



AAAS Science and Human Rights Coalition

Council Meeting Report

February 1, 2013

<u>Welcome, Introductions, and Meeting Objectives</u>	<u>1</u>
<u>Progress Reports: Member Actions to Address Human Rights</u>	<u>1</u>
<u>Building Members' Infrastructure to Address Human Rights</u>	<u>3</u>
<u>Council Business: Meeting Follow-up</u>	<u>4</u>
<u>Progress Reports: Areas of Work</u>	<u>5</u>
<u>Progress Reports: Joint Initiative</u>	<u>6</u>
<u>Funding: Ad Hoc Activities and Membership Dues</u>	<u>7</u>
<u>Council Business</u>	<u>7</u>
<u>Appendix: Meeting Attendees</u>	<u>8</u>

Welcome and Meeting Objectives

Jessica Wyndham (AAAS Scientific Responsibility, Human Rights and Law Program) welcomed the Council. She noted that the past six months of work have brought the Coalition closer to the goals set out in the Plan of Action 2012-2014 which was adopted by the Coalition Council at its last meeting in July 2012. She then outlined the agenda for the meeting, the objectives of which were to: review progress in engaging scientific and engineering associations in human rights and bringing human rights to their membership; assess progress in the implementation of the Joint Initiative; and determine next steps in meeting the goals set out by the Coalition in its Plan of Action 2012-2014. *The Council adopted the report from the July 2012 meeting.*

Progress Reports: Member Actions to Address Human Rights

Human Rights Activity Updates:

Doug Richardson (Association of American Geographers (AAG)) reviewed some of the human rights-related activities of the AAG, including several high-profile events at their 2012 Annual Meeting. Most recently, the AAG provided assistance to a geographer from Cameroon who is seeking political asylum in the United States. Richardson then invited Council members to introduce themselves and share information about the human rights-related activities their organizations have undertaken since the last Council meeting:

- **Protecting colleagues at risk:** the American Physical Society has continued its work in support of Omid Kokabee, a physics student imprisoned in Iran; the American Educational Research Association has joined Scholars at Risk; and the American Statistical Association recently published an article in their monthly magazine with regard to the Committee on Scientific Freedom and Human Rights' work on behalf of statisticians in Argentina.
- **Organizing human rights meetings for members of the discipline:** a number of organizations have hosted human rights themed panels as part of their annual meetings including the American Educational Research Association, the American Political Science Association, the Association of American Geographers, and the American Psychological Association; the upcoming American Orthopsychiatric Association 5th Annual Greenville Family Symposium will address the rights of people with disabilities; and the Capital Area Social Psychological Association continues to exchange information within the membership about potentially relevant sessions on human rights in the DC-area.
- **Organizing human rights meetings for the general public:** the American Society of Civil Engineers held a webinar on engineering and human rights which was open to the public and is available online. At the Society of Women Engineers meeting, a representative from Engineering4Change spoke about the work of the Coalition and the need for increased participation by members of the engineering community. The National Center for Science and Civic Engagement will host a session on human rights as part of its summer meeting for students, faculty and administrators interested in civic engagement and STEM education.
- **Maintaining a human rights committee, section or interest group:** several Council members referred to a membership structure within their organization that addresses human

rights, including the human rights section of the American Political Science Association, the Committee on International Freedom of Scientists of the American Physical Society and the Committee on Scientific Freedom and Human Rights of the American Statistical Association (ASA). The ASA is also home to a pro bono group of statisticians who contribute to human rights and other projects.

- **Including human rights in their organizations' publications:** American Physical Society members are informed of the activities of the Coalition and other human rights related news through a quarterly APS newsletter column; the National Center for Science and Civic Engagement recently launched a series of bi-weekly articles on science and human rights in its Science Education for New Civic Engagements and Responsibilities (SENCER) [e-newsletter](#); the American Orthopsychiatric Association regularly publishes human rights-related articles in its quarterly journal; and Amstat News, of the American Statistical Association, published two articles last year specifically on human rights.
- **Connecting human rights with disciplinary practice:** the Ecological Society of America is considering making human rights a joint initiative of the justice and education subsections of the organization; for International Human Rights Day 2012, **Clinton Anderson** (American Psychological Association (APA)) encouraged the various directorates within the APA to promote something related to human rights on their individual web pages. This information was then aggregated into a central human rights [page](#) for the organization. In addition, the APA Board for Psychology in the Public Interest is starting to explore how to address human rights more systematically within the organization, including beginning a flow of communication on human rights activities, and identifying the added value of addressing human rights over, for example, social justice. Finally, work is currently underway to develop a website for the American Statistical Association's Committee on Scientific Freedom and Human Rights.
- **Awarding a human rights prize:** the American Physical Society awarded the Andrei Sakharov Prize for outstanding leadership in upholding human rights; and the Linguistic Society of America recently has developed an award for excellence in community engagement that recognizes efforts in language revitalization.
- **Researching human rights issues:** the American Sociological Association is in the process of writing an amicus brief regarding the Defense of Marriage Act (DOMA), and may also write one for the Proposition 9 case in California; the American Orthopsychiatric Association recently published a paper on safe and humane schools and has signed on to related legislation; and the American Political Science Association is working with middle east scholars on a project aimed at measuring human rights in emerging democracies.
- **Issuing public statements on human rights:** the Council of the American Educational Research Association will consider issuing a public statement on human rights.

Benchmark Data:

Theresa Harris (AAAS Scientific Responsibility, Human Rights and Law Program) noted that the current benchmarks are new and cannot be compared with past years. All of the data collected this year is critical for developing a baseline for the next two to three years. For those members who have not completed the benchmark survey, they can still be submitted to Theresa.

Building Members' Infrastructure to Address Human Rights

Workshop on Establishing a Human Rights Committee

Jessica Wyndham explained the goals for offering a workshop to member associations: strengthening the work of existing human rights committees (including sections and affinity groups); and encouraging the creation of a human rights committee within societies. The workshop is intended to provide a forum for peer-to-peer learning about human rights and the human rights work of scientific and engineering organizations societies. The goals of the workshop are tied directly to the Plan of Action and the benchmarks for or of the Council.

Karen Oates (National Center for Science and Civic Engagement) noted that a session on human rights committees had been held early in the day as part of the Coalition meeting and recommended incorporating feedback gained from that session into the workshop plan. **Clinton Anderson** (American Psychological Association) emphasized the need when developing the workshop to distinguish between member-driven groups and top-down advisory committees.

Human Rights Website Template

Rebecca Carlson (AAAS Scientific Responsibility, Human Rights and Law Program) led the discussion of human rights “portals” on association websites, sharing several examples from the AAAS, APS, AAG, and ACS. She has created a template based on the content provided on these websites for Coalition members to use if they would like to create similar web pages on their association’s site. For those who do not have a website or do not have the ability to create this type of page but who would like to develop similar resources, the Secretariat can customize a page on the AAAS Scientific Responsibility, Human Rights and Law Program website.

Clinton Anderson requested that once human rights specific pages are established, the link on the Coalition website go to those pages. **Doug Richardson** encouraged members to integrate human rights content into other sections of their organization’s website, e.g., link the human rights page to other membership pages that are relevant. **Constance Thompson** (American Society of Civil Engineers) asked the Secretariat to create a page on engineering and human rights. **Steve Pierson** (American Statistical Association) asked for a Word version of the template for distribution. **Betsy Super** (American Political Science Association) suggested an additional way to raise the profile of an association’s human rights work: advise IT staff to tag content with “human rights” more often so it shows up in search engines.

Council members agreed that human rights portals might be aimed at association members or the general public, with current examples representing both approaches and influencing the content of the page. Council members considered that having something online that is incomplete is better than having nothing, still demonstrating to funders the accomplishments of the Coalition and revealing synergies between human rights, science and technology.

Karen Oates recommended adding more welcoming language to the Coalition homepage. It should welcome people into the Coalition and avoid incorrectly conveying that the Coalition’s membership is settled, for example. The website should emphasize how to get involved.

Council Business: Meeting Follow-up

Steering Committee Roster

Susan Hinkins (American Statistical Association) explained the process that led up the Council considering the nominees for members-at-large and representatives from the human rights community on the Coalition Steering Committee. ***The Council approved all Steering Committee nominees by unanimous vote.***

Broader Impacts Project Outline

Susan Hinkins reminded Council members that the origin of this project stems from an interest expressed by several Council members in encouraging greater research and development funding for human rights-related research. The project aims to achieve this end by supporting researchers in developing and framing human rights projects that meet the funding criteria of government funding agencies, including particularly the “broader impacts” requirements of the National Science Foundation (NSF). The proposal before the Council was prepared by an ad hoc group of Coalition members.

Jessica Wyndham drew Council members’ attention to the intentionally incremental approach of the proposed project, which begins with a focus on the NSF, including a review of past and existing NSF funding for human rights-related research and a workshop with relevant program officers as well as principal investigators. Based on the experience of working with NSF, the project will be extended to include other principal funding agencies of relevance also to the life, behavioural and health sciences, such as the National Institutes of Health.

Doug Richardson urged all to be prepared for a lengthy process, but emphasized the importance of the project for spreading the idea of human rights as a worthwhile research subject. **George Middendorf** (Ecological Society of America) recommended that in the first phase of the project, we look not only at grant applications that explicitly reference human rights but also the reports submitted for these projects upon completion. The latter is important because of the opportunity to identify discrepancies between what was proposed and the final project.

After some further conversation about the time frame, several Council members noted the need to be thoughtful about the contacts the group has, especially at NSF, to determine who should be included in the early stages. **Constance Thompson** noted that the intent and implementation of the “broader impacts” requirements could have different implications in some communities. She suggested involving Shirley Malcolm of AAAS in the discussions as soon as possible. **George Middendorf** suggested being very specific about what is meant by “broader impacts,” even cutting and pasting the congressional language to avoid any misunderstandings.

Council endorsed moving ahead with the project, with the inclusion of engineering and health in the project description.

Progress Reports: Areas of Work

Welfare of Scientists: **Theresa Harris** reported that **Alex Ingrams** (Society for the Psychological Study of Social Issues) has stepped down as co-chair of the working group. **Juan Gallardo** (American Physical Society) will serve as interim co-chair until the July meeting. The working group contributed to the December 7, 2012 letter writing [event](#) held at AAAS with Amnesty International. In addition, while continuing to maintain the Alert Network and starting to streamline responses to individual cases, the working group is currently developing two projects: (1) addressing the intersections of online and academic freedom; and (2) the development of a toolkit on using Article 15 to protect scientists and engineers. Juan asked Council members if they would be interested in receiving case notifications. Several members said they would not typically act on notifications. Notifications are currently sent through the AAAS Action Alert listserv and the Science and Human Rights Report. Theresa suggested that Google analytics could be used to monitor whether or not people are going to the alerts.

Ethics and Human Rights: **Doug Richardson** announced the completion of the working group's report, *Intersections of Science, Ethics and Human Rights: The Question of Human Subjects Protection* (available [here](#)). The working group is now turning its focus to addressing the relationship between Article 15 and scientific responsibility. This process will begin with circulating a short questionnaire to discern what scientists and engineers consider are their social responsibilities. This study will eventually incorporate case studies from an array of disciplines (e.g., nanotechnology, geospatial technology, biosecurity).

Service to the STEM Community: the working group has three primary projects. As **Margaret Vitullo** (American Sociological Association) and **Clinton Anderson** explained, one project is focused on Article 15, another is aimed at developing a template for a webinar on human rights for scientific and engineering societies, and the third is concerned with evaluating the value and impact of the Starter Kit based on a small set of benchmarks.

Service to the Human Rights Community: **Susan Hinkins** reported that *Human Rights Projects: Guidelines for Scientists and Human Rights Organizations* is now [online](#). The Guidelines aim to facilitate partnerships between human rights organizations and scientific or engineering experts. Focused now on disseminating the Guidelines, the group held a training session for human rights organizations in New York on January 11. Organized in conjunction with the Secretariat, the workshop focused on program evaluation tools and approaches. Susan reported that Brian Gran (American Sociological Association) is working with members of the group to determine the strength and applicability of existing data for the purpose of creating indicators for Article 15.

Outreach and Communication: **Jeff Toney** (Sigma Xi) encouraged members to use social media and other online tools to promote the Coalition. Jeff then introduced an idea for engaging students in the Coalition: each member organization would nominate one student delegate from their organization to attend Coalition meetings and participate in a working group. Several members noted that they do not have funds to bring a student to the meetings, but could nominate a student in the Washington, DC area. Avenues for recruitment include the undergraduate honors society, student chapters on campuses and member organizations' student groups. Council members requested more information on the expectations of student delegates.

Progress Reports: Joint Initiative

Jessica Wyndham reported that the focus group process is now complete. She and Margaret Vitullo are currently analyzing the focus group data for the purpose of developing a report to be presented to the UN Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights. The report is intended to encourage and inform the Committee's work in developing a formal articulation of the meaning of the right to enjoy the benefits of scientific progress (Article 15).

Margaret explained the methodology for the analysis. She and Jessica are using an online analysis tool called Dedoose to conduct a qualitative analysis of the textual data arising from the focus groups. She explained that a focus group is a theory building process that is particularly valuable in elucidating questions of meaning. By analyzing the data they are able to draw out ideas and questions that focus group participants may not have been able to articulate by themselves without an interactive dialogue. So far they have been able to identify a number of common themes across disciplines. The analysis, however, is not intended to be representative of all disciplines or even to suggest a consensus on the meaning of Article 15, but rather to reveal the perspectives of the individuals who participated in the focus group process.

Jessica asked how involved the members of the Council would like to be in the development of the report. She emphasized that they want to make sure participating societies, in particular, are comfortable with the report and added that she and Margaret will be providing an overview of the report approach to the Secretariat's advisory committee when they convene at the AAAS Annual Meeting. **Cliff Duke** responded that the findings of the analysis need to be broadly communicated and suggested writing a *Science Policy Forum*. **Janet Stocks** (Council on Undergraduate Research) suggested that the information be shared with the communities that are represented (focus group participants and the broader discipline) for participant validation. **Clinton Anderson** asked why the advisory committee would discuss a draft of the report before participants or the working group. **Constance Thompson** reiterated Clinton's concern and suggested sharing the report with the Executive Director's circle. Jessica explained that the advisory committee will not review a draft, which is yet to be developed, but they will discuss progress. This discussion is occurring now because of the timing of the committee's meetings.

George Middendorf asked if a review of the report by Council would be sufficient vetting, rather than having to wait for participant validation. Jessica mentioned that an individual report will be developed for each focus group that will then be shared with the participants. Margaret clarified that there will not be any discipline-specific sections within the report; the various sections will be supplemented with anecdotes from the unique disciplines.

There was general consensus among Council that the usual process of approval (working group, Steering Committee, Council) would work for reviewing the report, rather than going back through the individual focus group participants. Margaret asked whether that process can occur online through email or whether there needs to be another meeting. Council would prefer to review via email. Jessica added that all of the Executive Directors, the staff liaison, and the participants of the societies that participated in the focus groups will get an individual summary report. Constance stressed the need to send something to the EDs as quickly as possible to make sure they are on board.

Funding: Ad Hoc Activities and Membership Dues

At the last Council meeting, several Council members raised the question of introducing membership dues for the Coalition. In response, the Secretariat developed several questions that could be asked in the process of determining whether membership dues should be introduced. After some discussion regarding Coalition expenses, it was agreed that the question should be reframed to focus more generally on ways to generate resources to support the Coalition, one of which might be membership dues.

Council then discussed some of the advantages and disadvantages of charging membership dues and the different concerns across associations. **Art Kendall** noted that his organization does not have a budget, that it is run purely on a voluntary basis. **Constance Thompson** noted that she might be asked why her society is asked to provide support to the Coalition when they already contribute to AAAS as an Affiliate. At the same time, she said that it is not uncommon for a society to pay more attention to the organizations and activities for which they pay to be involved. **Margaret Vitullo** said she thought membership dues were a good idea and, in particular, that participation in Coalition meetings should not be voluntary. **George Middendorf** disagreed, explaining that for some organizations the connections between their discipline and human rights are not clear and so they may be unlikely to agree to pay dues. [NB: Affiliates of AAAS are not required to pay dues.]

Jessica asked whether the Council agrees to form an ad hoc committee to consider this issue and bring their recommendations to the Council its next meeting.

The Council voted unanimously to create an ad hoc committee to investigate ways to bring in resources to support the Coalition. Constance Thompson, Michele Irwin, Liepa Gust, and Arthur Kendall volunteered to be a part of the committee.

Other Business and Public Comment

Jessica drew the Council's attention to the call for proposals for the 2014 AAAS Annual Meeting, inviting them to suggest sessions highlighting the applications of their disciplines to human rights.

Appendix: Meeting Attendees

Representative	Member Organization
Clinton Anderson	American Psychological Association
Nathan Bell	American Educational Research Association
Clifford Duke	Ecological Society of America
Juan Gallardo	American Physical Society
Liepa Gust	American Orthopsychiatric Association
Susan Hinkins	American Statistical Association
Michele Irwin	American Physical Society
Art Kendall	Capital Area Social Psychological Association
George Middendorf	Ecological Society of America
Karen Oates	National Center for Science and Civic Engagement
Steve Pierson	American Statistical Association
Alyson Reed	Linguistic Society of America
Doug Richardson	Association of American Geographers
Janet Stocks	Council on Undergraduate Research
Betsy Super	American Political Science Association
Constance Thompson	American Society of Civil Engineers
Jeffrey Toney	Sigma Xi
Margaret Wiegers Vitullo	American Sociological Association

Secretariat (AAAS Scientific Responsibility, Human Rights and Law Program):

Rebecca Carlson, Senior Project Coordinator

Theresa Harris, Senior Program Associate

Jessica Wyndham, Associate Director and Coalition Coordinator