

Minutes

AASTA Founding Fellows Planning Group Meeting March 2, 2005

The first meeting of the AASTA Founding Fellows Planning Group was held on March 2, 2005 at the University of Arizona Health Sciences Center.

Dr. Vincent Fulginiti chaired the meeting.

Present were Dr. Michael Belton, Dr. J. Lyle Bootman, Mr. Patrick Burkhart, Dr. John Hildebrand, and Dr. Lynn Nadel. Vice Chairs Dr. Russ Balda and Regent Lorraine Frank, and Dr. William Uttal participated in the meeting via telephone.

Dr. Fulginiti called the meeting to order at 1:00 PM and the members of the Planning Group introduced themselves.

Mr. Burkhart was then asked to review the purpose of the Planning Group. He thanked all of the AASTA Founding Fellows who volunteered to serve in this activity. He further reviewed the origin of the concept for AASTA, the early feasibility period and drafting of a business plan that preceded AASTA's incorporation. Now that 112 Founding Fellows had joined AASTA, the incorporating Board of Governors believed it wise and prudent to revisit the assumptions and content in the original business plan and, with the contribution of the Founding Fellows, update it. It is considered vital that AASTA launch its operations following the election of a new Board of Governors in a way that enjoys consensus support from the Fellows and focuses the work of this new organization in ways that are both productive and meaningful to its stakeholders.

Two major themes have arisen from 70 interviews recently conducted among the Founding Fellows. First it is clear that the Fellows are eager to have a means to connect with one another for intellectual enrichment. Secondly, there is a strong desire among most of the Fellows to engage in citizenship similar to the way that the National Research Council serves the nation.

A white paper detailing these findings as well as the progress of AASTA's evolution to date was distributed to the members of the Planning Group prior to the meeting and posted on the planning Group's webpage that describes in greater detail some of the clustered interests of the Founding Fellows, such as Education, Health, Sustainability, Technology, Arts, Culture and Humanities, and so forth.

Dr. Fulginiti responded that two matters were of primary importance relative to this group's work over the next few weeks. First is to resolve AASTA's structure and second the content of its programmatic activities. A new business plan is to be drafted for the group's consideration and approval on or before April 1, 2005. The plan will be made available to the entire group of Founding Fellows immediately thereafter and will be

presented to them as a recommendation at the April 16th meeting of the Founding Fellows.

Dr. Fulginiti stated that the objective of this first meeting of the Planning Group was to arrive at a set of recommendations that would drive the work that needs to be completed in the next few weeks.

A discussion ensued at length regarding the content of the white paper and the feedback received from the Founding fellow interviews conducted to date.

It was noted that the role of AASTA in helping to shape informed public policy making attracted many to join the organization. Among the key questions to be resolved was the means by which this new entity could effectively engage the policy making community. The group seemed to agree that the focus of this role had to be centered on “Arizona” and must be constructed to operate and publish in a non-partisan fashion. The group noted further that the National Research Council had a process in place whereby draft reports were vetted to ensure this type of outcome and perception.

It was suggested that AASTA act in two modes. Namely that it be proactive in holding briefings for the legislative community and others on a wide variety of topics, and secondly that it be reactive to requests from any source for analytical services.

The group felt that AASTA must begin in a focused way and that the prioritization of potential issues was thus important. Selecting where to begin among a wide spectrum of topics that beg the attention of the organization is a strategic decision with implications for how AASTA’s early work is perceived by those we would seek to assist.

The American Academy of Arts and Sciences was suggested as perhaps the better model to emulate, at least in certain respects, in contrast with the National Academies. The American Academy of Arts and Sciences seeks to stimulate and nurture the intellectual life of its members as well as conduct major studies on issues of importance. It brings the best talent in the nation to bear through a committee on studies to consider what topics to explore and how the work shall be conducted. Perhaps this is a model that AASTA should incorporate in launching its policy related efforts.

It was noted that there is a strong desire for connectedness among the Fellows. Dinner events and other regularly scheduled means of convening the Fellows need to be implemented, with the possibility that regional chapters be established.

The discussion turned to the production of major intellectual events. There was a general sense that the first major conference be held next Spring rather than the coming Fall simply to allow sufficient time to organize it well. Topical themes were offered by several members centering on the future of Arizona, the demographic, scientific, technological and cultural forces that are influencing that future, and how bridges can be built to transform the State from our present status to world class status.

The Planning Group concluded its discussions by agreeing upon the following:

1. It directed Mr. Burkhart to solicit the full CV's and biosketches from all of the Founding fellows for the purpose of building a more complete profile of the membership to date.
2. It recommended that a leader for planning a major conference be identified as soon as possible.
3. It recommended that an initial focus be placed on smaller regional meeting to coalesce the Fellows into a community.

Mr. Burkhart was asked to poll the Planning Group members to establish an optimal time and date for the next meeting.