

Religious Education Association  
Recent and Upcoming Changes in Governance and Programming  
September 2019

In their efforts to listen carefully to feedback provided by the membership in the 2017 Association-wide survey, ongoing program evaluations, and discussions with members, the Board of Directors has worked hard to propose and make changes that will increase transparency, efficiency, and accountability to our mission and values. These changes open up exciting opportunities for our Association.

All of the changes have been carefully and extensively discussed. Some are actions by the Board that we want the membership to know about and understand the underlying rationale. Others require changes to REA Bylaws and require a vote by members present at the Annual Meeting.

**First and foremost**, we are putting in place an accountability task force explicitly charged with moving the Association to embody more clearly our commitments around diversity of all kinds.

- While the Board made the initial invitations to form the task force, the latter has complete freedom to organize itself, add members, establish objectives and conduct its work.
- Funding is included as a line item in the REA budget.

Other Board-implemented changes that do not affect the bylaws:

1. Having the Annual Meeting in July

- This will make it possible for us to meet on university campuses, thus reducing the cost of the meeting for REA and attendees while avoiding the congestion of autumn conferences.
- We will try this new arrangement for three years and evaluate the change. There will be no November 2021 meeting since we will meet the following summer. Instead, there will be an expanded REA program at 2021 AAR.

2020 Meeting	Nov 6-8	St. Louis	Traditional format
2021 Meeting	Nov 19-20	San Antonio	Abbreviated program at AAR
2022 Meeting	July 5-8	St. Paul, MN	St. Thomas University
- 2023 and 2024 meetings are during the summer on a university campus
- Be sure to see the Frequently Asked Questions page on the REA website.

2. Creating an Advisory Council

- Expand representation and participation of the membership to share leadership through a structure for explicitly connecting to our various diverse constituencies.
- Members are drawn from places of REA leadership (for instance, the chairs of standing committees and conveners of working groups), others invited from representative partner organizations (FTE, Wabash, ALLM, and so on), and others invited from our membership at large.
- Meets once yearly at the Annual Meeting on Sunday afternoon to provide input to the Board about the meeting, Board actions, and future projects.
- Increase the Board's efficiency and accountability while maximizing the benefits of the wisdom and input that comes from people talented in programming, committed to leadership, or compelled by the vision and mission that guide us.

3. Appointing a new Advancement Committee for membership and finance
  - Important functions of an advancement committee—to increase resources of membership and finances—are currently served by no position on the Board. REA would benefit greatly by paying more attention to growing its membership and developing a disciplined plan for raising funds through grants and campaigns.
  - An ad hoc Advancement Committee was appointed and approved by members in November 2019:  
José Irizarry, Chair, Presbyterian Board of Pensions and Villanova University  
Barbara Davis, Executive Pastor, First Presbyterian Church of New York City  
Tamara Henry, Assistant Professor, New York Theological Seminary
  - In January 2020, this committee would become a standing committee of the Board with two elected committee members and whose chair is a regular member of the Board.
  - Appointing an ad hoc committee is a Board action, while creation of a new Standing Committee requires a change to REA Bylaws.

Other proposed changes that require a member vote to change REA Bylaws (2005, last revised 2017):

4. Reducing Board and committee terms to 2 years, with the option of a second term
  - Currently, most terms are 3 years with reelection allowed after a one-year hiatus. Exceptions are Harper/Wornom committee members (4-year term) and the President, who serves 4 years in successive roles (V-P, Program Chair, President, Past President).
  - A 4-year term would provide better continuity and enough time to plan and implement programs or deal with issues. A 2-year term with the possibility of reelection provides a compromise when there are changes in ability, interest, or availability such that 4 years is not recommended.
  - Harper/Wornom committee terms will be reassessed in the future.
5. Separating the Program Chair position from the position of President
  - Currently, the President serves 4 years in successive roles: Vice-President/Program Chair-Elect, then Program Chair/President-Elect, then President, and finally Past President. This changes to the President being elected to a 2-year term with the possibility of reelection to a second term. It focuses the Presidential election on the vision, tasks, and skills incumbent to that position.
  - Two- or four-year term improves the ability of the President to exhibit creative and wise leadership that can motivate significant change.
  - Vice-President does not automatically advance to President but is elected to an independent 2-year term. Vice-President has designated responsibilities on the Board, including chairing the Advisory Council. Vice-President could be elected President.
  - Program Chair is elected by the membership on the basis of their proposal for the theme of a future meeting. Interested members are invited to submit program proposals which are then voted on by members. The winner is announced at the Annual Meeting and would then be responsible for the REA program two years later.

- Creates the opportunity for members to select the REA program based on a theme rather than selecting a future president who creates a thematic program.
- Program Chair's term is 2 years, where the first is as Assistant Program Chair to the current Program Chair and the second year is implementing their own program for the Annual Meeting.
- Eliminate the position of Past President to reduce costs, reduce term of service, and increase clarity of Board roles.