

## MSERA Spring Board Meeting

February 26 - 27, 2026

Embassy Suites Hotel and Spa | Huntsville, AL

“From Inquiry to Impact: Advancing Educational Research to Transform Learning Environments”

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**Thursday, February 26, 2026**

Location: Orion

**Officers Present:** Kelly Byrd, Keicia Hawkins, Stefanie Sorbet, Ashley Wicker,

**Committee Chairs Present:** Erika Cheek, Larry Daniel, Kim Godwin, Crystal London, Jane Nell Luster, Lisette Manuel, Angela Reed, Franz Reneau, Rebecca Robichaux-Davis, Jim Rost, Sarah Salisbury, Rod Uzat, Mindy Waldrop, Kasey Warren, Earlisha Whitfield

The Board Meeting was called to order by Dr. Kelly Byrd at 9:34 AM.

Welcome and Introduction (Dr. Kelly Byrd)

- Dr. Byrd gave welcoming remarks and shared housekeeping information.
- All members in attendance introduced themselves.

Board Member Orientation and Ethics Training (Dr. Rebecca Robichaux-Davis and Dr. Jane Nell Luster)

- Dr. Robichaux-Davis provided an orientation to the organization including historical foundations, bylaws and operations manual, leadership structure, publications, and awards.
- Board members and the leadership team engaged in a reflection on being a part of MSERA.
- Elected officers and Committee Chairs were provided an orientation to the respective roles in MSERA.

— *Following a short lunch break, the meeting reconvened at 1:15 PM* —

President’s Vision for 2026 (Dr. Kelly Byrd)

- Dr. Byrd highlighted three aspects for her 2026 shared vision:
  - Active leadership | Members should have easier access to leadership opportunities in the organization and it should be a rewarding experience.
  - Elevated benefits | New tools, mentorship networks, and research resources for members of the organization are being explored.
  - Stronger community | Veteran scholars will be reconnected with emerging researchers to shape the future of educational research.

State Director Vacancy

- Due to a resignation of the Kentucky State Director, Dr. Kelly Byrd asked the Board to appoint a new director to fill the vacancy for the remainder of the term.
- Dr. Byrd recommended Dr. Mindy Waldrop as the Kentucky State Director and submitted this recommendation for approval of the board.

- A motion was made by Dr. Kim Godwin to approve the President's appointment of Dr. Waldrop's nomination for Kentucky State Director; the motion was seconded by Dr. Kasey Warren.
- The motion was voted on by the board; Dr. Mindy Waldrop was unanimously approved as the Kentucky State Director and will fulfill the remaining term until State Directors are voted on in November 2026.

### **Committee Reports**

Evaluation Committee (Dr. Mindy Waldrop on behalf of Dr. Tina Allen and Dr. Dustin Whitlock)

- Dr. Waldrop shared that the data collected from the 2025 Annual Meeting were reviewed and summarized, and the information was provided to board members.
- It was noted that evaluation processes should be reviewed and updated to ensure quality data are collected, as well as to consider who has the responsibility to oversee the Annual Meeting evaluation.

Future Sites (Dr. Larry Daniel and Earlisha Whitfield)

- Dr. Daniel shared an update to the committee, including new committee members.
- It was noted that the 2027 Annual Meeting now has a signed contract for Pensacola, FL, at the Hilton Pensacola Beach.
- Ideas discussed for the 2028 Annual Meeting included Arkansas (Little Rock and Fayetteville/Bentonville), Kentucky (Lexington), Tennessee (Nashville or Knoxville).
  - A motion was made by Dr. Jane Nell Luster to charge the previous and current Future Sites chairs with collaboratively bringing proposals as specified by the operations manual for the 2028 and 2029 Annual Meetings to the Fall 2026 Board Meeting; the motion was seconded by Dr. Keicia Hawkins.
  - The motion was opened for discussion.
    - The RFP should include specifications outlined by the Operations Manual.
    - It is recommended that the Executive Director play a larger role in the negotiation of the proposals as the face of the organization
  - The motion was amended by Dr. Kasey Warren that the current committee chairs (2026 Future Sites chairs) will lead the proposed process; the previous committee chairs (2025 Future Sites chairs) will join the Future Sites committee to support efforts. The amended motion was seconded by Dr. Keicia Hawkins.
  - A vote for the amendment was taken. It was unanimously accepted.
  - Discussion continued about the motion.
  - The motion was voted on by the board; The following motion was unanimously accepted by the board:
    - A motion by Jane Nell Luster, amended by Dr. Kasey Warren, that the 2026 Future Sites Committee chairs lead the process of presenting RFPs, with specifications as outlined by the Operations Manual, for the 2028 and 2029 Annual Meetings at the Fall 2026 Board Meeting. The 2025 Future Site chairs will support the 2026 chairs with the process.

Institutional Membership and Sponsorship Committee (Dr. Franz Reneau and Dr. Angela Rand)

- Dr. Reneau shared that the committee has been discussing strategies to approach institutional membership and sponsorships for the 2026 Annual Meeting.

- All State Directors are charged with securing at least 4 institutional memberships, which will be supplemented by securing sponsorships. At-Large Directors will also be asked to support this process. The following process was outlined:
  - State Directors will update state directories by April 18.
  - Committee chairs have created a central hub for State Directors to access information.
  - At-Large Directors will be asked to generate lists of vendors to solicit sponsorships.
  - The committee chairs will host a meeting in April 2026 to kick off outreach activities.

#### Local Arrangements (Dr. Mindy Waldrop and Erika Cheek)

- Dr. Waldrop shared efforts made for welcoming members to the 2026 Annual Meeting in Huntsville, AL.
- The committee has worked with the local visitors bureau, goody bags are being created, and bands are in the process of being considered for the reception.
- Local universities have been contacted to encourage participation.

#### MSERA Mentors (Dr. Franz Reneau on behalf of Dr. Ibrahim Duyar)

- Dr. Reneau shared that the committee met virtually in February, and three main tasks were identified:
  - Mentors and mentees will be recruited.
  - Support and guidance will be provided to mentor-mentee pairs to ensure their sustainability and productivity.
  - There will be two (2) sessions offered at the MSERA's annual meeting in November 2026 in Huntsville, AL.

#### MSERA Today (Dr. Mindy Waldrop)

- Dr. Waldrop shared that the first issue was sent out, and information is now being collected for the second issue of the year.
  - All information to be included in the next issue is due by March 6, 2026.
- The Operations Manual will need to be reviewed and updated to reflect any updated timelines.

#### Program and Proceedings (Dr. Mindy Waldrop and Dr. Miranda Allen)

- Dr. Waldrop shared updates for the 2026 Annual Meeting, to be held at the Embassy Suites in Huntsville, AL.
  - The meeting will be held on two floors, and there will be plenty of signage for wayfinding.
  - The timeline is being moved up to allow for time of start and completion of the call for proposal process; the goal is for CFP to go out Monday, March 2.
    - Proposal submissions will be due May 31, 2026.
    - All board members will serve as reviewers, which will be completed in June 2026.
    - All acceptance decisions will be sent by July 31, 2026.
- A discussion was held about reviewers, specifically the requirements of reviewers and how reviewers operate.

- RiP proposals will be reviewed by a special committee of reviewers approved to review RiP proposals. These reviewers must meet certain qualifications.
- The year requirement for reviewers will be reconsidered.

*RITS* Updates (Dr. Kelly Byrd on behalf of Editors, Dr. Tina Allen and Dr. Bryan McCoy)

- Dr. Byrd shared the following:
  - 10 manuscripts are currently in review.
  - 2 additional manuscripts were received recently, which may be considered for the current issue; however, if time does not allow, they will be considered for the fall issue.
  - The first 2026 issue is scheduled to be released May 15, 2026.

Social Media (Dr. Kasey Warren)

- Dr. Warren shared updates on social media for the organization.
- She encouraged members to interact with social media accounts to generate activity and engagement.

Technology/Webmaster (Dr. Ashley Wicker on behalf of Dr. Jennifer Crissey)

- Dr. Wicker shared the following:
  - The webmaster granted member access for all 304 members on the 2026 member list.
  - The *RITS* webpage was updated as requested by Dr. Tina Allen.
  - She is gradually working on removing site access to the people who are no longer members. They can be added back if they become an active member in the future.
- The webmaster chairs the Technology Committee and will need support at the 2026 annual meeting. All interested should contact Dr. Kelly Byrd or Dr. Jennifer Crissey.

University Student Director and Advisory Committee (Erika Cheek, Dr. Christy Horsby, Dr. Laura Norman)

- Erika shared that work is being done to plan for the 2026 Annual Meeting.
- It was requested that if anyone had nominations for students to be involved in the committee, send nominations to Erika.
- The committee will send the CFP to students to encourage RiP submissions.

MSER Foundation (Dr. Larry Daniel)

- Dr. Daniel shared updates on the MSER Foundation. He reminded the organization of the Foundation's role and purpose to MSERA, as well as how the Foundation supports MSERA.
- The Foundation met in November 2025 at the last annual meeting to accomplish the following:
  - New officers were elected.
  - RiP awards were approved.
  - A renewed interest in developing a strategic planning initiative was established.
- The Foundation currently has a board vacancy for a Florida representative. Any recommendations should be sent to Dr. Daniel.
- Additional items were discussed:
  - The Foundation has an opportunity to do something special for the Huntsville meeting to enhance the meeting experience (approx. \$3,000).

- Ideas include annual meeting support (coffee break, brunch, snacks, etc.) and local impact support (sponsor teacher/student, high need project, school support).
- Any additional suggestions should be sent to Dr. Daniel or Dr. Byrd, and Larry will submit ideas for foundation board consideration.

#### Executive Director Report (Dr. Kelly Byrd on behalf of Dr. Randy Parker)

- Dr. Byrd provided updates of the Executive Director's activities. These activities include:
  - Updated 2026 Membership list
  - Worked closely with officers for supervisory duties (MSERF, web, officer inquiries)
  - SRERA membership and Oxford Abstract system has been renewed for 2026
  - Worked to finalize contracts for 2026 Annual Meeting (Huntsville, AL) and secure contract for 2027 Annual Meeting (Pensacola, FL)
  - Updated 2025 Annual Meeting numbers:
    - 296 meeting registrations
    - 268 meeting attendees
    - Increased institutional membership and sponsorships

#### Additional Items

- Additional discussion included items for the board to consider in the future:
  - Consider how to retain members - is there a way to alert members their membership is about to expire? When do we alert them?
    - Consider sending notifications in December so they can still purchase membership.
  - Consider ongoing institutional support such as local impacts and member engagement, beyond the annual meeting or to be done associated with the annual meeting.

#### Venue Planning (Dr. Kelly Byrd, Dr. Mindy Waldrop, Erika Cheek)

- Dr. Byrd shared updates for the 2026 annual meeting
  - Name Badges | Name badges will be updated this year with a schedule-at-a-glance featured on the back.
  - Goodie Bags/Shirts | It was mentioned that they will consider selling t-shirts prior to the meeting; possibly adding to registration.
  - Technology | There will need to be volunteers to bring projectors; looking into if UAH or the local library has projectors that can be borrowed.
  - Posters and Door Prizes | Local contacts are doing a great job interacting with local businesses; will need a flyer or something to show to businesses.

Dr. Byrd reminded everyone of Friday's schedule and meeting start time.

— The meeting recessed at 4:40 PM until Friday, February 27, 2026 —

**Friday, February 27, 2026**

Location: Orion

**Officers Present:** Kelly Byrd, Keicia Hawkins, Stefanie Sorbet, Ashley Wicker,

**Committee Chairs Present:** Erika Cheek, Larry Daniel, Kim Godwin, Crystal London, Jane Nell Luster, Lisette Manuel, Angela Reed, Franz Reneau, Rebecca Robichaux-Davis, Jim Rost, Sarah Salisbury, Rod Uzat, Mindy Waldrop, Kasey Warren, Earlisha Whitfield

The meeting reconvened at 8:31 AM.

## Old Business

Constitution and Bylaws Committee (Dr. Rod Uzat)

- Dr. Uzat shared that the committee has identified some gaps to be filled in the Operations Manual.
  - A motion was made by Dr. Rod Uzat to accept additions to the Operations Manual regarding processes of document transition and transmission. Wording added will be followed:
    - “Changes to the MSERA website are made by the Webmaster. Beyond routine maintenance, aesthetics and functionality, any changes to website content or MSERA website hosted documents are sent to the Webmaster by the appropriate committee chair and cc’d to the President, Vice-President, Secretary, and Executive Director. The Vice President then confirms said changes as communicated by email are approved. Following the Vice President’s confirmation, the Webmaster will then collaborate as need be with committee chairs to ensure clarity and accuracy of any changes. In the interests of effective, timely, transparent communication to members, and in alignment with the process for changes outlined above, the following individuals are responsible for communicating with the Webmaster regarding any changes that have been duly approved by MSERA:  
Constitution and Bylaws – Constitution and Bylaws Chair  
Operations Manual – Vice President/President Elect  
Annual Board Meetings and Business Meetings –Secretary
  - The motion was voted on by the board; The motion was unanimously approved by the board.
  - Additionally, Dr. Uzat shared that a discussion will be had to iron out Future Sites responsibility and procedure language.

2026 Operating Budget (Dr. Rebecca Robichaux-Davis on behalf of Dr. Dustin Hebert)

- Dr. Robichaux-Davis shared that the 2026 budget was compiled by the Executive Director.
- The budget was reviewed by the board of directors and leadership team.
  - Sarah Salisbury moved to accept the 2026 budget as proposed
  - A vote was taken; the board voted unanimously to accept the 2026 budget for the coming year.
- Additionally, it was proposed that instead of using a Word document, the budget committee chair would transition to using a spreadsheet to organize budget information. This would allow for comparison of budgetary items across multiple years and efficiency with calculations.
- It is also proposed that the budget approval cycle be reviewed to identify a way to approve a budget in a timely fashion, as well as the language associated with the process and procedures with the budget approval process.

- Dr. Kasey Warren moved to approve proposing a 2027 budget in fall 2026; Dr. Jim Rost seconded the motion.
- A vote was taken; the board voted unanimously to have the 2027 budget proposed in fall of 2026.

#### Meeting Proposal Types (Dr. Mindy Waldrop)

- Dr. Waldrop shared that we have been receiving more proposals outside the scope of traditional presentations.
- A discussion was had regarding proposal submissions and how the organization can navigate this in the future. Ideas included:
  - Identifying research tracks (e.g., K-12, Higher Ed, Health Ed, Science Ed, ID).
  - Expanding outreach for membership and sponsorship opportunities.

#### Evaluation of Executive Director (Dr. Stefanie Sorbet)

- Dr. Stefanie Sorbet shared that the Executive Director's evaluation process began in November 2025. Seven board members participated in the evaluation process. The results of the evaluation were shared for board consideration.
- There was also discussion regarding the possibility of revisiting items on the Executive Director's evaluation rubric. Items may no longer need to be reviewed, and other items may be added.

### **New Business**

#### Ad Hoc Committees

- Membership Benefits/Member Divisions (Dr. Kelly Byrd)
  - Dr. Kelly Byrd is creating an ad hoc committee to work on details regarding membership benefits for the future of the organization.
  - The ad hoc committee will be charged with identifying ways to increase membership benefits for new members, member engagement, member retention, etc. Other ideas include:
    - Revisiting More with MSERA (recorded videos)
    - Webinars for open-access
    - Member directory/community engagement (via website)
    - Inviting presenters to share their presentations from the annual meeting again
    - Building membership divisions
  - Dr. Angela Rand and Dr. Kim Godwin will serve as co-chairs of the committee; Dr. Kim Godwin, Dr. Larry Daniel, and Dr. Keicia Hawkins have agreed to serve as members of the committee.
- Annual Meeting Planning (Dr. Kelly Byrd)
  - Dr. Byrd shared that she would like to see the organization explore how other organizations conduct their annual meetings.
  - The ad hoc committee will be charged with exploring possible changes with how MSERA conducts the annual meeting, including:
    - Format
    - Rotation, Locations
    - Times (Start v. Finish)
  - There was discussion regarding how to handle future decisions of rotation so the organization can maintain planning structure.

- It was recommended that the organization conduct a member needs assessment (could be combined with organization evaluation).
- It was decided that no ad hoc committee would be formed but the charge would be absorbed by the evaluation committee as a priority.
  - Dr. Jane Nell Luster and Dr. Lisette Manuel have agreed to serve as committee members.

#### Keynote Speaker Alternative (Dr. Kelly Byrd)

- Dr. Kelly Byrd discussed the opportunity to revisit the keynote luncheon (who serves as speaker, purpose of keynote, etc.). Some ideas included:
  - Having paper winners from previous meetings speak.
  - Creating roundtable discussions that are topic/division driven.
  - Creating opportunities for networking and fellowship.
- There was discussion regarding the purpose of a keynote luncheon, such as energizing the organization with a specific charge or purpose. It may be a good opportunity to leverage local participation (local school, university, Huntsville Space and Science Education Division, etc.), which can also open up sponsorship opportunities.
  - Discussion will need to happen regarding the cost of luncheon and ideas to support (future consideration).
    - Dr. Jane Nell Luster has agreed to gather some data for the purpose of making informed decisions.
    - It was discussed that the luncheon and receptions are a valuable part of the annual meeting experience so if there is a way to look into the contracts for the purposes of annual meeting planning and informed decision-making, the organization should do so. It was also noted, in recent years, a charge has been collected from those indicating attendance at the luncheon to provide a more accurate count for cost purposes.

#### Small Group Planning

- Board members and the leadership team dispersed for small group planning.

Dr. Kelly Byrd wrapped up the meeting with final reminders, and entertained a motion to adjourn the meeting. [Dr. Jim Rost moved, which was seconded by Dr. Kasey Warren.](#)

The Board Meeting was adjourned by 11:35 AM.