

2005 ANNUAL REPORT LONG RANGE PLANNING COMMITTEE

The long range planning committee (LRPC) met this year, on March 5-6 at the AAA headquarters with AAA staff. In addition to discussion on objectives and the long range plan, this year we focused discussion on financial objectives and improving the annual meetings. The committee was also able to meet for its traditional breakfast session at the Annual Meetings in December in DC. Our main issues there concerned reorientation for 2006 and beyond, with Setha Low as the new committee chair, and orientation of new members.

2005 Activities

1. The LRPC and the Long Range Planning Process. What will anthropology look like in five, ten or thirty years and what should the AAA do to respond to changes in anthropology, the academy, and other milieus important to anthropologists? How can the AAA better plan for crises such as a lock out of workers at our meeting hotel while continuing to support anthropologists in better engaging and understanding the world and humanity? In the hope of setting a forward-looking agenda for the AAA, LRPC considers questions such as the above and proposes plans to catalyze programs that support anthropology.

The **long-range objectives** consist of a list of goals that AAA hopes to achieve in the next ~ 3-5 years. The long-range objectives reflect both the mission of AAA, and areas that need attention at this time. For this reason, the objectives may change from year to year. Reflecting our discussions, this year we added an objective on “financial planning” (objective XII) and expanded the “meetings objective” (objective VII).

2. Communications of the LRPC. The LRPC has been concerned with increasing communications with Sections and other groups within AAA. To this end, Sections, interest groups, publications and committees were encouraged to complete their annual reports and these reports were read by members of the LRPC and discussed at the beginning of our meeting. Greater than 80% of sections submitted reports this year. LRPC members learned a great deal from reading these reports. In response, I send a memo to all Sections thanking them for their reports and updating them on the deliberations and actions of the LRPC.

3. The AAA Financial Plan. Partly as a result of the financial loss resulting from the 2004 annual meeting move to Atlanta (estimated at about 500K) and partly due to the insights of Douglas Schwartz, (former president of School of American Research), this year the LRPC began to examine and initiate a long term financial plan. To be clear, the AAA does a lot of financial planning. The LRPC, Finance Committee and EB, must consider the long-range financial viability of all new initiatives and the Finance Committee reviews, and the EB approves the annual operating budget. In addition, the AAA officers and the Finance Committee work with AAA’s auditors and investment advisors. However, we are missing an explicit plan for possible growth as well as a plan to financially protect ourselves from disruptions such as occurred during the 2004 annual meetings.

To start the process of financial planning, the LRPC drafted a new financial objective that has now been approved by the EB. In addition, as the main planning gap falls between the LRPC and the Finance Committee, so as to work through a financial planning mechanism we are planning to have these two committees meet at overlapping times during the spring of 2006.

4. Diversity The AAA has a minority fellowship initiative to support predoctoral scholars. Fundraising, however, has not met its goals to enable the endowment to fund the annual scholarship given each year. Rather, operating funds have been solely supporting this fellowship. Furthermore, the current climate is chilly for funding such a program through federal programs and large foundations. However, now is not the time to give up on the critical goal of increasing the diversity of the AAA and anthropology.

To this end, the LRPC will soon be enlisted to help to re-conceptualize and expand the minority fellowship program. The goal is not to drop or diminish the existing program but rather to develop additional components that help to expand and maintain the pipeline of minoritized scholars. In this initiative, the LRPC plans to work closely with the Minority Affairs Committee and other consistencies within and outside of AAA.

5. The Current Status and Future of the Meetings. The annual meetings are generally considered to be one of the greatest benefits of membership in AAA. Nearly half of our members attend the annual meetings. Our meetings are growing in the number of attendees and especially in the number of submitted papers, and thus, the rising rate of paper rejections. Given the importance of the meetings to membership, the LRPC decided to begin a process of examining the meetings and planning for their future. In doing so, we are trying to be as open as possible to considering what our meetings might best look like.

Annual Meetings Surveys in 2002 and 2003 suggest that while there is great room for improvement. There are a host of complaints about the meetings, often contradictory. For example, some people like the fact that students are frequent presenters and others complain about the same issue. Overall, however, 86% of the respondents to the 2003 survey ranked the quality of the program as good to excellent.

The sense of the LRPC is that the timing and general form of the meetings works well. By that we mean that having a large fall meetings seems to work, especially given that many sections sponsor and many members attend smaller and more specific spring meetings. Still, one of the general needs seems to be for more space and opportunity for informal gatherings. The LRPC also discussed issues that center on the potential growth of the meetings. How big a meeting would be too big? How could we accommodate the growing needs of diverse groups to present papers? Help might come by converting some podium presentations to poster and by use of some form of presentation that is available electronically before, during and/or after the meetings.

The LRPC believes that the annual meetings should aim to be inclusive and welcoming to anthropologists, students and others such as local teachers and retirees. Furthermore, the meetings should promote a diversity of activities ranging from informal networking (a priority of membership) first presentations by junior scholars, places for books sellers and merchants, press

coverage, faculty recruitment and educational outreach activities, and large events such as keynote talks and galas.

A subgroup of the LRPC will soon be charged with continuing to explore the future format of the annual meetings and to eventually report to membership. In the meanwhile, we heartily welcome feedback and advice.

Proposed Activities for 2006

In addition to reviewing the activities of section, progress on initiatives, and the LR Objectives, this year, I propose to consider:

- Focus on core issues. Continue to discuss the future of the annual meetings and also consider issues relating to AnthroSource and the publications program and website.
- Examine the development of new membership categories such as under or unemployed and the potential for income based membership fee structure
- Consider the viability of small sections and the relationship of the LRPC to the newly formed Governance Commission
- Work towards implementation of a new diversity initiative.
- Work with the Finance Committee to further the formulation of financial planning.

Issues for the Executive Board

None at present.