

Report of the Committee on Regions for the Year ending June 30, 2009

Sigma Xi, The Scientific Research Society Report of the Committee on Regions For the year ending 30 June 2009

The Committee on Regions met during the Society's November 2008 Annual Meeting and Student Research Conference at Marriott Renaissance Hotel, Meeting Room 3, Washington DC. The committee consisted of the six elected Board Directors who each represent a distinct region by which Sigma Xi chapters are organized. Attending the meeting were:

Committee Members

Dr. John J. Kelley, Chair, Northwest Region
Dr. Jacob Jacobson, Northeast Region
Dr. William Klemm, Southwest Region
Dr. John Knesel, Southeast Region - absent
Dr. Linda Meadows, North Central Region
Dr. Andrew Velkey, II, Mid-Atlantic Region

Guests

Dr. Jerome Baker, Executive Director
Dr. Ann Williams, President, Sigma Xi
Mr. Phillip Cates, Director, Organizational Advancement Department

Staff Liaison

Ms. Kathy McLane

Opening Remarks

Dr. Kelley opened the meeting inviting the directors to enjoy dinner and conversation before beginning the meeting.

Review of the Minutes of the 2007 meeting in Orlando, FL.

Dr. Tim Ng, Chair of the 2007 meeting of the Committee on Regions submitted his report on the deliberations of that meeting. The report was reviewed by the committee. It was noted that most of the concerns of the 2007 meeting regarding recruitment and retention, Sigma Xi's identity, the role of chapters and finances were still important issues for the consideration at the 2008 annual meeting.

Report on Caucus Deliberations

Membership Retention

After each Regional Director and guests were introduced the discussion centered on reports of caucus deliberations at this annual meeting. The discussion began on the important topic of member retention. Directors were urged to refer to the documents on retention in their meeting notebooks and to share these with their regional members.

Dr. Jacobson asked that the administrative offices follow up on the idea of notifying members when moving where new chapters are located. This was referred to as the "zone project" when the membership office worked with The Shodor Foundation. Dr. Jacobson recommended that this project be revisited and completed in the upcoming year.

Dues Increase Issues

The discussion moved on to the dues structure. The feeling was that Sigma Xi needs to rethink its mission and narrow its focus to inspire members to renew and invite potential members to accept membership. The directors voiced their concerns over the dues increase and how will it affect membership. Should an outside consultant review increases and will the increase eliminate the deficit?

Dr. Klemm asked why the chapters and delegates were not sufficiently briefed on the 8-pt motion. We have accepted the reality that something needs to be done. Why was the delegate from Berkeley cut off by parliamentary issues? A dues increase might send too many members away.

Dr. Velkey stated that the idea of an early career dues level at a fixed level for 3 to 5 years (postdocs - bridge dues) would add value to membership. What would the cost be to the Society to have this level? Would the Society break even? If the students had online membership and did not receive the magazine or if they wanted the magazine pay an extra fee, how would this affect the bottom line?

The discussion continued on the dues and the 8-pt motion. Should the Society sell or maintain the building. How can funds be raised to sustain the Society?

Communication Strategies

Discussion moved on to the focus on the problem of communication. What does it say about Sigma Xi? Here are some of the things we are doing but could increase the effort:

- personal commitment in contacting members previously nominated
- membership should be more elite more prestigious to become a member
- contact deans of graduate schools and provosts to identify top 5% and extend membership to them
- graduation recognition
- improve identity problem on campus at institutions which don't know Sigma Xi
- must have support of chapter officers and administration when visiting chapters
- advertise faculty posters for the meeting
- encourage regional science fairs and joint research days
- how to retain student members
- bridge dues may help retain recent graduates
- greater emphasis on what chapters could do to increase their membership

Directors were asked to briefly state their suggestions for strengthening the society and fostering recruitment and retention. Linda Meadows suggested greater member involvement including greater use of technology. Ann Williams and Zach Jacobson stated the importance of contacting members and providing follow-up when they move. Andrew Velkey suggested leadership development and getting members involved. William Klemm emphasized sharing value of membership in the society and providing better instructions to delegates. John Kelley suggested more use of "e" technology in bringing members of the society closer together.

Visit to New Orleans Chapter

Dr. Williams spoke about her visit with the newly merged Greater New Orleans Chapter. Jerome Howard spoke of the dedication of the officers and members to try to maintain what they could of the devastated chapters. It was mentioned that Michael Stephens should be commended with a certificate of recognition for his dedication in keeping Sigma Xi alive in the midst of the devastation. Most lost their homes and their schools were downsized with a huge loss of faculty in the area.

Online Journal

Ann Williams and John Kelley reported on progress that was being made regarding a suggestion to offer an online journal for the publication of scientific reports from High School student research projects. Initial discussions have included collaboration with Epsilon Pi Tau (Technology society), Kauffman Foundation, Academy of Applied Sciences and Sigma Xi.

The meeting adjourned at 8:00 PM to attend the film *FLOW*.