

Rationale for proposed changes to the 2007 OPEN By-Laws

Major changes

- *Electronic voting.* The 2007 By-Laws permit voting only by written secret ballot, by voice acclamation, or by submitting votes in writing and sending them to a meeting with a member who will be present (see Article IV sections 5, Article V section 2a); it does not allow for electronic voting. Also, however few or many OPEN members attend a meeting are considered a quorum for voting purposes; the number is often a small percentage of the actual membership. By contrast, electronic voting is used by OPEN's parent organization, the American Evaluation Association (AEA), and by many other professional groups. The proposed revision for 2011 would allow (but not require) electronic voting (see changes at Article IV sections 3 and 5, Article V section 2a).
- *Officers.* At Article V section 1, the 2007 By-Laws identify as Council officers a president, president-elect, secretary, financial officer, student liaison, and chair of the planning committee; note that this is an even number of officers which would invite difficulty in case of tie votes of the Council. By contrast, at Article VI section 3, the chair of the planning committee is not listed as an officer; note the internal inconsistency as to who the Council officers are. The 2011 proposed revision would make the following changes (see Article V section 1, Article VI sections 1 and 3).
 - The proposed revision for 2011 would clearly identify five (5) Council members and more clearly indicate their duties (see Articles V and VI).
 - The "Secretary" would become the "Communications Officer," an adaptation of the term used for the "Financial Officer" and a term which offers a better descriptor for the revised duties indicated next.
 - A "Membership Officer" is a proposed addition which would designate a point of contact and welcome for members and a point of encouragement for volunteers, now missing from the roster of officers. The lack of such a position created some problems this year when members or potential conferees attempted to contact OPEN using the website, and some failed to get a response. In years past, OPEN has sometimes had a membership committee; the proposed revision's identification of a membership officer would ensure attention to this missing function (and, of course, this officer could gather and chair a committee, as needed or desired).
 - The "Student Representative" would become an *ex officio* member of the Council, rather than a voting member. The current Council considers an *ex officio* designation appropriate because of the liaison function of this position and because the odd number of members allows for a tie-breaker.

- Rather than designating the "chair of the Planning Committee" as a member of the Council, which would require this person to attend two sets of meetings, liaison between the Council and any committees would become a responsibility of Council officers (see next).
- *Responsibilities.* Our experience in recent years is that the 2007 By-Laws delegated to the Planning Committee far more duties than this group has been able to undertake (see Article VIII section 1) and conspicuously few duties to some Council officers (see Article VI section 3). Beginning at a January 2010 meeting of incoming leaders, immediate past leaders, and some of OPEN's founding members, the current leadership piloted this year a transition into a more realistic and feasible balance of responsibilities. Adjustments were made repeatedly during the 2010 pilot and are included in the 2011 proposed revision (see Article VI section 3; see also diagram entitled "Ofc & Resp chart Nov.ppt"). Among the more clearly delineated positions responsibilities, note:

- *Communications Officer.* Technical, online, website, and e-mail responsibilities would be centralized in the position of the Communications Officer, formerly the "Secretary." OPEN needs to provide for structured electronic access to documents including meeting minutes, bylaws, guidelines, procedures, and checklists in order to avoid flurries of email searches and sharing of such documents, and to avoid unawareness of existing documents which can result in time-consuming reinventions of the wheel.

Insufficient provision for technology responsibilities has left OPEN dependent on volunteers whom we have often begged to continue unofficially much longer than has been reasonable. On the other hand, when we have tried to divide up technology responsibilities among a secretary, webmaster, and others, confusion has resulted in slower-than-intended postings and notifications. The 2011 proposed revision would consolidate to avoid confusion and delay *and* to allow for smoother transitions with each new election of officers.

- *Council liaisons.* In addition to the student liaison, the 2011 proposed revision designates the president as the Council's liaison to the conference committee; the president-elect as liaison to the events committee; the financial officer as liaison to sponsors (an area lacking until the work of Eric Einspruch and Alisha Lund-Chaix this past Fall); and the membership officer as liaison to AEA, to members, and to *ad hoc* committees. Only the communications officer, who would have new technology-related duties, would not serve as a Council liaison. These liaison designations would ensure that the Council stays informed and up-to-date, and that all groups and members have easy and regular access to the Council. Providing these interfaces would greatly improve infrastructure, communication, and sustainability.

- *Standing and ad hoc committees* are the terms proposed in lieu of the 2007 provision for a Planning Committee and "Special Committees." The standing committees, one for the annual conference and one for monthly events, would supersede the current Planning Committee as follows.
 - *Planning Committee.* Even the reduction of responsibilities for the Planning Committee noted above leaves this group with the hefty tasks of arranging both the annual conference and our monthly-or-so professional development sessions and "brown bag" discussions. In the past two years, these two sets of responsibilities have been overwhelming for our volunteers. The 2011 proposed revision divides these responsibilities between a "Conference Committee" which could work on conference preparation all year at a more leisurely and uninterrupted pace, and an "Event Committee" which could work on monthly presentations and sessions with undivided attention.

Minor changes

- *Error in internal reference.* The 2007 version states at Article V section 3, "The procedure for election of officers shall be as set forth in Article IV, Section 2," but the procedure is actually set forth in Article VI section 2. This correction has been made in the proposed revision for 2011.
- *Wording – Board v. Council.* Article II section 2 of the 2007 version refers to a "Board," but the term used elsewhere for the OPEN governing body is "Council." The 2011 proposed version uses the term "Council" consistently throughout.
- *Consistency in identifying officers.* At Article V section 1, the 2007 By-Laws identify the "chair of the Planning Committee" as an officer but not at Article VI section 3. The 2011 proposed version identifies officers consistently throughout.
- *Appointments.* The 2007 By-Laws indicate that the Council makes appointments in case of vacancies (see Article 5 section 4) and tied votes for officers (see Article VI, section 2). At the same places, the 2011 proposed version makes these appointments the responsibility of the incoming president with approval of the Council.
- *Reimbursement of Council members.* A past problem has been the lack of formal policy, procedures, or guidelines for financial planning and reimbursement. This year, guided by the suggestions and experience of our three-year Financial Officer Carolyn Manke, guidelines were established – and helped us move from a dangerously low fiscal balance in January to a more-than-healthy one now. To continue to safeguard OPEN's funds and to help leaders who, otherwise, have often been confused about which expenditures are allowable, the following wording in bold italics has been added at Article V section 6: "Council members may be reimbursed for actual expenses incurred by them in the performance of

their duties ***in accordance with established procedures*** or as approved by a majority of the Council."

- *Advance notice of Council meetings.* The 2007 By-Laws provide that Council meetings may be called with three (3) days' notice. The 2011 proposed revision provides for one (1) week's advance notice.
- *Format consistency – subheadings.* In the 2007 version, most sections have a sub-heading in italics, but not all (see Article II). In the 2011 proposed version, all sections have sub-headings in italics.
- *Format consistency – numbers and numerals.* In the 2007 version, some numbers are spelled out and then followed by the numeral in parentheses, but not all (see Article V sections 3 and 5). In the 2011 proposed version, all numbers are formatted in this way.
- *Typeface.* The 2007 By-Laws are in Times typeface, a serif font. The 2011 revision is in a more readable, sans-serif font – Ariel.