



SSA Staff Reorganization and Policy Development

Since November 2002 the Excomm and Board of Directors have instituted a number of actions that impact staff organization, job titles and descriptions, travel and expense policies, and new reporting relationships.

SSA Staff Realignment

In November 2002 the Executive Committee met at SSA headquarters in Hobbs, NM and established a new direction for the strategic organization of the professional staff, specifically, the strengthening of the position of Chief Financial and Administrative Officer and the creation of a new Director of Member Relations and Services position.

The purpose of the realignment is to have strong Chief Financial and Administrative Officer and Director of Member Relations and Services positions, allow consistent management of staff talent by an administrative officer who is normally resident in Hobbs, and to allow the chief executive and Director of Member Relations and Services to spend more time communicating with volunteers and members, finding and doing new projects and keeping current projects on track. The Chief Financial and Administrative Officer is to take on most of the headquarters staff and office management functions. These actions were initiated by the Excomm just after Thanksgiving 2002, then discussed and finalized at the January Board of Directors meeting. A detailed narrative has been written and posted describing the job opening for the Director of Member Relations and Services and a number of resumes have already been received.

Expense and Employee Receivables Procedures

An Employee Receivable Account had existed for some years for the purpose of recording travel advances and unsettled expense items owed by the President. In 2001 the SSA Secretary and First Vice Chair became aware of this account. Investigation found that this account was abnormally high and was not being reduced on a timely basis. The President was instructed to pay this account off as fast as possible, and as of December 2002 the account had been paid off through a combination of payroll deductions and additional payments. SSA had no specific written policies governing this activity so a new Expenses and Travel Policy was implemented in mid-December 2002 to prevent future recurrences. An investigation into SSA expense account practices was completed on January 17th. Nothing was found that would indicate that any of the advances were not repaid.

In early December 2002 questions arose about irregularities in SSA's expense and travel reporting and documentation procedures, credit card procedures, and how expenses and employee advances were paid back. The Executive Committee of the SSA Board of Directors was made aware of this situation and the Employee Receivable Account in late December 2002 and immediately began an investigation and instituted new expense reporting procedures and credit card usage policies. The entire Board of Directors was apprised of both situations at the January 2003 winter board meeting in Dayton.

Starting in Mid-December 2002 all employee travel and other authorized expenses were mandated to be handled by employee-owned credit cards and normal periodic expense report procedures. The SSA corporate credit card was mandated for office use only for the purposes of purchasing airline tickets and for office-only needs. These expense questions were investigated and the above new policies relating to expense reporting, documentation and oversight were instituted.

The Executive Committee is not aware of any funds owed to the SSA that have not been paid.

Job Descriptions and Reporting Relationships Discussed at SSA Board Meeting

At the SSA Board of Directors meeting in Dayton, Ohio the November job reorganizations were introduced to the Board of Directors along with the credit card and reporting policies and the results of investigation into the expense reporting concerns. Additional actions were taken by the Board of Directors to enhance the reorganization plan to create a Hobbs Management Team comprising the Chief Financial and Administrative Officer, the Director of Member Relations and Services and the chief executive. The Directors tasked the Excomm to assume the responsibility for promotion, compensation and hire / fire decisions relating to the members of the Management Team from the President. The job descriptions of the Management Team were to be further refined, a process created to review the roles and responsibilities of the Management Team positions with the Directors, and a process defined for creating stronger ties between the Executive Committee and the Management Team. Key employee succession and transition procedures are planned to be developed.

The Administrative Committee was asked to perform additional financial oversight of processes and practices under the new Expenses and Travel Policy. As backup to that Policy and to provide a communication (“whistleblower”) channel for staff members at Hobbs to report perceived irregularities occurring within the administration, a whistleblower hotline was authorized and will be instituted during the first quarter of 2003. These actions are in progress and will be reported upon as soon as they are solidified.

Larry Sanderson Resignation

After nearly 19 years of service to the SSA, first as Executive Director and later as President, Larry Sanderson has resigned as President, effective immediately, and has been put on administrative leave until final severance on May 1, 2003. During this time period he will be available for consultation by the SSA. The terms of Mr. Sanderson’s resignation were negotiated by the Executive Committee and approved, after much vigorous discussion, with the concurrence of the Board of Directors.