

**AAAS Science and Human Rights Coalition
Council Meeting – DRAFT Minutes
July 17, 2015
AAAS Headquarters, Abelson-Haskins
Washington, DC**

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Welcome and Meeting Objectives

Mark Frankel (AAAS Scientific Responsibility, Human Rights and Law Program) welcomed the Council. Jessica Wyndham (AAAS Scientific Responsibility, Human Rights and Law Program) outlined the agenda for the meeting, the objectives of which were to: review progress in Coalition areas of activity and towards the goals set out in the Plan of Action 2015-2017; consider a proposal for amending Coalition membership requirements; and address student engagement in Coalition activities.

Coalition Member Activities

Human Rights Activities Aimed at an Organization’s Members or Discipline

- The Linguistic Society of America (LSA) hosted a [webinar](#) for members on the intersection of linguistics and human rights. Over 200 people registered. Currently, the LSA representative Michel DeGraff is promoting STEM education in Haiti and is working to create leadership development programs with the MIT School of Business.
- American Sociological Association: the Annual Meeting included 67 papers/sessions addressing human rights and they received seven human rights entries for the annual book award.
- Sigma Xi: Representative Jeff Toney together with Sociologists Without Borders representative Brian Gran submitted an article to the *Huffington Post* on privacy. Toney also write a commentary for the *New York Times* on South Sudan.
- Association of American Geographers (AAG): they are seeking to make human rights an overarching theme of the 2016 Annual Meeting.
- American Psychological Association (APA): sought the council of the Coalition on the next steps the APA should be taking in light of the recent revelations concerning the role of the organization and some staff in the involvement of psychologists in military interrogations.

- American Chemical Society: held a science and human rights symposium at its national meeting focused on chemical weapons. They have held several webinars, including on the Primer on Scientific Freedom and Human Rights, and with Widney Brown of Physicians for Human Rights. The ACS plans to write a science and human rights charter to be voted on by the Board.
- National Center for Science and Civic Engagement: meetings have addressed science and human rights through the Science Education for New Civic Engagements and Responsibilities program.
- Council on Undergraduate Research (CUR): will hold a conference on international collaboration in undergraduate research, addressing partnerships between researchers to address global issues.

Human Rights Activities Aimed at Policy Makers, Authorities, or the General Public

- American Educational Research Association (AERA) issued a report entitled Culture Matters: How Values Shape Human Progress. AERA also released a [statement](#) defending the tenure process and academic freedom in Wisconsin, as well as a [statement](#) on the Charleston shooting and racism in America. Finally, the AERA recently held a Hill briefing on LGBTQ and education.
- The American Sociological Association and Sociologists Without Borders came together to create a program entitled [Constitutional Convention](#). Conducted across 12 campuses, the exercise challenges students to update the U.S. Constitution by including human rights. The program provides documents and materials for instructors. A book will be published in the near future about the results of the program and the experiences of the students.
- The Linguistic Society of America has written proposed [amendments](#) to the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) and is working with the Federal Department of Education to allow children to be tested in their native language.

Activities Aimed at Protecting the Human Rights of Scientists, Engineers, and Health Professionals

- The American Statistical Association is following several cases of human rights abuses against statisticians and advocating for the end of prosecution against statisticians and economists in Argentina, and Greece, and Tanzania.
- American Physical Society (APS): will honor recipients of the [Andrei Sakharov Prize](#) at the 2015 annual meeting, recognizing outstanding leadership and/or achievements of scientists in upholding human rights. The APS continues to write letters on behalf of Iranian physicist Omid Kokabee.
- The ACS has implemented a new [alert network](#) for ACS members regarding human rights cases. The network informs members when ACS has cases they can act upon, directly engaging members to have an impact on human rights issues.

Rush Holt, CEO of AAAS, was present for the discussion, and he suggested the Coalition use its convening authority to weigh-in on relevant issues, when appropriate, to set standards and communicate with the public on relevant issues of science, technology and human rights.

Council Business

Council adopted the draft minutes of the January 2015 Council Meeting and approved the Steering Committee's proposed roster.

Membership: The Steering Committee discussed various options for broadening the Coalition membership to potentially include scientific organizations that are not themselves membership based as well as human rights organizations. However, the Steering Committee was not able to reach consensus and, therefore, was not able to make specific proposals to Council regarding membership. Jessica Wyndham (AAAS) said that there are two major outstanding questions:

1. Is the current member definition too narrow?
2. What are the reasons to not associate with STEM organizations or human rights organizations that do not fit current membership categories?

Alyson Reed (Linguistic Society of America) said that the Coalition should accept any organization that supports the Coalition mission and not elaborately vet them. "We don't know who is vital if they aren't yet involved," she said. Beth Ambos (CUR) agreed, while adding that we should approach cautiously extending membership to organizations that are highly activist. Jeff Toney (Sigma Xi) advised that the Coalition should be wary of groups with political agendas that are not consistent with our mission. Dorothy Phillips (ACS) and Judith Torney-Purta (AERA) agreed that vetting is important, just as is the need to communicate what the Coalition does, what members are expected to contribute and where their money will go. Michelle Irwin (American Physical Society) said we should focus on science societies and scientists and what they can bring to human rights which, as Wyndham noted, was the original intention of the Coalition. That said, she supported involving human rights organizations as 'friends' or 'affiliates' as a trial and potential pathway to membership.

The Council discussed different categories of membership based on the nature of the organization and determining their role in the Coalition, perhaps creating an observer category. Sheryl Luzzadder-Beach (AAG) suggested offering a trial period with an affiliated/friends category. Ambos questioned how we would sell membership to them; what would be their role? Reed (LSA) said the Council decision should be based on an assessment of what will ensure the Coalition having maximum impact in achieving its mission.

The Council held a poll on the following:

1. Include human rights organizations as full members: 13 votes
2. Tiered category for non-STEM groups: 8 votes

A motion was put by Art Kendall and seconded by Melvyn Nathanson to ask the Steering Committee to develop proposals for membership. Amended by Alyson Reed, the proposals should be put to Council before the January 2016 Council meeting. Motion accepted by unanimous vote.

Progress Reports: Areas of Work

Welfare of Scientists: Melvyn Nathanson (American Mathematical Society) noted that the three objectives outlined at the 2015 January Coalition meeting have yet to be met: (1) sharing information about advocacy on behalf of scientists, engineers, and health professionals whose human rights have been violated; (2) mapping violations of scientific freedom in countries throughout the world; (3) and planning an event in connection with the interpretation of Article 15 to be held in 2016 at the United Nations in Geneva. The lack of action is largely due to the lack of cases of scientists whose rights have been violated being suggested to the working group. Other challenges they face are duplication of work by other organizations and the lack of awareness of current cases. The working group discussed what it meant to advocate for the welfare of scientists when there are so few cases to address?

Dorothy Phillips (ACS) suggested the issue of visas and the freedom to travel for scientists were related topics that could be taken up by the working group. In addition, she noted the freedom to publish in many countries is a right of scientists that is being violated. The working group will attempt to tackle the other two objectives outlined in the 2015 January meeting.

Ethics and Human Rights: Mark Frankel (AAAS) noted that Maya Sabatello is the current working group chair, but that they are in the process of recruiting a co-chair. The ongoing two projects of the group are (1) preparing a report on the topic of big data and human rights to submit to the UN, and (2) drafting a statement on human rights for societies and associations to incorporate into their codes of ethics.

The report on big data is in the drafting stages. The working group is compiling case studies to include in the report. In addition, the group has drafted a statement which encourages scientific societies to integrate human rights into their codes of ethics. The language is now being reviewed and revised. The statement will be sent first to Coalition member organizations that are in the process of reforming their codes: American Political Science Association, American Sociological Association, American Statistical Association, and the Association for Information Science and Technology. These four associations will act as a preliminary test and to get feedback on the proposal.

Mark outlined the challenges the group has faced, including getting work out of the members of the group. It was agreed upon during the working group meeting to set a preordained time for a call every month and to have follow-up reports sent to the group after the calls. Subcommittees working on the two projects will have separate calls.

Service to the STEM Community: Alyson Reed (LSA) explained that the working group over the past few months has focused on continuing existing projects, particularly the webinars aimed at the members of Coalition member organizations, bringing awareness to them about human rights and the connections with their disciplines. She said the group needs to fully articulate a follow-up strategy to the webinars it has been conducting with Coalition member organizations and long-range follow-up to determine impact.

Service to the Human Rights Community: Oliver Moles (Capital Area Social Psychological Association) reported that the working group is currently focused on identifying human rights organizations that may be interested in receiving scientific expertise/input. The group has undertaken workshops and activities with human rights organizations as well as seminars with law schools in the DC area. In addition, the group is planning a workshop of case studies of collaborations between human rights organizations and scientific experts or societies. The workshop is planned to run concurrent with the AAAS annual meeting. With all of these endeavors, they hope to capitalize on student interest.

Brian Gran (Sociologists Without Borders) outlined the progress of the Indicators project, which is working to develop indicators of the implementation of Article 15. Ali Arab (American Statistical Association) has been working with the group to figure out a simple way to organize the data. The group is pursuing external funds for the project.

The working group participates in monthly telephone conference calls, but is still facing issues of finding a time that works with everyone and a time to get things done.

Education and Information Resources: Sheryl Luzzadder-Beach (Association of American Geographers) reported that three projects have been finalized since the last Coalition meeting: posting a Human Rights 101 paper on websites, which is aimed at a board group of disciplines at the college level; posting an annotated bibliography of science and human rights literature in order to serve as a general resource; and creating teaching modules for the professional development of educators in STEM and health fields.

In the next six months, the group plans to finalize draft teaching modules, test the teaching modules, and write a series of questions, as the modules are developed, to get feedback on their effectiveness. Also, the group plans to send out educational materials to the Steering Committee for review. These materials include a template for writing the annotated bibliography, a high school teaching module, and a team-based learning module.

The challenges the group has faced recently have been standardizing the high school teaching module due to the high variability of teaching standards across the country. Another challenge includes the absence of consistent voices in reviewing documents due to the fluidity and permeability of the group. To combat this, the group plans to create a new review process which will be controlled by a subcommittee of three members, so that the review process becomes more constant.

Outreach and Communication: Ali Arab (American Statistical Association) noted that in the past six months student activities have increased—there were twenty-nine submissions to the essay competition and seven submissions to the poster competition. The group hopes to develop more ways to engage students. They also plan to introduce an orientation for new working group members.

Theresa Harris (AAAS) explained the Campus toolkit that is being developed will provide a way for engaging students on campus in discussions about science and human rights. The toolkit will consist of background materials, short video clips, and discussion topics.

Plan of Action- Taking Stock

Theresa Harris (AAAS) noted that progress is being made towards the fulfilment of the Plan of Action, but there are several outstanding challenges: goals/projects lacking clear direction; time challenges, particularly with remote teams; maximizing resources to have greatest impact; and handling participant turnover and continuity with new people.

The January 2016 meeting presents an opportunity to tackle some of these challenges. The Steering Committee recommended structuring the meeting to address some of these issues, but still having open sessions (e.g., on scientific approaches to human rights action). There could be workshops and sessions on how the Coalition works and to reflect on whether we need to make operational changes or challenge assumptions. Beth Ambos (CUR) suggested having more than two Coalition representatives from member organizations.

Art Kendall (Capital Area Social Psychological Association) said it would be helpful to learn more about Trellis and Harris agreed we could hold a training session at the meeting. Bruce Friesen (ASocA) suggested having breakout groups with panelists to dig into topics deeper. Lori Brown (ACS) said the discussion groups were fruitful but they could be improved if the discussion questions were offered ahead of time so people think about it throughout the day. Judith Torney-Purta (AERA) noted it would be helpful if the working groups met at different times so individuals could attend multiple meetings but Jessica Wyndham (AAAS) explained that it is rare for people to have time to give to more than one working group. Harris (AAAS) said we could provide more instructions and opportunities for attendees to check out working groups.

Student Engagement

Tiffany Carey, a recent graduate of the University of Michigan, presented a proposal for an AAAS Science and Human Rights Coalition student section. Carey was elected the 2012 student delegate for the Ecological Society of America and participates in the Service to the STEM Community Working Group. She felt that although her time as a delegate was greatly enjoyed, a more structured and official student led group would get more students involved in the Coalition. The mission of this group would be to raise awareness and empower students and young leaders to engage in the interaction between science and human rights and its impact on policy, academia, communities, businesses, etc.

Carey presented the Plan of Action for the student group. This plan includes activating a Facebook page for the student group in order to disseminate articles, blog posts, events, and information about ways students can get involved in human rights and science. In the future, Carey expects to create governance structures, allowing ten students to be the leaders of the initiatives. The student section would be a sustainable part of the Coalition, and at some point hold a permanent seat on the Coalition Council. She then turned to the Coalition for input and advice on making this proposal more concrete and comprehensive for the January 2016 meeting.

Lori Brown (ACS) applauded Tiffany's proposal and suggested that she look to those who have submitted to the poster and essay competition in the past few years in order to gain an invested body of students. Danielle Kraus (National Center for Science and Civic Engagement) proposed that she reach out to faculty in the area who are already involved in the Coalition to identify students that may be interested in joining. In addition, a student representative could be chosen for a few universities so that leadership is created not only at the Coalition level, but also at the university level. Alyson Reed (LSA) recommended that Carey and the rest of the leadership in the student group brainstorm about discrete projects that are manageable for the students who have expressed interest in joining the section. This will create activities at the community level and make a difference. The group would also allow a direct dissemination of the toolkit to students who want to learn more and teach others about the relationship between science and human rights. Reed questioned the goal of the group—to get students working on human rights issues or to just inform them about the issues.

Brian Gran (Sociologists Without Borders) asked about a membership criteria; who will be able to be part of the student group? Ali Arab (American Statistical Association) thought that a pilot study could be created for the students who engage in the ongoing projects of the working group. Getting a small number of students involved in the Coalition's projects could be a worthwhile experience for them. Jeff Tony (Sigma Xi) offered help in giving advice to student about how to get funding from their universities to come to the Coalition meetings and other events. Theresa Harris (AAAS) suggested thinking about what is going to motivate students to become more involved. Campus representatives would allow students to add to their resume and give them reasons to not only get involved, but to also stay involved.

Beth Ambos (CUR) stressed that creating a student voice and membership in the Coalition will help us understand where the connections between science and human rights begin and how people seek out information on the subject. Carey reiterated the importance of including the younger generation's voice in a conversation that is directly affecting them, in addition creating a sustainable foundation for future leaders to become involved.

Other Business

The Education and Information Working Group suggested that “transitional justice and reconciliation,” namely, the increasing role of STEM in post-conflict societies, could make an interesting Coalition meeting topic. Bruce Friesen noted that he is actively using the Coalition's teaching materials in his classroom. Jessica Wyndham was among several speakers who skyped into his classroom to address human rights issues with his students.

Mark Frankel thanked the Council members for their work and warm welcome to Rush Holt, the new AAAS CEO.

Meeting Attendees

Representative

Beth Ambos
Ali Arab
Lori Brown
Melissa Cragin
Bruce Friesen
Brian Gran
Bill Hartman
Laurie Hill
Michelle Irwin
Art Kendall
Anju Khubchandani
Sheryl Luzzadder-Beach
Julia Milton
Oliver Moles
Melvyn Nathanson
Karen Oates
Dorothy Phillips
Alyson Reed
Janet Stocks
Jeff Toney
Judith Torney-Purta
Ed Walsh

Member Organization

Council on Undergraduate Research
American Statistical Association
American Chemical Society
Association for Information Science and Technology
American Sociological Association
Sociologists Without Borders
Acoustical Society of America
American Educational Research Association
American Physical Society
Capital Area Social Psychological Association
American Psychological Association
Association of American Geographers
Council of Social Science Associations
Capital Area Social Psychological Association
American Mathematical Society
National Center for Science and Civic Engagement
American Chemical Society
Linguistic Society of America
Council on Undergraduate Research
Sigma Xi
American Educational Research Association
Acoustical Society of America

Observers:

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Carson Martinez AAAS Scientific Responsibility, Human Rights and Law Program
Jessica Wyndham AAAS Scientific Responsibility, Human Rights and Law Program
(Coalition coordinator)