

**Society of American Archivists
Council Meeting
May 18-20, 2022
Chicago, Illinois**

**Revise Description for the
Committee on the Selection of SAA Fellows
(Prepared by Eric Chin)**

BACKGROUND

As previously discussed from the August 2, 2021, SAA Council Meeting¹, the Committee on the Selection of SAA Fellows posed some questions due to some issues in the current process of selecting new Fellows (Appendix A). As stated in the document, “there have been a comparatively low number of nominations over the past several years.” Aside from the selection process itself, the root of the issue may in the composition of the committee’s membership. Consisting of five past SAA Presidents and three SAA Fellows, the composition of the committee is too narrow in scope and does not create a wide enough lens to promote and search for often overlooked and qualified nominees for SAA Fellow. By opening up the structure of the committee to include general members, the hope is to illicit a larger and diverse nomination pool for SAA Fellow with better resources and strategies to promote the process.

DISCUSSION

The motivation for this change originated from an email from 2021 member Brenda Scruggs Gunn questioning whether the structure of the committee is due for updating (shared confidentially). She was alarmed, as were others, about the lack of nominations (2) they received that year during the process. Apparently, this was an ongoing problem over some of the previous years. After presenting questions to SAA Council on August 2, 2021, and getting some feedback, we reached some thoughts that the composition should be changed to shorten the terms of past SAA presidents from five years to three years and adding two members from the general membership including (1) from the Diversity Committee and possibly (1) from the Membership Committee.

As past SAA president and member Dennis Meissner states, “I like the idea of 3 years of service for ex-presidents rather than the current 5 years. Five years is a long haul, and does not necessarily deliver more judgment/wisdom into the mix.” Considering Dennis’s thoughts and the goal of making the Fellows nomination and selection process more open, SAA looks to gain more qualified nominations and a diverse pool of candidates for the honor of SAA Fellow.

¹ <https://www2.archivists.org/sites/all/files/0821-1-V-B-FellowsSelection.pdf>

Further discussion regarding the nomination process, qualifications, and requirements should be continued amongst the committee and SAA Council because the equity and inclusiveness of it poses trouble and difficulties in certain areas. Also promotion and understanding of what the honor means to be SAA Fellow might need some examination:

<https://www2.archivists.org/governance/handbook/section7/groups/Fellows-Selection>

RECOMMENDATION

THAT the following revisions to the Committee on the Selection of SAA Fellows be approved:

II. Committee Selection, Size, and Length of Term

The committee is composed of the ~~five~~ three most recent past presidents of the Society ~~and~~, three Fellows who are elected by the Council at its winter meeting and who serve one-year terms, and two members of the general membership including one member from the Diversity Committee and one member from the Membership Committee. Past presidents, current members of the Council, and Society staff members are not eligible for election. The president who has served the longest on the committee serves as chair of the committee.

Support Statement: Revising the member composition and limiting the past SAA president terms will broaden the candidate pool and increase nominations for overlooked, qualified, and diverse individuals for SAA Fellow.

Impact on Strategic Priorities: Goal 1: Advocating for Archives and Archivists (1.3) – increases diverse leadership and representation with Fellow distinction, Goal 4: Meeting Members’ Needs (4.2) – provides opportunities more fairly for those qualified for honor, DEIA Strategic Plan – diversifies nomination pool with more focus goal of looking for candidates of different backgrounds.

Fiscal Impact: None.