost for graduate studies, Monmouth University). (It was largely through Michael's efforts that the Metropolitan Association of College and University Biologists was able to receive annual funding for student research from the textbook publisher Pearson/Benjamin Cummings.) Don learned that publishers will likely consider interest in their products and relationships with their local sales managers when collaborating with organizations such as ECSC. He stated in his June 16, 2017 email, "This is challenging because the science supply clearing houses (Fisher, VWR) did this in the past but no longer so you have to try and find groups that recognize ECSC and see value in its membership and exposure to their sponsorship." Carl Hoegler has made arrangements to discuss possible sponsorship of ECSC with the science and technology company Regeneron this summer, with the understanding that any proposed action must be approved by the board.

**8. Posting specific instructions for posters and oral presentations:** The board agreed that the specific instructions for posters and oral presentations should be clearly posted on the web page that includes the other conference information. For posters, some items include poster dimensions, formatting guidelines, items that will be supplied on site to help with the poster display, and any items that the presenter should bring. For oral/platform presentations, some items include instructions regarding uploading of presentations (when? how?), as well as approximate length of presentation and follow-up questions and answers. In the past, the instructions for posters and oral presentations have been posted with the abstract submission guidelines and are no longer accessible after the abstract submission deadline has passed. As a result, many presenters cannot retrieve those instructions as the conference date approaches. The board agreed that these

instructions should remain posted after the abstract submission deadline and remain posted until the conference.

**9. How to encourage more students to give platform presentations:** Jay Pike presented the argument that students need to present more platform presentations, since most professional presentations are oral. Lance Evans reminded the board that posters were not an option back in the 1980s. The board agreed that faculty should do what they can to encourage their students to prepare platform presentations.

#### **10. Old Business and Any Additional Items:**

• **Posted judging instructions:** The ECSC web site (ECSC1.org, Judging) includes the following posted information:

- judging guidelines for platform and poster presentations
- full-length paper instructions
- the ECSC judging rubric
- the ECSC judging report form

The board agreed that each evaluator should be explicitly instructed to determine each presenter's individual contribution to the presented research. This information is particularly important when judging a student's effort as a member of a research team. Also, while most judges recognize empirical research involving hypothesis testing, there remains some confusion regarding evaluation of discovery-based research (please see **Selection of ECSC abstracts for the conference** above). The board approved revising posted judging guidelines to clarify these issues. When the host institution posts specific conference information related to presentations, it should provide a link to these judging guidelines, as well as a link to the full-length paper instructions for manuscript submissions.

• **Spreading the good word of ECSC to others:** To help advertise ECSC, Cyndy Scheibe agreed to create a mailing list from names and contact information sent to her from ECSC members who know of other faculty, particularly at other institutions that do not regularly send participants to ECSC. An electronic poster announcing the next conference, similar to the one distributed this past year, could be sent to people on that mailing list. Barbara Murdoch recommended that ECSC also network where it can with other organizations that share ECSC interests in presentation of undergraduate research (e.g., Council on Undergraduate Research, Metropolitan Association of College and University Biologists). One objective here would be to post ECSC information on those web sites.

**11. Future ECSC Meetings:** Manhattan College (Riverdale, New York) will be hosting the next (73<sup>rd</sup>) annual meeting of the ECSC Saturday, April 6, 2019. Please contact Don Stearns ([DStearns@Wagner.edu](mailto:DStearns@Wagner.edu)) if you would like your institution considered. Having willing hosts is crucial for sustaining ECSC.

The meeting was adjourned 2:10 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Lance S. Evans

Secretary and Treasurer of ECSC Board of Trustees

Original completed April 27, 2018; revision sent for posting July 27, 2018