**SSB Midterm report on Joint Meeting Council Activities**

Prepared by Kelly Zamudio (JMC representative for SSB)

***New JMC Structure***

Beginning January 1, 2016, Kelly Zamudio will replace Lacey Knowles on the JMC. Kelly and Lacey have communicated at various points this last semester to assure a smooth transition and transfer of information.

Mitch Cruzan has been added to the JMC to help Howard Rundle and learn the ropes in preparation for that transition.

***Meeting Venues Upcoming Years***

Next year (2017) we will be meeting in Portland (June 23-27). In 2018 we will have a joint meeting with ESEB in Montpelier France (Aug 18-22), and in 2019 we meet in Providence, RI.

Please see <http://www.evolutionmeetings.org/> for info about the meeting including venues, and a link to the record of historical joint meeting venues. This historical record is valuable in evaluating where we have been, and how we can diversify our meeting locations to serve the largest section of our community.

Looking forward. The Joint Council evaluated three Midwest locations for the 2020 meeting (Cleveland, Minneapolis, and Columbus). Columbus could not accomodate us at all (even 4 years out). of the other two offers, the one from Cleveland was the best in terms of dates and overall costs, so we voted to accept that offer for 2020.

\*\* Action Item for Council: In our efforts to spread the meetings around the US, I would like some input from the council on where we should target the 2021 meeting. Places discussed by various groups include southeast and southwest, but I would like to hear opinions of the SSB general council, so I can bring those to the JMC in June.

***New Talk Formats at the Portland Meeting:***

At the 2016 meeting in Austin, some members of the JMC proposed a new format for talks called "thematic lightening sessions". The idea was to make 5 minute talks more appealing by grouping them in 15 thematically-cohesive groups of talks to fill a 75 minute session. This sounds like an interesting format (an entire session of thematically linked 5 min talks), and developed (as I understand) from an idea put forth by the community, but in the end the JMC decided they will require a bit more planning. The two main concerns discussed by the JMC about implementing thematic lightening sessions in Portland were that we would need each society to "seed" the topics and get people to sign up for talks (and we had no execution plan in place), and second, it was not clear how this might differ significantly from the Spotlight Sessions that were implemented last year (see below). After discussion, the societies agreed that this idea needs maturing and we will revisit in June in Portland to assess feasibility and interest.

\*\* Action Item for Council: I would like to know whether Council has interests in Thematic Lightening Sessions. Please discuss the pros/cons of the format itself, and how this would be implemented for SSB. The Program Chair (Weisrock) would need to be involved in finding volunteers and leaders for "themed session" for which SSB took responsibility.

***Spotlight Sessions at the Portland Meeting***

Second, JMC voted to continue the **Spotlight Sessions** that were started last year. Spotlight sessions are also thematically linked talks, but they are pre-selected by someone interested in leading and that person also picks the speakers. The selection process elevates average quality, and increases the value of 5-min talks by putting them in rooms with some higher-profile people working on the same topic. We experimented with these last year and they worked OK, but required a bit more advertising. Also, the organizers chosen last year were probably a little too junior to really attract high interest.

Joint council decided to work on this session format. In Portland, SSE will organize 6 of them, and ASN and SSB three each. I will work with David Weisrock (Program Chair) to find leaders and topics of broad interest to SSB members.

Each Spotlight Session is a 75 minute session with the following format:

one 15 minute talk

three 5-min talks

one 15-min talk

three 5-min talk

one 15-min talk

\*\* Action Item for Council: Any suggestions for good leaders we can approach to lead the Spotlight sessions? These should be leaders in the field, who will put together a good team of speakers (we will encourage that they be gender and demographically diverse) and run the Spotlight Session efficiently to highlight SSB research. Please communicate any suggestions to David Weisrock and Kelly Zamudio.

***Close out on 2016 Austin Meeting***

We ended up with a $39K cost overrun at the Austin mneeting. While this may seem like a lot, it is about 4.4% of the total budget. The shortfall arose from some combination of across the board under-budgeting for many costs and attendance that was substantially lower than we anticipated. Given the attractive destination of Austin, we expected to meet our 'break even' of 2000 attendees, but only 1700 registered. Joint Council agreed in Austin that rather than distribute cost overruns among the societies, we’d instead transfer the amount to the next year’s meeting budget. We’ll therefore budget an expense of $39K for Portland to cover this deficit and plan more conservatively so we break even in Portland. All are in agreement that we need to better estimate attendance and costs (both difficult to do), so we do not make a habit of this.