

Roles and Responsibilities of Key Conference Positions: A Proposal for Study and Recommendations

Executive Committee
November 1, 2014

Background

Guided by tradition, our Covenant, and the deep trust held among members of our community, Star Island's All Star One conference has long been governed and administered in a way that integrates past experience, new ideas, and the collaborative spirit of its members. In recent years, while honoring the strength of its traditions, the conference has worked to review, clarify and reinforce its structural underpinnings and made changes as necessary.

For example, in 2011, conference leadership elected to, "after years of experience with our current governance structure ... have an intensive study of each of the major parts of our governance."¹ Under the guidance of the Executive Committee (EC), a seven-member ad hoc Governance Committee (GC) met during 2012 and proposed a number of changes to the conference's year-to-year governance structure as expressed through its By Laws. These changes were approved as amended at the conference's fall meeting in 2012. At the 2013 fall meeting, the Governing Council made additional By Law changes, in particular by clarifying the terms of service for its various committees. The Governing Council also reaffirmed its commitment to transitioning the legal form of the conference into a 501(c)(3) organization, a process chiefly implemented by a three-member committee convened by the conference Treasurer.

These actions since 2011 have clarified understandings and expectations about the conference's overriding governance structure – that is, the backdrop against which the All Star One conference takes place each year. They have not, however, pertained to specific administrative aspects of the conference. The key positions associated with annual conference administration – the Chairs, the Registrar, the Housing Coordinator, and the Children's Program Coordinators – are documented to varying degrees and are interpreted generally through conference tradition, Island practice, and personal experiences shared among those who have held these roles in the past. The process has long worked fruitfully and well, thanks to the hard work and good will among the many individuals who have held these jobs. It has further allowed for a healthy dose of "the old and the new," such that wisdom gained from years of engagement in "conference infrastructure" both informs and supports the work of the Chairs, who are entrusted for one year to bring their own programming ideas and creativity to the conference.

It is to be expected that individuals holding the key administrative positions will have questions about their specific roles and responsibilities, including where their own "job description" might end and another begins. These questions are of particular pertinence when it comes to interpreting the conference Admissions Policy in over-subscribed years: When making final admissions decisions, it is fair to ask, "Ultimately, who decides?" Over the years, admissions matters and other aspects of conference administration have usually been resolved informally among the interested individuals. Still, it is reasonable for these questions to be submitted to the EC and/or the Governing Council for clarification, just as governing issues have been addressed in the recent past.

In 2014, the EC has indeed considered a number of questions about the roles and responsibilities of the conference's core administrative team: the Chairs, the Registrar, the Housing Coordinator, and the Children's Program Coordinators. Although the EC attempted to resolve some of these questions on an individual basis, it found that the positions are inherently interdependent, and that it is nearly impossible

¹ See "A Governance Study Initiative," prepared by Jim Prochaska and Paul Jennings for September 2011 All Star Chairs Meeting.

to define the role of one without touching on the role of another. The EC is also mindful of related questions pertaining to the accountability and long-term expectations for each position. Ultimately, the EC agreed that resolution of these questions requires a process of thoughtful review consistent with the processes that took place in 2012 by the Governance Committee and in 2013-14 by the 501(c)(3) committee.

Recommendation

To address questions about the core administrative aspects of annual All Star One conference, the EC recommends the establishment of an ad hoc “Roles and Responsibilities Study Committee.” We recommend charging this committee to do the following:

1. Assess the history and current expectations associated with the four key administrative positions of the conference (the Chairs, the Registrar, the Housing Coordinator, and the Children’s Program Directors);
2. Recommend succinct job descriptions for each position, tailored, to the extent possible, in a way that identifies the extent of their respective authority;
3. Make additional recommendations as it sees fit.

The committee would present its findings and recommendations to the EC in or about August 2015. Incorporating EC feedback, the committee’s final report and recommendations would be made to the Governing Council at its fall meeting in 2015.

Membership on the committee would consist of seven members drawn from the Governing Council. At least two members of the committee would also be members of the EC, one of whom would serve as the committee’s convener. For membership on the committee, the EC will consider confidential recommendations by the Nominating Committee and from the Governing Council at large, submitted no later than December 1, 2014. The proposed membership of the committee will be presented to the Governing Council for electronic approval no later than December 31, 2014.