

Panel on Public Affairs
February 18, 2021 - Meeting Minutes
Virtual Meeting

Virtual Members Present:

D. Dahlberg (Chair), W. Collins (Chair-Elect), W. McCurdy (Vice-Chair), P. Bucksbaum, J. Dailey, S. Demers, E. Gawiser, S. Fetter, L. Grego, N. Holtkamp, B. Klein, D. Louca, T. Mason, E. Mazur, C. Nitta, R. Orbach, B. Rosner, D. Stamper-Kurn, W. Taylor, M. White, J. Wurtele
Due to scheduling conflicts, some members joined for only limited portions of the meeting

Virtual Advisors/Staff Present:

J. Bagger, M. Elsesser, J. Gates, F. Hellman, J. Hernandez Charpak, J. Oliver, J. Russo, F. Slakey

Call to Order:

Dahlberg called the meeting to order at 11:03 AM

Dahlberg opened the meeting with a brief welcome and introductions and a motion was made to approve the minutes.

***Motion:** to accept the October 2020 minutes, as presented
(Collins, Grego)*

***Action:** the motion passed unanimously (17 in favor)*

New Business

The new POPA members were asked to share their primary interests. New members indicated interests in: energy & the environment, international collaboration & scientific mobility, public engagement, restoring public trust in science, STEM education, and diversity/equity/inclusion. Based on those interests, there was a discussion of subcommittee assignments for the new POPA members.

National Security Subcommittee

Grego, Chair of the National Security Subcommittee, presented two previous APS statements that the National Security Subcommittee will review this year: Statement 01.1 “Security & Science at the Weapons Laboratories” and Statement 06.1 “The Use of Nuclear Weapons”. Fetter will take the lead role in reviewing the latter Statement with input from the Physicists Coalition for Nuclear Threat Reduction.

Grego also provided an update on the Statement on Verification and Science drafted by POPA in 2020. The statement will be reviewed by the APS Council in Spring 2021.

Guest, Fred Lamb, Missile Defense Study Chair updated the committee on the POPA Missile Defense study. Lamb shared that the Congressional Budget Office was in the process of preparing a report on missile defense that would be useful input to the POPA Missile Defense Study committee. Lamb shared the target schedule for the full draft report: he is aiming to have a draft completed by mid-April, available for POPA members to review at the June meeting. Fred will present the report recommendations at the June meeting.

Standing Ethics Committee

Guest, Frances Houle, Ethics Committee Chair, provided the committee with an update on the Standing Ethics Committee’s work on APS revocation and nomination policy, as well as preliminary information regarding the 2020 ethics survey. Houle explained that the Standing Ethics Committee established two subcommittees to pursue activities suggested by APS Leadership, and that they would engage with units on both ethics issues and ethics promotion/education. The first subcommittee, Research Integrity, is led by Nan Phinney and will monitor the evolving landscape of scientific misconduct to develop sub-field descriptions of norms and make modifications to the current Ethics Guidelines as needed. The second subcommittee, Ethics Education, is led by Michael Marder and will manage ethics communication campaigns and develop associated educational materials for the physics community.

Energy & Environment Subcommittee

Collins, provided a status update on the review and editing of APS Statement 15.3 “Earths Changing Climate”. The modifications have been substantial enough that it should go to the entire APS membership for review. The statement will be reviewed by Council in Spring 2021.

Orbach, Chair of the Energy & Environment Subcommittee, presented the revised POPA Methane Study outline to POPA for approval. The outline was expanded by Orbach and Collins to specifically assess the actual amount of flaring and methane release through measurement platforms already on the ground, or soon to be completed.

Motion: *to approve methane report outline*

(Dahlberg, Stamper Kurn)

Action: *the motion passed unanimously (18 in favor)*

Physics & the Public Subcommittee

McCurdy, Chair of the Physics & the Public Subcommittee, provided a status update on statements continuing from 2020: the new Graduate Admissions Statement, Statement 89.2 “The International Nature of Physics and International Cooperation”, Statement 15.2 “On the Status of Women in Physics”, and Statement 00.4 “Protection Against Discrimination”. McCurdy, presented the committee with the statements up for review in 2021 with a proposal to renew without edits Statement 91.5 “Scientific Review of Research Facilities Funding”.

91.5 Scientific Review of Research Facilities Funding

Motion: *to renew without edits*

(Dahlberg, Gawiser)

Action: *the motion passed (15 in favor, 2 against and 1 abstained)*

McCurdy presented the 2021 statements up for review by the Physics & the Public Subcommittee. The subcommittee will review the statements and work to consider the statements at the June and October POPA meetings. The include: Statement 06.2 “Advocacy for Science Education”, Statement 06.3 “Career Options for Physicists”, Statement 01.2 “K-12 Assessment & Science”, and Statement 81.1 “Creationism”.

OGA Advocacy Update

Elsesser, Interim Director of Government Affairs, provided an update on the recent activities of APS Government Affairs (GA). The APS 2021 Virtual CVD had the participation of more than 60 APS Members, who virtually visited 41 districts in 23 states for a total of 83 Meetings. All the participants discussed a “top line” funding issue: the federal R&D budgets & COVID relief. The participants then selected two additional issues to discuss from the following list: visas and immigration, addressing sexual harassment in STEM, maintaining a ready supply of liquid helium, and broadening participation in STEM. Extensive training was provided by APS GA as well as a website that congressional staff found useful. The APS Presidential Line virtually met with congressional offices and Biden Administration officials for discussions of research security and the future of NSF.

Adjournment

Action: D. Dahlberg adjourned the meeting at 3:19 PM

Next Meeting Date: June 11, 2021