

Convention Committee Minutes
Thursday, September 7, 2017

Present: Lexey Bartlett, Chair; Shannin Schroeder; AmiJo Comeford; Ericka Hoagland; Sam Miller; Sarah Hovet; Elizabeth Upshur; Leigh Ann Rhea; Joan Reeves; Elfi Gabriel

Agenda items indicated with bullets, followed by notes on the committee's discussion:

- On Common Reader/Convention Theme papers: If paper is considered in multiple categories, can it win more than one award?

Committee discussion/decision: No paper can win more than one award, but one student can win more than one award for separate papers. The committee generally agreed that if a paper is being considered for two awards, it should be awarded the larger of the awards.

- Previous Convention Speakers: Nominate for Honorary Membership (from 2017 (Megan Mayhew Bergman, Marlon James, and Jeff Vandermeer-- include Anne Vandermeer, too?) and 2016—Kao Kalia Yang and Charles Baxter)

Committee discussion/decision: The committee voted unanimously to nominate the listed speakers for Honorary Membership, and so the following motion was put to the full Board, where it passed unanimously:

Motion: The Convention Committee nominates for Honorary Membership our speakers from the 2017 Convention (Megan Mayhew Bergman, Marlon James, Jeff VanderMeer, and Ann VanderMeer) and from the 2016 Convention (Kao Kalia Yang and Charles Baxter).

- Career Workshops: Already planned: Jessica Heller workshop on finding non-teaching jobs that match your skills; and Fellowship opportunities workshop. Other ideas: Micah Hicks creative writing workshop; SKD sponsor(s) about teaching in community or other two-year colleges; museum or archive personnel from local institutions on their careers; other ideas on topics or presenters? (Some constituencies to consider: alumni, diversity, English education, international, and virtual chapters; partners SKD and NEHS)

Committee discussion/decision: Leighann and Joan from SKD were on board with the idea of a workshop with an SKD sponsor talking about teaching in two-year colleges [post-meeting note: John Pruitt agreed to run this workshop]. We discussed making sure there was programming for English ed., with the suggestion of a workshop through Dave's NCTE connections [post-meeting note: A teaching Shakespeare workshop is being offered by Diane Steinberg et al., but not during the career workshops time]. Workshops with non-profit agencies are an idea, with the suggestion to contact the non-profit association for Ohio to find local presenters. A workshop on jobs in digital media was suggested also—video game writers, social media writing jobs, etc. Follow-up on this task is to take place in September and October.

- Student Leader Activities—Leadership workshop and Friday night event, intro and

author help duties (SL scheduling); other activities/ideas for Convention?

Committee discussion/decision: The student leadership presented their idea for an escape room activity Friday night, including many details about how to include single attendees, how to generate excitement for the activity using social media, and using it to reveal either the theme or Common Reader for St. Louis [post-committee discussion: maybe reveal the theme, so the Common Reader can be announced in the program and sold, or to reveal the Common Reader with the theme announced in the program. More thought needed and consultation with the 2019 Convention Chair.] They also explained how they will award prizes, which will be mainly copies of the 2019 Common Reader.

The Student Leadership workshop was discussed, with the idea of using principles from the Clifton StrengthsFinder to help participants identify their own strengths to help guide their leadership practices. This would be a broader personal development workshop than past workshops just focused on the details of Sigma Tau Delta participation. This might be a two-part workshop: identifying strengths, and then learning how to apply them.

Another idea: A wall display where chapters can bring their best activity ad/flyer/poster and post it at convention.

- Sponsor workshop (also work with Regents Committee): Maybe Felicia Steele and Beth DeMeo, or other non-Board sponsors? Topics or presenters?

Committee discussion: The Convention Chair will work with the aforementioned sponsors to plan the workshop.

- Proposed theme for the 2019 Convention in St. Louis

Committee discussion: Felicia Steele, the 2019 Convention Chair, shared a document via email with the proposed theme of “work” and a list of possible speakers. The committee liked the theme idea and played with some of Felicia’s suggestions for the theme title wording, which were also well received. Here is the information shared on the theme:

Work

Possible Theme titles: Work; Working Titles; The Work We Do; Vision and Revision

Description of Theme: Central to St. Louis’s history is work: the work of railroad workers, the trade along the Mississippi, and the work of local factories exported across the country. Our students often conceive of literary production as the work of genius, or the “spontaneous overflow” of emotion “recollected in tranquility,” but writing and revision and teaching about literature is work. At this historical moment, we also have a cultural reconsideration of work, as more and more labor is automated. Does automation open up space for aesthetic production? Do we need to reimagine work? This theme would invite participants to consider the work of writing (both creative and critical) and to consider their “working lives,” inviting opportunities for guests from industry (Hallmark is one of the biggest employers in Missouri, for example) and from education.

The committee members talked over the proposed theme titles and suggested some other

good ideas [to be shared again and discussed with the 2019 Convention Chair via email discussion].

The committee also liked the suggestion of the play *Sweat* by Lynn Nottage for the Common Reader, along with other suggested speakers/writers. This also will be discussed by the committee via email.

- Discuss the responsibilities of non-Board committee members for this committee regarding decisions related to convention planning and develop a plan for consultation and approval of aspects of the convention planning that the Convention Chair supervises. (As part of the charge to develop a document including a planning timeline for future Convention Chairs and a description of their responsibilities. This will be an on-going discussion, but Board input would be helpful here, from this committee and perhaps other members of the Board, particularly Convention Chairs of recent past conventions.)

Committee discussion/decision: The Committee agreed that for the most part, all decisions for the planning of the Convention should take place within the Convention Committee designated from Board members by the President, with some outside consultation of the full Board or select Past Presidents or former Convention Chairs if needed. The suggestion of creating a list of convention elements that the Convention Chair or Committee determine with a notation of where the final decision responsibility lies to include in the convention planning handbook was made, and it was endorsed by the full committee. That will be an ongoing project for the committee this year as per our charge. [Post-meeting note: The idea of limiting decision-making for the convention to the Board membership of the Convention Committee, with consultation of the full Board or invited members when desired, was raised to the President, who approved this procedural clarification.]

Minutes submitted by Lexey Bartlett
21 September 2017