MSERA Spring Board Meeting
February 28, 2025, and March 19 – 21, 2025

Officers Present: Stefanie Sorbet, Kelly Byrd, George Noflin**, Randy Parker, Ashley Wicker, Celeste Wheat*, Charlotte Parham***, Earlisha Whitfield, Raglena Salmans*, Lisette Manuel, Sarah Salisbury, Jim Rost, Kasey Warren*, Mary Giles, Tony Latiker, Jane Nell Luster, Mindy Waldrop***, Erika Cheek

Committee Chairs Present: Christy Hornsby, Keicia Hawkins, Dustin Whitlock*, Franz Reneau*, Ibrahim Duyar*, Larry Daniel, Laura Beth Norman, Margaret Westmoreland, Stephanie Cheramie*, Tina Allen, Rod Uzat, Rebecca Robichaux-Davis

**Zoom only; **Wednesday only; ***Thursday/Friday only*

Friday, February 28, 2025
Zoom

Stefanie Sorbet called the meeting to order at 1:05 PM

President's Welcome

- Stefanie Sorbet, President, welcomed board members to the first part of the Spring Board Meeting
- Stated that this initial planning meeting will serve as preliminary business before official board meeting in March in New Orleans
- Requested that board members review of the operations manual for roles and responsibilities, as well as any suggested changes
- Introduced Raglena Salmans as Parliamentarian, who provided parliamentary procedures for the meeting:
    - Reports will be given then saving questions to the end
    - Raglena will monitor reports to keep order throughout business meeting

Committee Reports

- Mid-South Educational Research Foundation (Larry Daniel)
    - The MSERF report was given by Larry Daniel
    - An overview of MSERF was provided, including membership and purpose
    - Met at annual meeting in November, elected officers
        - Drafted initial structure of strategic plan for the board
        - Goals include increasing board participation, services to membership, and giving to the foundation
        - Mentioned that Florida has a vacancy and interested parties should contact Larry
- Mentors (Ibrahim Duyar)
    - The Mentors committee report was given by Ibrahim Duyar
    - Co-chairs held planning meeting to discuss activities for committee
    - Full committee met (5-member committee) to discuss two agenda items: Recruitment of mentors and mentees and mentor succession
- Webmaster/Technology (Ashley Wicker)

    - The Webmaster and Technology committee report was given by Ashley Wicker
    - An overview of recent updates made to the website was provided, including new pictures and updated leadership listing
    - Mentioned the need for a technology point-person for the annual meeting in November
- Membership (Stephanie Cheramie)
    - The Membership committee report was given by Stephanie Cheramie
    - Membership recruitment is underway
    - Looking for ideas for membership drives and inquiry follow-through; committee will convene to discuss ideas
- Constitution and Bylaws (Rod Uzat)
    - The Constitution and Bylaws committee report was given by Rod Uzat
    - Board voted to change the name of *The Researcher* to *MSERA Today* at fall board meeting, which will now need to be voted on by general membership.
        - General membership will be notified of name change at least 30 days ahead of annual meeting in November
        - This change will also result in required edits to Article 2, Section 1E: “The President, upon reviews of responses to requests for proposals and recommendations from the Executive Committee of the Board, shall appoint the editor(s) for the *Mid-South Educational Researcher*” to “The President, upon reviews of responses to requests for proposals and recommendations from the Executive Committee of the Board, shall appoint the editor(s) for *MSERA Today*”
- Institutional Sponsorship (Franz Reneau, Deanna Rice - absent)
    - The Institutional Sponsorship committee report was given by Franz Reneau
    - The committee is building a one-stop shop for resources, including communication strategies, to help state directors garner support for MSERA
    - State directors will need to update their contact lists for post-secondary institutions, including deans, associate deans for research, and administrative assistants
    - The committee will provide monthly updates on institutional memberships, disaggregated by state
    - At-large directors are asked to work closely with state directors or, if outside member states, to build a contact list for post-secondary institutions in their respective states
- *The Researcher* (Lisette Manuel, Tina Allen)
    - The Researcher report was given by Lisette Manual and Tina Allen
    - The newest edition went out to the membership Friday, February 28, 2025
    - Call for an editor is live - there is interest in the editor position; therefore a new editor will be named soon
- Past Program Chairs (Dustin Whitlock, Earlisha Whitfield)
    - Past program coordinators, Dustin Whitlock and Earlisha Whitfield, provided a recap of coordinating last year’s annual meeting
    - New program chairs are being communicated with and supported

        - A challenge guide was created for new program chairs to help troubleshoot ideas, challenges, and barriers
- Evaluation Report (Tony Latiker – absent)
    - The Evaluation committee report was given by Stefanie Sorbet on behalf of Tony Latiker
    - An evaluation report was created by Tony and shared with board members ahead of the meeting
        - The report includes a breakdown of who attended, how many people attended, and overall satisfaction
        - Suggestions included needing coffee
        - There were 180 people physically present at the conference, but the evaluation represents a subset of that number

New Business

- Continuation of Spring Board Meeting in New Orleans (Stefanie Sorbet)
    - Stefanie shared that the board will convene on site of the annual meeting March 19-21 for Part 2 of the Spring Board meeting
        - The executive board will meet on Wednesday and finalize the bonding process at Regions bank
        - There is a Wednesday welcome reception in the hotel restaurant
        - Thursday Agenda items include introductions, board orientation, work time for committees, executive director nominations (looking for someone to shadow Randy Parker in his last year - 2026, committee reports, annual meeting items (venue planning, technology, silent auction, etc.)
        - Lunch will be provided and the board dinner will occur nearby Thursday evening
        - Friday Agenda items include reviewing board minutes, RITS updates, new business, etc.
- 2025 Annual Meeting (Keicia Hawkins)
    - Keicia Hawkins provided updates for the 2025 Annual Meeting and Call for Proposals
        - Recently met to discuss annual meeting planning
        - CFP will likely go out April 1 with final submission date of June 30
        - Need volunteers to serve as reviewers (initial reviews to begin around July 14)
            - Timeline is moving up to help avoid major and rapid program changes; RiP reviews will following similar deadlines
            - Acceptance letters to be sent out end of August/first week of September
        - Will provide further updates at the March board meeting.
- Other Business
    - Ashley Wicker reminded board members to review the fall board meeting minutes and send any requested changes by March 13
    - Randy Parker reminded board members that institutional memberships are available, as well as sponsorship opportunities
        - Coffee breaks, tables, receptions, etc.

        ▪ The Institutional Sponsorship committee will provide further updates on sponsorship opportunities as they come available
    o Future Site committee will present options at the board meeting in March, but if members have suggestions or opinions, send ideas to Kasey Warren or Mary Giles

On a motion by Tina Allen and seconded by George Noflin, the meeting was adjourned at 2:49 PM

Wednesday, March 19, 2025
Hilton New Orleans/St., New Orleans, LA

The executive board met on Wednesday, March 19, 2025, to complete the bonding process at Regions Bank, as well as to discuss the executive board committee agenda, including Evaluation of the Executive Director, Randy Parker, the search for a new executive director, the keynote speaker for the Annual Meeting, and new directions for RITS

Thursday, March 20, 2025
Hilton New Orleans/St., New Orleans, LA

Stefanie Sorbet called the meeting to order at 8:48 AM

Welcome and Introduction
- Stefanie Sorbet gave welcoming remarks, gave a recap of the Executive Board meeting, and shared housekeeping information
- All members in attendance introduced themselves
- She highlighted the importance of following parliamentary procedures and tapped Rod Uzat to serve as parliamentarian for the duration of the meeting

Board Member Orientation
- Rebecca Robichaux-Davis provided an orientation to the organization including historical foundations, bylaws and operations manual, leadership structure, publications, and awards
- Engaged members in a reflection on being a part of MSERA
- Rebecca explained the committee collaboration breakout process and goals
- Small group breakouts took place for cross-committee collaboration

Executive Director Report
- Randy Parker provided the executive director report
    o The executive director has ensured that checking account statements have been reconciled, and bonding for account signatories has been renewed and revised
    o There is a continued adherence to agreed-upon procedures to ensure financial transparency and accountability
        ▪ Accounting for spending is ongoing, but an update is expected by May 30
        ▪ The executive committee will review the report and any recommended changes for implementation, potentially starting in November, but certainly by January 1st
    o The 2025 membership database has been updated

- The 2024 McLean recipient has been registered for AERA distinguished presentation
- Executive director has worked closely with officers for supervisory duties (MSERF, web, officer inquiries)
- The Oxford Abstract system has been renewed for 2025
- Need to figure out how to advertise STEM RiP award/recruit for candidates
- Shared efforts to secure spring board meeting and provided annual meeting updates
  - Hotel negotiations, including room rates, meeting rooms, etc.
  - Meeting Registrations: 224 for 2024 Annual Meeting
    - Registrations were mostly from Alabama, Louisiana, Mississippi, and Tennessee
    - Institutional Memberships: 7
  - There has been a downward trend in attendance in certain locations
- Will share updates on RITS in future sessions

Following a short lunch break, the meeting reconvened at 12:30 PM

Committee Reports

- *The Researcher*
  - Lisette Manuel sent out a recent edition looking back at the 2024 annual meeting
  - New editors have been named for *The Researcher* – Mindy Waldrop and Raglena Salmans
  - Submissions for the next issue are due March 21
- Program and Proceedings
  - Keicia Hawkins provided the program and proceedings committee report.
  - Call for Proposals will be open from April 1 to June 30 and reviewers should have access to proposals in early July
    - Goal is to have reviews complete by August 15, and acceptances out by September 1
- Local Arrangements
  - The Local Arrangements committee report was given by Margaret Westmoreland
  - Committee has met twice via Zoom and will meet again in New Orleans in June to continue discussions
  - The local visitors' bureau has been contacted, and they have spoken to the hotel about a local high school jazz band
  - Margaret is creating a resource list for annual meeting attendees.
- Budget Committee
  - The Budget committee report was given by Rebecca Robichaux-Davis
  - The cost of registration is based on $175 and $75 (depending on tier)
  - Rebecca mentions that the beginning balance is $12,500, and the total expected expenses are $49,500
  - 80% of the proposed budget is connected with direct or indirect costs of the annual meeting
    - This includes hotel meeting space, food and beverage, the reception, and the session
  - The budget includes a $1,000 payment to the Hilton in Huntsville (2026 Annual Meeting site) as part of a negotiated contract to spread out a deposit over three years

    - 94% of the budget is predicated on the money coming from registrations (70%) and institutional memberships, sponsorships, and development donations (24%)
        - Sponsorships and institutional memberships will help offset costs
- Graduate Student Advisory
    - The Graduate Student Advisory report was given by Christy Hornsby
    - Advisory group met with Kelly Byrd and plan to update the University welcome letter before April 1st
        - Will be pushing out more information about the STEM award and provide suggested updates to the website
    - The advisory group is brainstorming ways to increase engagement and participation
        - Will be seeking to increase participation from undergraduate, graduate students, K12, and colleagues from other departments
- Future Sites
    - The Future Sites committee report was given by Mary Giles
    - Committee chairs, Mary Giles and Kasey Warren have discussed looking at future sites, considering prices and participation
    - They are considering whether to maintain a consistent rotation or focus on states with higher participation
    - A survey has been created to gather feedback on future site preferences
    - Any changes to rotation will need to be voted on by the Board and updated in the operations manual
    - The board needs to have options to vote on in November, including cost estimates for locations such as Mississippi and Little Rock if they are to be included in the rotation
        - It is recommended to consider how attractive a site will be to potential attendees when choosing a location and the possibility of having local members to coordinate efforts
        - University partnerships were also suggested as cost-saving measures and increasing University presence

Other Business

- Keynote Speaker for Annual Meeting
    - Keicia Hawkins identified Dr. Clementine Singh, an associate professor at Lamar University, as a potential keynote speaker
    - Dr. Singh has a resilience story, being the only surviving member of her family to escape the Rwanda genocide
    - She is passionate about education and collaboration, and her book is currently free on Amazon
- Programs for Annual Meeting
    - Rebecca Robichaux-Davis proposed a discussion of having a certain number of printed programs available at the conference
    - Reasons include new members expecting a program and not everyone wanting to read fine print on a phone screen
        - The last time the program was printed in full color, it cost around $3,500.
        - Suggestions were provided for consideration
            - Providing hard copies to the first 150 attendees or having a limited number available upon request
            - Explore in-kind contributions from institutions to print the programs

        - Give people the option to pay for a physical program as part of the registration cost
  - Advertisement and Sponsorship
    - Transparency is needed regarding advertising if ads are sold, as electronic ads differ from printed ads
    - Discussion included ideas for sponsorship The conference sponsorship on the website lists options for quarter, half, and full-page ads
      - It is recommended that the website needs to be cleaned up to accurately reflect what advertisers are paying for
  - Operations Manual Changes
    - Kelly Byrd requested that any timelines changes needed in the operations manual be submitted to her for voting in the fall
  - Venue Planning
    - Discussion included the silent auction and responsibility of securing door prizes
      - The silent auction will be discontinued for the 2025 Annual Meeting
      - All board members will bring at least one door prize (minimum of $10) for various receptions
    - Technology
      - Ashley Wicker requested additional help for annual meeting
      - Stephanie Cheramie and Mary Giles have volunteered to support technology needs at the annual meeting
      - Randy Parker mentioned that the hotel contract includes an AV company to set up the screen and table for the luncheon
      - However, there needs to be six working projectors at any one time
        - Stefanie Sorbet thinks UCA can contribute at least 3
    - Additional discussion was had on commemorative items for the 2025 annual meeting, wayfinding for the annual meeting (signage around the hotel), and materials provided by the visitors' bureau

Meeting recessed at 2:35 PM until Friday, March 21 at 8:30 AM

Friday, March 21, 2025
Hilton New Orleans/St., New Orleans, LA

Stefanie Sorbet reconvened the meeting at 8:30 AM

Old Business

- Evaluation of Executive Director
  - Stefanie Sorbet shared updates on the evaluation process and how the evaluation was conducted
- Research in the Schools Journal (RITS)
  - Stefanie Sorbet shared that the executive committee met to discuss updates needed for new directions of the journal and leadership of the journal

New Business

- RITS

    - Stefanie Sorbet shared that the executive board will now serve as the editorial board with the addition of 2 editors
    - Stefanie solicited for two new editors and two committee members (2-4 to help secure new editors)
        - Traditionally, this has been a 5-year commitment in the past; however, RITS has not published in quite some time
        - Larry Daniel and Randy Parker agreed to reach out to the current editor
    - There is a need to determine hosting format
        - Open Journal Systems is an option ($480/year)
    - Currently 2-3 manuscripts are ready to go for an issue
        - Discussion included the possible recruitment of distinguished papers
        - Also consider editorial commentary to support issue
    - Larry Daniel brought up the idea of possibly extending editorial roles to beyond MSERA membership which would allow the journal to be considered a nationally refereed publication
        - Option – Editor in Chief with Associate Editors
    - Tina Allen has offered to support PDF compilation
    - Executive committee will likely step in temporarily to support finalizing current issue
- Operations Manual
    - Rod Uzat shared that the Constitution and Bylaws support the governing of the organization
        - Stefanie Sorbet encourages all board members to review roles and responsibilities
    - Membership Voting Needed at Fall Business Meeting
        - Official name change of *The Researcher* to *MSERA Today*
        - Rod will reach out to President in September about any other changes for member review
        - Mindy Waldrop will include language in the fall issue of *The Researcher*
        - Language will need to change regarding Financial Review, which will also needed to be submitted to the membership
- Executive Director search
    - Jane Nell Lester will provide Kelly Byrd with resource packet for the search process
    - An advertisement will go in *The Researcher*, as well as be sent to webmaster to live on website
    - The new executive director will need to be in place by 2026 to shadow Randy Parker in his last year
- Membership Vision
    - Stefanie charged At Large directors with brainstorming ideas for the future of MSERA membership, including answering questions such as what's included for membership? And what do members get?
- Budget Approval and Acceptance
    - The budget was reviewed by board of directors and discussion included ways to save costs and luncheon costs/fees for annual meeting
    - On motion by Sarah Salisbury and second by Kelly Byrd, the board voted unanimously to accept the operating budget for coming year

On a motion by Lisette Manual and seconded by Sarah Salisbury, the meeting was adjourned at 9:49 AM