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**AER Orientation and Mobility Division Executive Committee Meeting**

**Thursday, June 22, 2023**

**In Attendance:**

Raychel Callary (chair)

Margaret Winn (chair-elect)

JoAnne Chalom (past chair)

Valery Kircher (secretary)

Megann Brousard (treasurer)

Shay Utley (District 2)

Jennifer Duncan (District 3)

Eric Shaw (District 4)

Kevin McCormack (District 5)

Tessa McCarthy (District 6)

Michael Lorento (student representative)

Mary Kline (guest, left after Professional Personnel Recruitment Committee Update)

Absent:

Angela Leavens (District 1)

Raychel called the meeting to order at about 6:10 after teleconferencing difficulties.

Maggie Winn agreed to act as parliamentarian.

Mickey Lorento was welcomed as the new student representative.

**Consent Agenda**

Shay moved to approve the consent agenda, seconded by JoAnne. The motion passed.

**Treasurer’s Report**

* + 1. The Finance Committee met June 19 and are still seeking a fourth member.
    2. AER Division Expense Reimbursement Requests totaling $57.08 were submitted June 19 for Michigan AER Conference vendor table registration and promotional materials paid by Raychel Callary and Maggie Winn.
    3. A total of $13,985.27 was reimbursed for Transportation Research Board (TRB) 2023 Annual Meeting attendance expenses to the following individuals: Beezy Bentzen, Raychel Callary, JoAnne Chalom, MaryBeth Cleveland, Jennifer Graham, Claudia Libis, Linda Myers, Meg Robertson.
       1. Registration Fees: $6,315.00
       2. Hotel: $2,593.30
       3. Transportation: $3,856.40
       4. Meals: $1,220.55
       5. The following organizations provided financial support to assist with TRB 2023 Annual Meeting expenses:
          1. PedSafety: $2,000
          2. Polara: $2,000
          3. StrongGo: $1,800
          4. Vanguard ADA: $1,000

**Chair report**

1. Vision professionals task force co-chairs met 4/3, 4/10, 4/24, task force met 4/1. Tasked with carrying out [AER Resolution 2022-03 Concerning Consensus-Building to Promote Vision Rehabilitation Therapy](https://aerbvi.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/10/AER-Resolution-2022-03-Concerning-Consensus-Building-to-Promote-Vision-Rehabilitation-Therapy.docx).
2. Assembled nominations and elections committee, collaborated on student representative selection process.
3. Council of division chairs met 4/6 to discuss the AER strategic plan, 5/31 to discuss recruitment strategies, and 6/21 for a regular quarterly meeting. At the 6/21 meeting, opportunities for collaboration among divisions were discussed. There was interest in two or three divisions hosting webinars or group discussions on a shared topic, as well as creating a google form to describe upcoming activities and request collaboration including having guest division representatives attend executive committee meetings.
4. Attended several AER division meetings and webinars, AER Executive Board of Directors meetings, AERlift sessions, and AER strategic planning meetings.
5. Participating in “defending services” workgroup: EC members from several divisions are drafting a document addressing proper hiring and utilization of vision professionals to support practitioners in working within their scope of practice and according to their code of ethics. Group met 5/22, 6/5.

**Committee Reports**

**Professional Issues:**

1. Meetings were held 1/17/2023 and 2/28/23 with the personnel preparation division focusing on collaboration on the issues identified in the strategic plan regarding recruitment and retention, student participation, and mentorship. We have created a folder for recruitment documents to be shared and will create a database to connect mentors and students or new professionals. A doodle will be sent to members for a meeting to be held early in July.
2. Position Paper update: The OMA position paper writing team is engaging in a delphi study and reports that the paper is progressing. The support cane use draft may have stalled; this is being monitored to be reassigned if needed.

**Program:**

Maggie is co-chairing the symposium/educational session programming work group for the 2024 International conference committee. Divisions assist with the development of the educational session programming and providing reviewers for abstracts. This is typically done within each cluster as educational strands are developed. All the division chairs will be included in this work group.

**Awards:** Will begin to meet in January 2024.

**Nominating and Elections:** Met beginning 2/28 for Student Representative selection. Mary Shore served as chair. Applications were open 4/3-4/28. Several qualified students applied. Northern Illinois University student Michael (Mickey) Lorento was nominated by the committee and appointed by the chair. One person resigned from the committee.

**Scholarship:** There were 8 completed applications for the Blasch Scholarship. 2 recipients were selected. They will be announced in the next newsletter and on social media.

**Strategic Plan:** Committee met 6/19. Progress spreadsheet was updated. Updating the webpage, the district director title, the PPRC, an EAC webinar, and a white cane day communication were among topics discussed. 4/26 division forum seemed like a success; second forum was discussed for around October. Vendor table at Michigan AER conference took place; provided connection opportunities.

**Environmental Access Committee:** EAC members are providing guidance on infrastructure including intersection design and signal functioning. A webinar focusing on new infrastructure design planned for fall was approved at the 3/30 meeting.

**Communications:** members needed for this committee. Meg Robertson edits the newsletter, and Maggie Winn has been posting on social media.

**District Director Reports:**

Eric Shaw (District 4):

* The Northeast AER conference will be held Nov. 1-3, and the New York AER conference will take place Nov. 5-7.

Shay Utley (District 2):

* + The Texas AER conference will be held in March 2024.
  + The Southwest Orientation and Mobility Specialists Association Conference will take place virtually in October 2023.
  + Cane Quest was held in Texas for the first time last year.

Tessa McCarthy (District 6):

* Third Annual Cane Quest in PA is scheduled for April 2024.

Kevin McCormack (District 5):

* First Cane Quest to take place in Kentucky may be in October 2023.

Jennifer Duncan (District 3):

* Michigan is having their 2nd cane quest in October with Leader Dog, which will include activities for siblings and parents.

**Action Items**

1. O&M Outpost

Discussion took place about whether to maintain the [O&M Outpost](http://aerom.org/). Shay reported that she spoke with Chris Tabb, who continues to maintain this website at his expense and did not express a preference regarding whether the resource should continue. The group discussed whether information could be archived. The new AER website was discussed, where we will be able to add information as a Division. The website will be public and will include a dropbox where information could be placed. The group determined that there had been a purpose for the Outpost when it was created and that it was no longer needed due to the upcoming ability to update the division page on the AER website independently.

* 1. Shay made a motion to discontinue the O&M Outpost, seconded by Eric. The motion passed.
     1. White Cane Day/Blind Americans Equality Day collaboration

Creation of a resource for White Cane Day activities was discussed. A vote was not taken as this will be a resource connected to the Council of Division Chairs. A link to a Google form was shared in an email. Raychel requested ideas about White Cane Day by August 1.

* + 1. Maggie suggested that we reach out to the Districts for ideas
    2. Raychel will share with AER District Representatives (National AER) to share and solicit ideas
    3. Date for fall forum

The Board expressed support for hosting a forum to take place around October. Raychel will send a poll to the group around August 15 to determine a date.

* + - 1. ACVREP announcement regarding new certification for OTs

A motion passed at the June meeting to request that AER host a virtual forum for members and request ACVREP participation, with a survey to be developed and sent to membership to assist with formulating questions to be presented to ACVREP regarding their recent announcement about a new certification to be created specifically for occupational therapists. Shortly afterward, the AER board issued a statement expressing objection to this new certification.

* + - * + Shay made a motion, seconded by Eric, to set aside the request to hold a virtual members forum in light of AER’s statement. The motion passed.

**Information and Discussion Items**

1. Professional Personnel Recruitment Committee (PPRC) Update

PPRC liaison Mary Kline ([mkline@escwr.org](mailto:mkline@escwr.org)) reported that AER is collaborating with other stakeholders to create a 3-4 minute video for recruitment purposes. Discussion took place regarding a lack of internship opportunities for O&M and the need for current COMS to take on interns. Recruiting issues discussed included the potential for younger students to have less family and other obligations and how to reach and interest potential candidates. Recruiting from the Peace Corps, Veterans, and Community College students were suggested.

1. District director communication, sharing district director updates

Discussion took place about how district directors can solicit information from their region and share information from the division. District directors expressed that this can be difficult in states other than where they live. Communication strategies suggestions included connecting with universities, getting contact information from the AER website for chapter leadership within regions, calling and texting to maintain connections, and creating a list of contacts for the next slate of directors. Sharing information in the division newsletter, on the division Facebook page and other social media, on the O&M website, and sent to the division as an e-blast were discussed. The newsletter will stay the same with regards to dates: January 1, March 1, June 1, September 1- send to Meg Robertson at [mobilitymeg@aol.com](mailto:mobilitymeg@aol.com).

1. District director title

The title of District Directors was discussed, and whether it would be beneficial to use a different title which might better describe the role. The board expressed interest in considering this option. Raychel will determine if this title can be changed. Options discussed included coordinator, representative, and liaison.

1. Student Representative opportunities

Opportunities for Michael Lorento as the student representative were discussed. Board members were encouraged to share ideas with him as they arise. Suggestions included staffing a table at conferences, connecting with PPRC liaison Mary Kline and others working on recruitment (ex: Janie Blome), connecting with others on social media, and connecting with university programs and personnel preparation division leadership.

1. Mentor Connection

This resource (not officially named) is being created by the professional issues committee and personnel preparation division leadership to connect mentors with new O&M graduates and professionals new to a geographical area or service demographic. This will be available on the AER website as a living document.

1. June 26 AERlift

Raychel encouraged board members to attend this virtual meeting regarding parliamentary procedure.

Motion to adjourn: Motion to adjourn made by Valery and seconded by Shay. Motion passed. The meeting was adjourned at 8:06 pm Eastern.

**Agenda item 6A:**

**Minutes**

AER Professional Personnel Recruitment Committee (PPRC)

Chair, Michael Tuttle; Secretary: Audrey Dannenberg for this call

**Thursday, August 17, 2023** via Zoom

1. Introductions of Committee Members not on the Zoom before

In attendance: Audrey Dannenberg, Ellen Hoke, Jessicia Klenk, Mary Kline, Tina Laffer, Diane Moshenrose, Heather Munro, Mark Richert, Amanda Thompson & Michael Tuttle.

1. Review of minutes from June 15, 2023. Thank you to Kristi Probst for taking the minutes. Approved unless corrections received.
2. Updates on PPRC goals by sub-committee chairs
3. Recruitment Coordinators (Chair, Jessicia Klenk)

* New recruitment coordinators are still signing up. To get trained they are going to a recording of the Zoom training that was done in June presented by Audrey.
* Jessicia reported vacancies in the various chapters. See attached recruitment coordinator list.

1. Recruitment Video (Chair, Michael Tuttle)

* Diane Colburn (DC) did a great job arranging for participants for the filming of our recruitment video at the MD School for the Blind on July 26 in Baltimore.
* Good communicators and a wide spectrum of participants appeared in the filming.
* Michael re-wrote the script that was sent to us at the last minute. The senior producer did not understand our goals. The information given to him was difficult for him to process.
* Michael has asked for early access to the 7 hours of video taken.

1. CATIS ACVREP Recruitment Brochure

* Amanda Lannan has stepped down as Chair due to other commitments.
* Amanda Thompson eagerly saved the day and accepted the new position as Chair. Thank you, Amanda! Must be the name that requires it. Audrey will send her the other AER flyers that are temporarily not posted on the AER website due to redevelopment of the site.

1. Occupational Handbook of Careers (Chair: Lauralyn Randles)

* No update

5) Repository of documents/outlines for recruitment presentations (Chair, Katie Ericson)

* No update

6) Outreach to PT/ OT graduate programs to recruit applicants who were surplus applicants in the programs; do presentations at the PT/OT graduate programs.

(Chair, Beverly Jackson)

* No update except changed “rejected” to “surplus” applicants.

7) HBCU sub-committee to recruit at HBCU's (Chair, Ellen

Hoke)

* Ellen has reached out to some HBCU’s but not to the HBCU recruitment subcommittee. Audrey will send list of subcommittee members to entire committee.
* Mark mentioned looking at the Higher Education Committee at HBCU’s and potential new vision programs at HBCU’s.

8) Vision professionals’ recruitment presence on social media sites in conjunction with AER's Social Media Committee (Chair: Karen Walker)

* No update

9) PPRC Liaisons needed for following AER Divisions:

Rehab Counseling, Multiple Disabilities & DB, Psychosocial Services, Info & Technology, Education Curriculum, Division on Aging, Neurological Visual Impairment

1. Other topics and updates?

* Mary Kline, O&M Division Liaison, talked to Karen Koehler with Shawnee State (in Ohio) re recruitment. They give out AER memberships!
* Mary stated that the Ohio DOE sends out email blasts with info each month, another idea for recruitment. Will send sample to Lee and Olaya
* Mary suggests adding non-profit organizations, military returnees, and Peace Corps returnees to the master list of where to recruit. She has connections for military returnees and will reach out to them.
* Mary reports that internships are holding applicants back as need more flexibility in doing an internship. Hard to take time off/away from family/job to do an internship. Personnel Prep might want to look at that.

1. Next Zoom meeting: **October 19, 2023, at 8 p.m. ET**.

* Canceling September 21 meeting

**Agenda item 6F:**

The following update was provided in the September division newsletter. We will discuss the [strategic plan](https://www.aerbvi.org/assets/docs/2022%20OM%20Division%20Strategic%20Plan%20draft.docx) at the December meeting and update this as needed.

1. Educate and connect with related service professionals, families, and the community

We are in the process of updating information and resources on the [division page](https://www.aerbvi.org/division_o-m) of the new AER website. [Position papers](https://www.aerbvi.org/position-papers) are posted on the website, all of which were developed or updated in the last few years. The Environmental Access Committee is updating the accessible pedestrian signal request letter and other resources. Executive committee meeting minutes and division newsletters are available on the website.

A [resource](https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSe_dGmUm1BzeAOoYdBzF7oJmjFGfYHjrO3ElfW2ncHOcCH7Jg/viewform) has been created to share suggestions for support system and community involvement including White Cane Day/Blind Americans Equality Day events. This is available on the AER website and will be shared periodically in the newsletter and on social media. Please share your ideas so that this can become a valuable resource. No idea is too large or too small.

The plan called for the establishment of an ad hoc committee to create a presentation that members can adapt to present to various groups. It is anticipated that we will be able to utilize the products created by the Professional Personnel Recruitment Committee described under the next goal without duplicating these efforts. We will ensure that presentation materials created by the PPRC are supplemented with resources or information needed for practitioners to utilize these materials and will communicate about their availability once they are prepared and available on the division webpage of the AER website.

2. Recruit students at universities with O&M programs, and educate students at all levels about career opportunities:

An ad hoc committee established by the O&M division professional issues committee has been meeting with AER personnel preparation division representatives and has begun to identify opportunities for collaboration on strategies for recruitment into our field.

The plan called for the establishment of an ad hoc committee to develop a recruitment presentation that could be used by any member to present to high school students or college undergraduate students which would be available on the website by spring of 2024. Because the Professional Personnel Recruitment Committee (PPRC) with chair Audrey Dannenberg has reformed and has taken on this project, it was determined that we would not duplicate this effort and will intend to utilize the presentation that this committee creates. There has been regular collaboration with the PPRC through our division liaison Mary Kline and through a Council of Division Chairs meeting.

3. Facilitate professional development opportunities

The Environmental Access Committee has been actively collaborating with transportation professionals. Three presentations per year through webinars or at AER and/or O&M association conferences addressing transportation and infrastructure trends are intended in the strategic plan. Beezy Bentsen recently collaborated with Polara to provide a webinar on the changes in pedestrian signals occurring with upcoming adoption of the Public Right-of-Way Accessibility Guidelines (PROWAG). At the Southeastern Orientation and Mobility Association (SOMA), members collaborated on a track of sessions in honor of the late Janet Barlow facilitating collaboration between O&M specialists and traffic engineers. An AER webinar is being planned for late October by the Environmental Access Committee addressing transportation and infrastructure trends.

Exploring the feasibility of an international O&M conference was included in the plan. Although 2025 was initially considered, it was apparent that this would be too soon. 2027 could be considered if there is interest in this. One option could be to investigate opportunities to partner with a state conference or an O&M association conference.

4. Promote high-quality O&M personnel preparation programs and agency standards:

The ad hoc committee has discussed with the AER personnel preparation division our goal to suggest curricular changes as needed. We plan to utilize the newly-created resource described under “Promote Mentoring” to facilitate communication about opportunities to collaborate with university programs (ex: university supervisor positions).

The scholarship committee awards two $1000 scholarships annually when funds are available to students in AER-approved university personnel preparation programs. In 2023, the procedure for soliciting and reviewing applications for the Donald Blasch scholarship was followed and scholarships were awarded to Portland State University students Suzanne Feigenson and Jen Scheel. The division has funding approved for two scholarships in 2024.

This spring, the nominations committee solicited and reviewed applications for the first O&M division student representative from an AER-approved university personnel preparation program. Northern Illinois University student Michael (Mickey) Lorento was nominated by the committee and appointed by the division chair. The student representative is a resource for students in O&M programs, available to receive questions and concerns. Students can reach Mickey at 7.mickey@gmail.com.

5. Increase legitimacy of the O&M profession

The ad hoc committee collaborating with the AER personnel preparation division has established communication regarding research opportunities and needs, including plans for a webinar on conducting research.

Meetings with the Council of Division Chairs have been among opportunities to support third-party payment and other federal funding priorities through collaboration with the AER Board of directors, AER divisions, and other organizations. The Alice Cogswell and Anne Sullivan Macy Act and Medicare expansion continue to present opportunities for significant advancement.

By December 2023, an ad hoc committee will be established to update the 2018 Scope of Practice in Orientation and Mobility.

6. Communicate directly with membership concerning professional needs and division activities:

In January 2023, a virtual watercooler was held to discuss division activities, leadership roles, and opportunities for involvement. In April 2023, a virtual forum for division members was held to promote professional connection and to discuss professional needs, division activities, and opportunities. This is intended to be biannual, and a forum is scheduled for October 3 at 5 pm Eastern. Notifications will be sent out by the AER office.

To support the goal of hosting a table four times a year at AER and orientation and mobility association conferences, the division hosted an O&M division table at the Southwest Orientation and Mobility Association (SWOMA) conference in November 2022. We were provided a table at the AER International conference in July 2022; although placement of the division tables section turned out to be challenging to connect with members, it was a great opportunity to learn about other divisions so that we could promote each other’s activities. The division hosted a table at the Michigan AER conference in 2023, and will be present again at SWOMA which will be virtual in 2023. Table registration costs are often prohibitive, so we will continue to seek opportunities to host a table and create this opportunity for connection and promotion.

The professional issues committee responds to requests from membership by considering and facilitating the creation of position papers. A paper is currently being drafted regarding orientation and mobility assistants, as well as a paper on support cane use. These will be provided to the membership for comment. After comments are considered, revised drafts will be provided to division members for a vote.

7. Collaborate with AER divisions, O&M organizations, and affiliated fields

Through participation in the AER Council of Division Chairs, we have been able to communicate with leadership from each division and have identified many opportunities for collaboration. A special meeting in May focused on recruitment to the field and to division leadership. Division leadership has expressed interest in two or three divisions hosting webinars or group discussions on a shared topic. We are currently preparing a webinar with the Administration and Leadership division for their members on filling O&M positions. There has been division representation at many meetings and webinars for other divisions to promote this cohesion.

The strategic plan calls for EAC members to advocate for accessible infrastructure through presentations and participation with associated committees at transportation organization meetings at least once a year. In January, several members attended the Transportation Research Board (TRB) Annual meeting in Washington DC, providing advocacy for accessible design and participating in a variety of committee meetings. Members participate in activities throughout the year. TRB meeting attendance is also an opportunity to support the point under our first strategic plan goal to increase awareness of O&M instruction and opportunities for collaboration.

Next month, an ad hoc committee will begin planning a virtual forum for organizations with a focus on orientation and mobility to increase knowledge about organizations, promote cohesion, and provide opportunities for professional connections.

8. Promote mentoring

In collaboration with the AER personnel preparation division, we created and are continuing to develop a resource to connect university O&M programs, employers, and current or retired O&M specialists to provide supervision and mentoring to new practitioners and students in O&M programs. This will be available on the AER website soon.

9. Recognize achievement by members at the local, state, and national levels

We would like to promote the accomplishments of our members. Please send us a message at [aeromdivision@gmail.com](mailto:aeromdivision@gmail.com) to let us know about a colleague’s accomplishment, retirement, employment change, or other information worthy of acknowledgement.