

## **President's Annual Report: Maureen Meyers October 2021**

The 2020-2021 year has been another busy one for SEAC. The longstanding work of the conference, including the annual meeting, journal and newsletter, public outreach, awards, students, mentorship, and curation, is ongoing. We have a number of existing initiatives, including sexual harassment and diversion and inclusivity, that have made considerable progress. New initiatives, such as policy and changes to the C.B. Moore award, are in the beginning stages. In this report I discuss these to update the Executive Committee and membership about this work. Please see the reports compiled by the Officers and each committee and task force, as for specific details.

### *Annual Meeting*

Thanks to the dedicated and painstaking efforts of the 2021 Durham Annual Meeting committee, (Margie Scary, Heather Lapham, and Steve Davis) we are able to host an in-person meeting during a pandemic, with a full two-day slate of papers and posters and related activities. Safety measures include masking and social distancing, as well as some changes to traditional meetings, such as outdoor seating and dining options, one large poster session Monday evening, and a slightly shorter conference. Although initially we were fully expecting to not do as well financially with this conference, thanks to vigorous fundraising efforts led by Heather Lapham, and a strong response from the membership, we have made our room blocks in most of the hotels, and are expecting up to 500 people to attend. Although, thanks to careful stewardship by the Treasurer and past President Janet Levy, SEAC had the finances to offset any losses, those losses will be much less than we anticipated allowing us to move forward on firm financial ground. A huge thank you to the organizers for their efforts--and for ensuring a safe, effective and fun conference--something essential to the vitality of the organization.

### *Future Meetings*

I am happy to report that planning for the 2022 meeting in Little Rock, Arkansas, spearheaded by Emily Beahm, is underway. The organizers are investigating the possibility of online or hybrid meetings as part of their efforts. I am also happy to report that the contract for the 2023 meetings in Chattanooga, TN, spearheaded by Scott Jones, has been signed and they are negotiating with the hotel and finalizing details. Finally, there is strong interest for a 2024 meeting in Tampa, Florida, led by Tom Pluckhahn and others. I have made inquiries with different individuals about meetings for 2025 and beyond, but have not secured firm commitments as of yet.

I also note that the Society for American Archaeology (SAA) has recently formed a task force to investigate future online meetings. One part of these efforts is to investigate the utility of regional SAA meetings to be held in the fall. I have reached out to the Task Force and noted that this would negatively impact SEAC and I and others on the SEAC Board will meet with a member of the Task Force (Kayeleigh Sharp) during the annual meeting to discuss this further. Please contact me if you have additional comments.

### *Journal Policy*

In the spring I asked Rob Beck, Journal Editor, to investigate creating a committee regarding the creation of a journal policy, following discussion with tribes over the use of images in the journal. After discussion with the Editorial Board and past editors, Rob suggests the creation of a committee made up of past editors, tribal members, and other interested SEAC members. Following the annual meeting, I will work with Rob to create this committee and present them with a formal charge.

### *Social Media Policy*

In the spring I asked Meg Kassabaum to form a committee investigating the creation of a social media policy, both to guide the Social Media Editor on what is posted on SEAC website social media platforms and to respond to companies asking to advertise on the SEAC website. Meg responded that due to unexpected increasing work load as Social Media Editor that she be allowed to wait to form the committee with the new Social Media-Editor Elect, and I agreed.

### *Sexual Harassment Committee*

In her annual report, Robbie Ethridge reports the committee has been busy with multiple issues. **First**, at the Board's request Robbie retained an attorney (Terry Ona) who reviewed the Grievance Procedure, and has requested a meeting with the SEAC Board to discuss the procedure. **Second**, the attorney recommends retaining an attorney if the procedure is adopted, and will discuss this in more detail during the meeting. An alternative strategy to address grievances is for SEAC to become an affiliate organization with RPA. Robbie and I met with Linda Stine, President of the RPA, to discuss the pros and cons of this affiliation; we will meet again once we gather additional data. At that point, Board discussion will be required. I anticipate multiple SEAC Executive Board meetings to address this issue and next steps.

### *Other Work*

Over the last year I have done the following as part of regular Presidential duties:

- appointed members to all standing committees.
- Met with the 2021 meeting organizers multiple times
- Met with the chairs of the NAALC to discuss their needs, discuss policy (see policy draft) and draft a survey of members
- Met with Karen Brunso, Chickasaw tribe
- Met with Alex Jones, Archaeology in the Community, to discuss partnership
- Met with Scott Ketchum, Chickasaw tribe
- Met with Linda Stine, President RPA
- Appointed two co-chairs of the Task Force examining the C.B. Moore award (see below) and met with them via Zoom
- Met multiple times with the Sexual Harassment and Assault committee; oversaw votes as needed to approve funds for conference (e.g., pamphlets, t-shirts, etc).

- Worked with Emily Beahm, Newsletter Editor, to create two dedicated issues of the Newsletter, one about the 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary of NAGPRA (April) and a second (October) about archaeology in the time of COVID.
- Worked with the organizers of the 2022 and 2023 meetings and discussed possible meetings for 2024 and beyond.
- Met with the Inclusivity and Diversity Chairs and Task Force via Zoom (multiple meetings)
- Created and chaired a SEAC Policy committee
- Met with NAALC and Treasurer, and discussed with the Board student membership lottery; instituted lottery
- Assisted the Nominations Committee as needed
- Nominated the Angel Mound/Indiana State Museum for an SAA Curation Award, which included soliciting multiple letters of support.
- Asked the SAMN to continue their online monthly SEAC social meetings during the pandemic. This was an incredible amount of work on their part and I think did a lot to keep up and increase membership and morale of the organization.
- Discussed the creation of a Task Force in SEAC to examine the effects of climate change on sites and adverse effects on minority communities

### *SEAC Administration*

Over the last year it has become more apparent to me that it is time to formally address the administration of SEAC. We are now a 900+-member organization, and because we are this size I am asking the Board to consider changes to its administration. Below I describe some existing needs and arising needs for the Board's consideration.

**First,** I have begun the process of organizing the SEAC Officer Google drive, created by Karen Smith, and adding more information to these files. These include past meeting information and contracts; election timelines; election results; description of officer duties; SEAC logo; award templates; and other information. In doing this it has become apparent that we need to first update and expand the SEAC officer duties, including more than the existing files of President, Secretary and Treasurer; and second, we need to ensure that new officers are given access to the files, and old officers removed once their terms are over. I will ask retiring officers to update or create a SEAC duty list and will add and delete members as needed (and add this to the Presidential duty list). This will ensure continuity of institutional information and allow a smoother transition between individual office-holders.

**Second,** and related to this, SEAC needs a policy document. I formed a committee with myself, Tony Boudreaux, Rachel Briggs and Ann Cordell. Due to changes in personal circumstances, the work of this committee has been in temporary suspension. However, we were able to determine that we need more information on how information, specifically emails, is curated in SEAC. The ultimate goal of the committee is to compile documents and create a short Policy Handbook for officers to guide them as they fulfill their duties. Much time on the Board is spent reinventing the wheel, as it were, and this would allow for more efficient work on the part of the Board. I will continue to work on this after the annual meeting, and am willing to continue serving in this role as needed after my term ends, and at the pleasure of the incoming president.

**Third**, related to this is the work of the Curation committee. After serving for many years, Patricia Galloway and Joe Herbert have stepped down from the committee and I asked Liz Horton to lead this committee. She is in the process of finding members to sit on the committee; please contact her if you are interested.

**Fourth**, in order for the SEAC Board to make decisions more effectively, we need more information. Currently we do not gather information on members or their affiliations. I have audited the 900-member list and completed a rough identification of affiliation type of 75% of the members (Table 1). I propose to the Board that we change the membership form so that this information is collected when members join or renew to better understand and serve our members. In addition, this would further assist the Student Committee (see report) who have requested the Board maintain a list of students and create a list-serve so they can better contact and serve students.

<b>Affiliation</b>	<b>Number</b>	<b>Percent</b>
Academic (including students)	380	42%
CRM	146	16%
Government	115	13%
Other	41	5%
Unidentified	218	24%
<b>TOTAL</b>	900	----

Finally, there is a continuing and increasing need for an Executive Director of SEAC. In my new professional position I am supported greatly by my employer for the work I do for SEAC, but it has become increasingly apparent that there is enough work to fill a part-time (20 hours/week) position as Executive Director. Other organizations, like SHA and ACRA, have part- or full time Executive Directors. Over the next year I will gather additional data (salary, etc.) about what this might entail so the Board can discuss in more detail.

*Diversity*

Over the last few years, SEAC has increasingly made efforts to recognize that it needs to become more inclusive. In Summer 2020, following the George Floyd murder, the SEAC Board issued a statement that read in part:

*We commit to actively working to become a more inclusive organization, to seeking dialogue with diverse groups, and to collaborating with communities of color. We affirm our support of equal respect and justice for all, in our daily lives and in our commitment to a fairer understanding of our shared past. We remain committed to welcoming, mentoring, and ensuring the value and safety of all individuals in our organization to the best of our abilities.*

Toward that end, I have done the following:

**First**, the Task Force for Diversity, Equity, and Inclusivity (DEI) chaired by Jayur Mehta and LeeAnne Wendt, formally called for interested members and formed their committee. I met with the committee in the spring and encouraged their efforts. Their members, with Board approval, are taking an online Inclusivity course to assist them in their next steps. They also recommended the Board take the course (online). See their report for more details.

**Second**, after multiple meetings with the Board and the Native American Liaison Committee, I set up a lottery for student memberships, thanks to a generous donation from TVAR, Inc., Michael and Kelsey Fedoroff, and an anonymous donor. Ten of these memberships are targeted for Native students while another ten are for students from HBCUs. Announcements of these memberships will be sent to HBCUs in the Southeast, as well as tribal colleges, tribal liaisons, and colleges and universities in the Southeast, including community colleges. The lottery drawing will be held in early December. I encourage other members of the Board and SEAC to donate memberships to increase the amount, both to increase but also to diversity student membership.

**Third**, I have met with Dr. Alex Jones of Archaeology in the Community (AIRC). She recently expressed a need for experts to donate time, labor and materials to assist communities, particularly communities of color, in identifying African American burial grounds, specifically enslaved burial grounds, and assist with GPR, research and grant-writing. I suggested that SEAC promote these efforts by creating a list of individuals interested in assisting these efforts. Dr. Jones would assist by distributing the list to interested communities. This is a low-cost initiative to collaborate with communities of color. I am in the process of drafting a partnership agreement with Dr. Jones for Board approval.

**Fourth**, I created a Task Force to examine changes to the C.B. Moore Award and named two co-chairs. Last year, the Board voted to retire the award. Amanda Regnier chaired the subcommittee examining the name and the physical award itself. Please see her report, where she and her committee strongly recommend changing the award name and the physical award. This will need to be voted on by the SEAC Board. Greg Wilson chaired the subcommittee addressing how the award is voted on, and his recommendations are in his report.

In the coming year, I plan to increase our focus on diversity with the end goal of increasing diversity in the organization by focusing at least one issue of the newsletter on this topic, and making very broad what is included in diversity. In particular, I want to focus on ways SEAC can institutionalize diversity.

**First**, I will work with the Nominations committee to increase the types of candidates we ask to run for Board positions. This would make the Board more representative of the organization's membership. For example, although 40% of the membership is allied with the academy (and I note this includes students), 90% of the voting members of the Board are affiliated with the academy, and until recently, this was 100%. In addition, the Board lacks diversity in terms of race and class, and probably is most diverse in terms of gender (50/50).

A **second** way to increase diversity in the organization lies with me, as I make appointments to committees. Currently, of the 60 members of the organization who serve on committees, 67% are affiliated with the academy, 15% with government, 10% are students, and 10% are in CRM. I would note that 10% of all committee members serve on more than one committee or on the Board and the committee. Because committee service is often a gateway to Board service, I think widening the scope of who I ask to serve is a good start. I suggest that SEAC emulate the SAA in this endeavor, and either put out an open call or again, use the membership form for members to self-identify which committees they have an interest in serving on.

In closing, I want to thank the members of the Board, the committees and task forces for doing the work they do. I have relied on all of them a great deal over the past year, and they have never hesitated to answer many questions or requests for assistance and service. I am particularly indebted to the Treasurer, Patrick Livingood, and the Secretary, Chris Rodning, for keeping me straight more times than I can count. They made a difficult year and transition much easier for me. I look forward to serving in the coming year.

Respectfully submitted,

Maureen Meyers, President  
October 12, 2021