



AASHE Board of Directors Retreat Stanford University

Thursday, March 5 – Friday, March 6, 2015

Meeting Minutes

Attendance (X – present; R – regrets; A - absent):

Board

X	Adam Steinman
X	Charles Richardson
R	Ciannat Howett
X	Fahmida Ahmed (Chair)
R	Jaqueline Johnson (Ex-Officio)
X	Jon Jensen (Treasurer)
X	Kim Smith

X	Kyu Whang
X	Richard Miller
X	Ruth Johnston
X	Sally Grans Korsh
X	Stephen Mulkey (Vice-Chair; arrived 11:10 Day 1)
X	Trina Innes (Secretary)

Executive Director and Staff

X	Meghan Fay Zahniser (Executive Director)
X	Ben Stookey

X	Allison Jones

DAY 1

1. Introductions

- Meeting notes taken today that required board motions will be carried into an upcoming Board meeting.
- Review of Agenda

2. Develop, prioritize and deliver services to the campus change agents

- All materials presented can be related back to the AASHE Strategy Map.
- ED is seeking to clarify priorities for 2015 and feedback on specific issues brought to the board
- Staffing plan reviewed: Director of Membership and Marketing to be filled soon, Director of Programs is posted; IT programmer posted.
- Questions raised about the geographic location of staff. Dispersed staffing model has been raised by board as a problem in the past and needs to be addressed.
- ED proposes to remain with a distributed model but an office may be proposed. Model will be somewhat of a hybrid. Ideally senior staff will be located relatively nearby the ED.
- As a North American institution we should give consideration to having a staff person in Canada – they could be collocated with an existing higher education institution and invoiced if there are administrative concerns about salaries over borders.
- STARS 2.1 is going to be released this summer.
- Need to be careful of how we use Advisory Council and how we interpret some of the feedback shared because they are a more informed audience than others we may be seeking to reach.
- STARS is one of the major tools people use – resource centre will be designed to support STARS.

- Conference in 2016 will be in Baltimore. October 8-12. Concerns raised because this is on Canadian Thanksgiving, Columbus Day, and a Jewish Holiday. This will negatively affect attendance of some participants.
- 50,000 users have created AASHE accounts on website. Within the last year about 14,000 have been active.
- Question – how much do business members pay for dues versus others? May be an opportunity to raise funds and to provide value to business members.

OPPORTUNITY FOR ACTION. Management to explore what we are doing to encourage business members to join and what we gain through their membership. AASHE to bring this plan to the Board as an information item in advance of the conference.

- We may benefit from consistent terminology when referring to customers or members. Plug-in to Salesforce is being explored to manage membership more efficiently at a cost of \$20k/year. This may free up resources so we can focus on other things of a higher priority.

OPPORTUNITY FOR ACTION. Management to explore video conferencing solution for Board meetings.

- United and Anthem are the two major benefit providers that seem to be available for multi-state benefit coverage.
- Human resources activities are an opportunity to create a new culture of trust and collaboration.
- We have 12 staff in 9 states.

3. Present & Future of AASHE Discussion

- Three visioning sources were used by the ED: Staff, Board Interviews, Advisory Council
- Major theme areas: Funding, Enhancing Member Value, Partnerships, International and Regional Networks, Faculty Engagement and Capacity.
- Identifying the customer – our existing members are primarily staff at participating institutions (practitioners). In addition – if we are to meet our mission – need to think about 3,000 institutions in US and Canada that don't have a sustainability coordinator or an office of sustainability. Of the 3,000 in the US who are not members, who are the people we need to reach out to, to become members (who writes the cheque)?
- Proposed 2015 Strategic Priorities
 - Diversify and stabilize funding
 - Deliver products and services responsive to market forces and mission
 - Optimize governance
 - Facilitate and support new and existing regional and international groups
 - Support faculty development
- Need to have the board shift to strategic visioning and governing.
- Academic constituency within higher education needs to be reached out to more intentionally.
- Can we promote AASHE as a platform to support academic research and sharing of academic research?
- Term “faculty development” may be too narrow. Consider changing strategy map from support faculty development to enhance faculty engagement in areas that may include curriculum and training.
- Could we have a Research Day as part of AASHE conference?
- Some concerns raised about the cost of conference by academics.
- There seems to be a vacuum in terms of developing curriculum for sustainability; more opportunities may be available.
- Want to give groups outside of academics in institutions a platform to share their expertise.

- As a board we need to be careful about getting into weeds – agree that faculty engagement is an area we should focus on.
- May be opportunities to look for synergies between proposed strategic priorities (e.g., faculty development and products/services).
- We need to be more responsive to market forces and interests.
- Faculty focus on teaching and research and operational staff are generally concerned with physical campus. The spaces in between are where there are opportunities. Institutes are opportunities to connect between faculties. Faculty don't need development – they need engagement on this topic area.
- We need to earn the right to grow by having a stable financial base. Do we want to design a program for the people who sign the cheques? What value do we bring to them?
- University, student, a sustainability officer, a faculty member, a member can all be a customer. To what extent are we too diverse? Should we focus on fewer?
- Branding and expanded research study was done a few years back, still opportunities to leverage this material. Different personas were identified that we could connect to (Tipping – Gardener). We implemented a whole new brand out of that exercise.
- HEASC has many groups that are part of it. AASHE is “the big tent” – accepting customers for all sorts of different reasons.
- AASHE doesn't just serve facilities.
- AASHE's content provides support for sustainability in the broader context of higher ed.
- Should we put products/services first as a priority (faculty piece is a sub-set of this) and then this should drive the funding? Diversifying our funding should be a priority but a longer term priority.
- What are the products/services that are responsive to market forces? Staff should bring their recommendations to the Board supported by evidence.
- We may need to communicate to the membership that we have identified our members and how we're going to deliver services to meet their needs.

OPPORTUNITY FOR ACTION. Meghan to chair a committee to take the strategy map, tweak it, and develop some positive messaging regarding what has come out since last year (key marketing piece). To be done ASAP.

- Traditionally we have released a message after the board retreat.
- Question regarding the word “advocacy” – what can we do more actively without adding a lot of work to staff's plate?
- We should be thinking about 2016 and new things we want to offer – be nice to announce something at this year's conference.
- Second Nature, with their ACUPCC program – may be a good potential partnership.
- The UN has released the new Global Action Program, signed by the United States and Canada. UNESCO defines one of five priority action areas as the “whole institution approach”, which AASHE helps achieve.
- AASHE could be vetter of best practices; we don't say what's best for big/small colleges, different regions, etc. This would be a great addition to the resource centre. This is a way to create value for intermediate institutions who have already advanced.
- ED needs help from the Board when it comes to stabilizing funding. Board members can help in terms of getting active in this area.

4. Staff Proposals

- Staff office proposed in a co-locate space for \$275 per month. May need to come to the Board for approval if financial triggers/policies indicate it is required.
- Member-Elected Board. We have some challenges with the voting process that have caused this not to move forward. Questions raised about whether or not the board voted in the past to make this

happen. Even if there are a lot of efforts to run elections – the value of having this kind of thing happen and responding to the Listening Project is very important.

- Bylaws indicate that the board elects/appoints new members.
- If we are looking at other partnerships (e.g., SCUP, NACUBO, APPA) they all have regional directors that could be brought forth.
- The 50:50 composition between member-elected and board-selected may be an issue and concerns raised about regional representation. A lot of complexities exist with bringing the skill sets forward to the board.
- We need to know what skills sets we need to fill. Sympathetic to mix of big school and small school representation. Concerns raised about electing people from the membership – who votes?
- ISSP potential partnership opportunity. Information shared with the Board. ISSP is developing a professional designation for sustainability professionals. Can we support designation with a declaration? Advisory Council members could be tapped to help develop test questions. Potential revenue-sharing arrangement once the program is launched. ISSP has no money and fewer staff (2.5?). First meetings for test questions are in June and hoping to launch at the AASHE conference. They are developing a test to assess people for the credential.

5. Securing our Financial Future

Jon Jensen – presentation

- Revenue for AASHE – derived from membership and conference.
- In 2014, 46% membership sourced funding and 47% from conference. Over the last five years 87% has been sourced from these two areas. Since beginning of the organization this has been the case when it comes to our revenue.
- Membership has trended downward in the last few years. It peaked in 2011 with over 1100 members and has trended downward. We have 173 fewer member institutions than we had in 2011. Business members are down 40% from peak time. We need to think about our value proposition for businesses is a good idea. Campuses membership numbers are down 13% (100 campuses) from peak in 2012.
- Last thing – overall idea is to diversify and stabilize. Focus on membership and understanding what we provide to people is important, but we also need to think about diversifying.
- Do we know which members are leaving? We could look at if it is large organizations versus community colleges etc. It would be good if we better understood the trends.
- Exhibitors at conference are not required to be members. Other organizations make it a requirement.
- We have never had a staff person focused on grant-writing.

Christine Sherry

- Presentation PowerPoint to be shared with the board.

OPPORTUNITY FOR ACTION. Fahmida to ensure that presentation is made available on or before next Board meeting.

- Shared expertise in fundraising
- Teach in continuing studies program at Stanford – teach philanthropy and other aspects of fundraising
- Works very closely with foundations and providing them with advice – also with the non-profit world.
- Not profit sector contributed \$887.3 billion to US economy in 2012, representing 5.4% of GDP.
- Number of registered nonprofits increased by 8.6% between 2002 and 2012
- Total revenue for nonprofits filing form 99s grew 35.2%; assets increased 21.5%.
- Giving has increased since recession; 22% increase in giving since 2009
- 2008 and 2009 were very bad for nonprofits.

- Within \$335 billion given, 2013 marked the fourth straight year giving has increased amongst Americans.
- May see consolidation in the sector of smaller nonprofits.
- In 2012, 1,082 million registered nonprofits in USA.
- Between 2000 and 2010, nonprofit employment expanded 2.1% annually compared to 0.6% in the private sector.
- Growth is leading to increased competition for funding.
- Key Trends: Community Foundations
 - Biggest growing part of the philanthropic sector ; about 70% of the funding collected come from individual donors
 - 100 largest community foundations show a 20% increase in assets since 2006
 - From 2011-2012 communication foundations grew about 9% in assets
- Key Trends: Individual giving
 - About 72% come from the hands of individuals
 - Since 2006 wealthiest American's incomes have increased but the portion of their incomes given to charity has declined – middle class Americans have contributed 4.5 % more of their incomes to charities in the same period, while earning less on average.
 - More than 98% of wealthiest Americans donated to charity in 2013
- Key Trends: Corporate Giving
 - Growing at slower rate
 - Nearly 2/3 of corporations increased their giving between 2010 and 2013
 - Rate of increase among corporations donating at least 10% to charity declined from 20% in 2011 to just 6% in 2013
- Key Trends: Fundraising
 - Baby boomers are now largest source of charitable gifts
 - Millennials volunteer or support nonprofits; driving by interest in causes not institutions
 - New techniques: texting donations, online political campaign-style funding
 - Stanford development office has 800 people working in it full-time.
 - Look at Chronicle of Philanthropy
- Show me the money
 - Religion is the top receiver of funding followed by education, human services (families, youth) and foundations
 - Funding focused on the environment has not grown a lot
 - Educational giving is largely associated with people's alma maters
- Writing Grant Proposals
 - Donor research: Who are your stakeholders? Who is your competition?
 - Value proposition: What can you offer that the competition can't?
 - Fundraising is one of the most difficult jobs in nonprofit sector. Turnover is high (1-2 years). Few staff can justify salary within 1-2 years. Really good fundraisers are paid handsomely by large institutions. Many fundraisers come in and cannot meet expectations in 2 years.
 - ED's are not paid and trained to do grant writing and other activities. Need to write proposals, research foundations, develop relationships with individual donors. Not that many credible organizations that you could use to hire on commission to do quality work. Challenge of finding and paying for a staff-person is very hard.
 - You have to be a good fit for funding guidelines and then be a strong organization, strong financials, etc.
 - Is a fundraiser a good investment to make right now? What is the return on investment we want and when?
- Donor research
 - Sustainabilityfund.org
 - Every organization has some guidelines
 - Many do invitation-only proposals

- Not a lot of foundations may align with us
- If we hired someone they would evaluate funders against our program fit and to develop a short list that they could develop a grant proposal for.
- 350.org has a lot of backing from the Rockefeller Foundation
- Is there anyone giving in our space? Not many people come to mind for her right now.
- Strategies: Creating a Value a Proposition
 - What problem are you solving? Why are you better at anyone else? Can you make the case your organization is the best solution to the problem you are trying to solve?
 - Do you have a compelling case for support and a rigorous analysis for how you evaluate your success?
 - We have a case for significantly changing what is being taught at institutions across our membership.
 - Are we the place that trains sustainability practitioners? Some colleges are seeking to create a masters program in sustainability and looking for funders for that?
 - What have we done to change the sustainability landscape in the last 10 years? Where do we hope to go? Why should people fund us? What do we have that's cutting edge?
 - Ethical fundraising
 - Is a dollar spent on our organization a dollar better than it could be spent elsewhere
 - Need compelling theory of change and cogent internal and external metrics

OPPORTUNITY FOR ACTION. Management to develop an evaluation framework/strategy/model to assess our impact on our membership community. This fiscal.

- Basic data we may need?
 - We need to measure our impact through our members
 - What is the retention rate of members?
 - In run up to 10th year we are seeking to understand our impact
 - Case studies
 - Look at long-term members we have had and learn from them
 - Who else did we influence?
 - Did it translate into a certain number of courses or organizations?
 - A lot of programs that have been around for a while will hire graduate students to do an external evaluation for little cost
 - 3-5 questions
 - Would you be willing to be interviewed?
 - Major take aways?
 - What did you implement?
 - Biggest challenges you are facing?
 - How can we help?
 - Ask the board what we think we've been able to accomplish?
- Donor retention – often neglected; more cost efficient than attracting new donors
- Develop a long-term fundraising plan and our strategy
- Who are natural supporters who aren't already?
- Can we create content for other entities
- Is cost of fundraising worth the revenue generated
- Develop questionnaire for use in October conference – look at who has been with us for 10 years (recognize them with awards? Are they connected to any funders? What about corporate partnerships?)

OPPORTUNITY FOR ACTION. Management to develop an approach to really celebrate our 10 year signature anniversary and tell our story. This should be happening throughout this year. Timeline is ASAP, but especially focused on for conference.

- Has anyone from our membership gone on to the corporate world (potential connected to their new corporation foundation)
- We have been instrumental in launching a movement – here’s what it means via individuals and in aggregate.

Miguel Figueroa- Update on Best Practices in Nonprofit Board Governance and Related Observations

- New members should not feel afraid to speak out and ask questions
- Bylaws – four standing committees and four steering committees
- Other partner organizations are part of our network – these groups are also a potential expense – what return on investment are we getting for this work?
- Initial period with a new ED is that we get the information we need and can monitor; want to see some progress being made and time spent in the right areas

OPPORTUNITY FOR ACTION. Management to develop more detailed activity scopes to support strategic priorities. ASAP.

- Who is your customer and market?
- Are we a charity or a professional membership association?
 - If we are a professional membership association – it’s harder to solicit donations.
- What are AASHE’s assets and monetization of such? (Tangible and intangible). Our value proposition includes discounts to conference. STARS is a key.

OPPORTUNITY FOR ACTION. Formal job description for ED to be updated/completed by Executive Committee and clear criteria for executive evaluation established. ASAP. Evaluation approach needs to be completed before six month mark.

- If we want to diversify the board we should think about if we should include people from the corporate world, or other areas.
- Advisory Council may be a good source of people to draw from.
- Board should be representative of our membership. A lawyer, financial expert, an HR expert, a marketing guru, etc.
- Want to align the board to support the oversight.

OPPORTUNITY FOR ACTION. Governance Committee to coordinate removal of steering committees from the bylaws. ASAP prior to establishment of next Board.

- Committees do not make decisions – propose recommendations to the board

OPPORTUNITY FOR ACTION. Governance Committee to conduct a self-assessment of the board. May be worth exploring opportunities to have Board members outline their commitments

- Normally Board members contribute funding personally to the organization. AASHE encourages this.

OPPORTUNITY FOR ACTION. Management to assign staff person to send a note out to each board member outlining what they will do in terms of a financial contribution.

- Meghan should be coming to us with the metrics – we shouldn't discuss for more than an hour
- Board members should spend approximately 90-100 hours per year.
- How are private companies benefiting from what we produce at AASHE?

DAY 2

6. Stanford Facilities Staff - Introductions

- Joe - Sustainability and Energy Management Leader
 - Students in sustainability movement have alerted people to the science of climate change.
 - Impacts of climate change driving Stanford's facility leaders to change – started with energy, water and soon transportation. Want systems that will carry university ahead 50 years.
- Tom
 - There is a water side to sustainability
 - Have 8,000 acres, old creeks and water rights – put water into impoundments behind campus and use that water to irrigate campus (nonpotable water). Wells are used to supplement creek systems during times of drought. Do a lot of dry mulch landscaping. Water conservation has been in place 20 years. Have decreased potable water use by 20% despite growing the campus
 - The new energy plant will reduce 15% of water use (from 3 million gallons to 2 million gallons per day) because it uses a different way of cooling – not evaporative.
- John - Director of Parking and Transportation
 - Mindset towards requirements of municipalities, saving space and funding. Do it for sustainability and many other reasons.
 - At Stanford have a general use permit. To build on campus they have to follow the county rules some of which affect traffic in peak hours. They have a very intensive program to encourage people not to bring their cars to campus. Carpool, vanpool, public transit...they pay people not to drive \$75 per quarter when they don't drive.
 - They give people annual train pass to any employee that wants it \$180 versus \$1000. They also have the shuttle system which incorporates alternative fuels (electric, hybrid and a few other fuels). Goal is to electrify the fleet.
 - 12 year drive alone rate before was about 70+ percent. They are now down to about 50%. They have turned segments of campus into pedzones – no automobiles permitted.
 - High capacity busses on one corridor – but may be looking to expand that.
 - Going to be doing a master plan for this area to advance things moving forward.
 - CalTrain – ridership has grown to 60k per day.
 - Get about 150 miles per bus on a charge – warmer weather gives them a more maximum range. Busses are financed over a period of time – so they help pay by the savings from the operational costs.
 - They get money from parking fees, people who want to use busses (route services and charters), buildings are taxed when they are built, new construction would allocate about 1.5% to go towards transportation.
- Stanford “does things first” and then tells people they did it – they don't publicize their goals

7. National/International Groups

- There is an old policy related to partnership development that guided work in this area. It needs to be revisited and shared with current board members so as background to inform our efforts.

- We get many inquiries from other organizations – but not always clear value for AASHE.
- HEASC relationship is not clear. We organize the calls. No contract; clear expectations required.

OPPORTUNITY FOR ACTION. Management to make potential partners list available to board members for review and update it with existing and potentially new relationships. ASAP.

- We need to think about the most strategic partnerships that will benefit our organization.
- Promotional partnerships are quite common (e.g., college of university recycling coalition).
- Seems like we have very little formally in place for most “partnerships”.
- Second Nature has entered into conversations with NCSE.
- AASHE’s future – we need to think strategically about partnerships.
- HEASC connects to about 3,200 schools. Strengthen the relationship or let it go? We are paid funding, but the program is net zero. Need to connect with Debra Rowe.
- We need to narrow down our value proposition and the list of key partners.

8. Regional Update

- Requests for support are coming from these groups. Some want more than others.
- Joining calls for Northeast group and CUSP in March.
- Not all of these groups are members of AASHE.
- How do we want to grow? Regional networks are something we cannot ignore and can be helpful. Regional Centres of Expertise (RCEs) on Education for Sustainable Development are multi-sector and acknowledged by the UNU. There are RCEs in Oregon, Michigan, Virginia, and Vermont.
- Regional groups can be a mix of cities, states and groups.
- Some of the existing groups we have connections with. What does AASHE want out of these relationships?
- NACUBO is a great example of regionalization. We need to know what we might offer regional groups (meetings, STARS, etc.). Add to this IVY Plus
- Some suggestion that people we serve must be members. Does this require additional exploration?
- Local sustainability consortiums may be offering more relatable offerings than what we do through AASHE.

9. International

- Kim Smith has been doing international work as a liaison for AASHE, beginning with the UN Conference on Sustainable Development, in Rio, in 2012, under Paul Rowland’s leadership. She would have liked to have had more communication with the Board related to these efforts.
- Iain Patton is the CEO of the Environmental Association of University Centres (EAUC). It is a similar organization to AASHE in the UK, as is ACTS (Australasian Campuses Towards Sustainability) in Australia, led by Leanne Denby. Both EAUC and ACTS have offered to help support AASHE and our new ED.
- The EAUC Conference is coming up in Leeds, England. Meghan Fay Zahniser may be attending. EAUC offered funding to support her engagement. What is the ROI on attending this international event? We need to be realistic about what we might do at the international scale. How do we use this opportunity?
- What are the broader initiatives we are trying to achieve and how can we find alignment with their missions?
- Concern that the United States is not at the international tables, as we have an opportunity to have influence and identify the value of higher education in sustainability efforts.
- To what extent do we want to put AASHE out there? If we don’t get on the international stage someone else might take over this space.

- At Rio, Higher Ed was not even recognized as a stakeholder, but higher education associations from around the world did active outreach and submitted sustainable development goals. In Japan, for the UNESCO World Conference on ESD, there was a Higher Ed stakeholder meeting, where Kim presented on behalf of AASHE, RCE Greater Portland, and the US Partnership for ESD.
- Higher Ed – only 3% of people around the world go to college and become 80% of the leaders in the world, so it is important to have a voice.
- UNESCO launched the Global Action Program on ESD in Japan. It is a five-year plan, with five priority action areas. AASHE can review how to align efforts with the initiatives.
- US State Department and Department of Education – did not submit a national report for ESD efforts to UNESCO, although some individual reports on the Green Ribbon Schools initiative and Teacher Education were submitted. Canada submitted a national ESD report.
- Is the US isolated and insular when it comes to higher education and AASHE?
- In January 2010 we launched STARS 1.0 focusing on US and Canada. After two years of running 1.0 we did an international pilot of STARS. With STARS 2.0 we welcomed any international participant. The system needed to be more adaptable internationally, so groups decided not to standardize. Other international metrics have been created now, such as LiFE and the Sustainability Literacy Test.
- All other countries are asking questions about what they can do – but AASHE is not at the table.
- Annual AASHE state of sustainability in higher education report would have been helpful to inform Kim's work.
- Where does AASHE want to fit within the international picture?
- Advisory Council may be a good resource to tap for this.
- World Education Forum happening in May 2015, in Korea.
- We may not be able to make international engagement with other associations and efforts a priority in the next year. Kim has offered to continue to serve as a liaison.

OPPORTUNITY FOR ACTION. Management to present an informed proposal to the Board outlining recommendations for what we want as an organization in terms of international engagement. ASAP.

10. Fine Tune Priorities

Organizational

- Products and services – going away to develop this with activity scopes
- Board is being asked to flesh out the work on the international and regional partnerships
- We need to optimize management and our functions/governance efforts
- Will work to bring some concentration of staff to a central location (e.g., a department in Philadelphia)
- Stabilize and diversify funding
- We need to get our sites for 2017 and 2018 done asap for conference
- Revise strategy map, develop value proposition, communicate outcomes of retreat to staff and membership, recruitment.
- Need to have a strong communication between board and key staff members.
- Staff are passionate.
- Suggest a joint release from Board Chair and the Executive Director.

Board

- Stabilize and diversify and secure funding
 - Stabilize membership and conference.
 - 4200 institutions in the US – and about 700 members? Who is or isn't joining?
 - Prepare value proposition.

- Stories for 10-year anniversary.
- Polish board processes and priorities – optimize governance.
 - Board Evaluation, ED Evaluation.
 - Board Election Process.
 - Are we a charity versus a professional association?
- Review/approve:
 - Partnership criteria – March/April
 - Value proposition – case study – evidence – April/May
 - Revised Strategic Plan – April/May
 - Professional development program – May
 - Partnership discussion to enhance products and services – May
 - E.g. Enter into discussions about HEASC, ISSP, etc.
 - Board Election Process - May
 - Conference Theme and activities – June
 - How will we network or help out here to make it successful?
- Strengthen partnerships (enter into discussion in May)
- Board should charge governance committee to work on the project of clarifying the election of directors and who is eligible.

11. Board Meeting

- Discussions between Board and ED

12. Retreat Adjourned

- 12:30 pm PT.