

Response of the ASC Executive Board to the Report of the Ad Hoc Committee on
Climate at the American Society of Criminology Meetings
May 25, 2022

Background

In April 2022, the ASC Executive Board received the report of the Ad Hoc Committee on Climate at American Society of Criminology meetings. The charge to the Ad Hoc Committee can be found on page one of their report (https://asc41.com/wp-content/uploads/Meeting_Climate_Committee_report.pdf). The Ad Hoc Committee was co-chaired by Jennifer Cobina-Dungy, Karen Heimer, and Vanessa Panfil, and committee members included Zach Rowan, Jeremy Staff, and María Vélez, along with ASC Executive Board members OJ Mitchell, Anthony Peguero, and Emily Wright, and two student members (in 2020), Victoria Kurdyla and Sadé Lindsay. An advisory committee to the Ad Hoc Committee included Rod Brunson, Claire Renzetti, and Nancy Rodriguez. The ASC Executive Board wishes to express its thanks to the Ad Hoc Committee for their time, work, and consideration of these important issues.

Receipt of the Ad Hoc Committee report in advance of the Executive Board spring 2022 meeting made it possible for the Executive Board to discuss the report at length in person during their Saturday, April 30th meeting. Not all members of the Executive Board could attend the spring 2022 meeting in person, however those that could not attend participated in the meeting via Zoom. All members of the Executive Board were present for these discussions (Lisa Broidy, Rod Brunson, Chris Eskridge, Bonnie Fisher, Venessa Garcia, Elizabeth Groff, Kareem Jordan, Janet Lauritsen, Ramiro Martinez, Shadd Maruna, Jean McGloin, Ojmarrh Mitchell, Melissa Morabito, Daniel Nagin, Anthony Peguero, and Emily Wright).

Initial Responses

Given the breadth of the report and the number of specific action items, the Executive Board decided to focus its initial response on the five overarching recommendations. This strategy allowed the Executive Board to achieve agreement on how to begin the process of implementing first-stage actions, and to assess where additional information is needed before specific action items listed in the report can be fully considered. The Executive Board agrees with the Ad Hoc Committee's assessment that some of the recommendations can be implemented immediately and prior to the 2022 ASC Annual Meeting, while others will take more time,

information, and assessment before decisions can be made. After the ASC begins implementing first-stage actions, it will then revisit the more specific action items in the report after gathering any necessary information for fully-informed decision-making.

Recommendation #1

“Hire a DEI specialist to help ASC meet the current expectations of professional organizations, including the following: (a) Addressing issues of diversity, inclusion, and harassment and informing the development of policies and programs; (b) Providing confidential discussion and guidance at annual meetings regarding options for addressing instances of harassment and unwanted or unwelcoming behavior; (c) Creating a statement focused specifically on diversity and inclusion that is easily accessible directly from the ASC homepage, comparable to those seen on the homepages of other professional organizations of social scientists; (d) Guiding the ASC in the development of mechanisms proven to increase participation of historically excluded racial/ethnic minority groups; (e) Developing an anti-harassment policy and the mechanism for enforcing it that is easily accessible directly from the ASC homepage.”

The Executive Board unanimously supported the hiring of a DEI specialist to help ASC meet the current expectations of professional organizations. This person will be hired on a contractual consulting basis as soon as possible, and will work with ASC staff and the Executive Board to further inform and assist with the issues noted in this recommendation. The Executive Board will assist in the vetting of possible candidates for the DEI specialist’s work. The Executive Board anticipates that this work will take place in the summer and fall of 2022, and be completed in time for the November 2022 Annual Meeting. The new Deputy Director in the ASC office, Sheena Hensley, has several years of experience with DEI initiatives in the business world, and she will assist the Executive Board and work with the contracted DEI specialist on these issues. The Executive Board anticipates ongoing meetings over time with the DEI specialist to discuss progress and necessary adjustments to implementation strategies.

Recommendation #2

“Develop and institute an anti-harassment policy – encompassing sexual, gender, and racial harassment – and set of practices whereby conference

attendees can report sexual and other forms of harassment to an ombudsperson or DEI specialist at the annual meeting. This policy and set of practices should include a mechanism for investigation and sanctions (especially for repeated offenses), such as barring harassers from participating in the conference, holding membership, receiving awards, etc. (a) Ensure these procedures are easily accessible via the ASC website, the conference app, the conference program, and on signage at the meeting. The policy should include clear information on how to report violations; (b) Encourage bystander intervention and reporting as an ethical obligation of membership; (c) Train Division chairs on the new processes; and (d) Offer a pre-conference harassment training workshop for attendees; this could be offered by the DEI specialist.”

The Executive Board unanimously supported the development of an anti-harassment policy and set of practices allowing ASC conference attendees to report harassment to an ombudsperson or DEI specialist. It also supported making this information easily accessible through the mechanisms noted in the recommendation and encouraging bystander intervention when witnessing harassment. The Executive Board generally agreed that a harassment training workshop would have more participants if it were offered as a regular meeting session that is open to all (including Division Chairs, though it would be up to Divisions to encourage their Chairs to attend such sessions). The Executive Board discussed, but did not reach agreement concerning potential investigative processes or sanctions for violations of an anti-harassment policy. As noted in the Ad Hoc report (see pages 12-14), professional social science organizations vary considerably in this regard, and more study of these other organizational practices is needed before making a decision regarding investigations and sanctions.

Recommendation #3

“Institutionalize opportunities to increase participation and access to the meetings from underrepresented groups through ASC sponsored activities, like formal mentorship of graduate students, early career scholar, and underrepresented scholars through travel grants and waivers. Certain grants and waivers could also be available to all participants. (a) Create additional opportunities where students can apply for travel stipends and reduced-cost or free conference registrations; (b) Encourage Divisions to offer competitive travel grants to international students and scholars; ASC could also provide several competitive travel grants of this nature; (c) Investigate hybrid presentation options for international scholars and students to

present their work and participate in the conference if they cannot travel to the U.S.; (d) Consider increasing funding to be able to offer more fellowships through the Ruth D. Peterson Fellowship for Racial and Ethnic Diversity and support more mentees through the associated mentoring program; (e) Encourage Divisions to implement formal mentoring programs based on the template of already-existing successful mentorship programs...”

The Executive Board agrees with the goal of increasing participation and access to meetings for underrepresented groups, however a complete analysis of the financial implications of recommendations 3a, 3b, and 3d must be conducted before decisions can be made. Any increases in grants and fellowships will require increases in members' dues or the identification of other funding sources. Hybrid presentation options (3c) are not easily accomplished because of the routinely exorbitant costs of hotel-provided Wi-Fi availability in meeting rooms. However, technology permitting, panel chairs are welcome to individually organize remote participation for panelists who are unable to attend by using their own laptops in meeting rooms. If/when the costs for hotel provided Wi-Fi are reduced, this option is likely to become more feasible and technologically reliable. The ASC is committed to in-person conferences when safe to do so, but will monitor hotel Wi-Fi availability and costs for the feasibility of this option.

Recommendation #4

“Set a long-term commitment to racial and ethnic diversity (and acknowledgement of how the discipline has been complicit in white supremacy) with a series of plenaries, panels, training sessions, etc. to combat issues of racism and white supremacy: (a) Provide training, perhaps as a pre-meeting workshop, about anti-racism and anti-racist scholarship; (b) Continue attempts to diversify the ASC Executive Board and other positions of influence in the organization as well as diversifying the content of the program and the pool of nominees and recipients of major awards; (c) Make transparent the processes by which people are nominated to run for office and invited to serve on standing and ad hoc committees. Consider allowing those serving the ASC to self-nominate for committees and the voting slate. At present, Divisions can suggest committee members to the President-elect, but there appears to be no mechanism for members outside of Divisions to volunteer for ASC Committees.”

Following discussions of a few potential ideas, President-Elect Shadd Maruna will be working to develop and highlight special sessions surrounding issues of racism and criminological contributions to institutionally racist criminal justice policy for

the 2023 annual meeting. These discussions of racial and social justice and reparation will fit perfectly with the theme for 2023 meeting, "Seeking Justice: Reckoning with our Past, Re-Imagining a Future," as announced at the November 2021 meeting.

The Executive Board discussed the diversity of the current membership of the ASC, possible plenaries and sessions about anti-racism and anti-racist scholarship, ways to make it clearer to the membership how committee members are identified and selected, how nominations for elected offices are made, and ways in which to diversify the pool of nominees and recipients of major awards. To clarify any confusion or questions that members may have about these issues, the ASC will develop and post a "Frequently asked questions" section for the appropriate sections of the website that can easily be located for persons interested in serving on committees, nominating themselves or others for awards, and related issues.

In brief, requests to serve on the ASC Program Committee, Standing Committees, and Award Committees come from the President-Elect, and President-Elects are always grateful to hear from volunteers. Although Divisions are contacted directly for a list of volunteers, the ASC is exploring ways to make information about volunteering to serve more readily available to the membership. There are parameters that the President-Elect must satisfy for each Award and Standing Committee. For example, committee chairpersons must have recently served on that same committee, and Award committees require some of the members to be prior recipients. There are also conditions regarding length of member terms that vary according to committee. These composition rules will be made more accessible to ASC members on the website.

The ASC Nominations Committee works to find persons willing to be on the ballot for President, Vice-President, and Executive Board members. Throughout their deliberations, diversity is expected to be taken seriously. Each year, a call for nominations appears in *The Criminologist* in which persons can nominate themselves or others (see page 11 of the most recent issue: <https://asc41.com/wp-content/uploads/ASC-Criminologist-2022-05.pdf>). A pool of candidates for each elected position is developed that includes persons submitting through this open call, and each nomination is considered and ranked by the committee. Oftentimes, however, persons from underrepresented groups may be the Nominations Committee's first choice candidates, but those persons may decline to run for office for a variety of reasons at that time. When this occurs, the next person in the ranking is contacted until the necessary number of candidates is achieved for the ballot. The details about this process will be made available on the ASC website so

that members who do not read *The Criminologist* can readily find this information elsewhere.

The process for nominating persons (or for self-nominating) for ASC awards are provided several times per year in *The Criminologist*. (See page 19 for a recent example: https://asc41.com/wp-content/uploads/ASC_Criminologist_2022_01.pdf). The details about this process will also be made available on the ASC website, and on ASC social media so that persons who do not read *The Criminologist* can readily find this information. In addition, the “Frequently asked questions” section of the website will be used to further inform how to nominate oneself or others for an award.

Recommendation #5

“Improve the physical accessibility and social components of ASC meetings and sponsored events: (a) Provide ASL interpreters, closed captioning, and microphones; (b) All offsite functions should be held at locations that are ADA compliant; (c) Designate a quiet room, a room with seating intended for conversations, and all-gender restrooms at every ASC conference; (d) Hire a consultant with expertise in accessibility to attend the ASC 2022 meeting to evaluate accessibility and make a list of other areas for improvement; (e) Provide more options for socialization and networking that are alcohol-free.”

The Executive Board agrees with the goal of ensuring that all meeting locations are ADA compliant, and discussed ways in which the need for ASL interpreters and closed captioning can be met. The ASC will continue to consider how best to meet these needs. It will also request that the hotel provide access to all-gender restrooms, and rooms with seating intended for conversation outside of hotel bars. The locations of these restrooms and conversation rooms will be made readily available through the program and program app.

The only ASC events that involve alcohol are the Poster Sessions. The availability of alcohol at the Poster Sessions was originally proposed to increase the number of meeting participants attending the Poster Sessions. On the basis of this recommendation from the Ad Hoc Committee, the Executive Board has decided that the 2022 Poster Sessions will not include alcohol, but instead offer other drinks and food. Other events (such as Division events or Alumni events organized by individual schools or departments) occurring during the meeting are not under the control or supervision of the ASC. Offsite events held by ASC members are also not under the control or supervision of the ASC.

Final Comments

The Board would like to reiterate our sincere thanks for the hard work involved in producing this report. As the Executive Board is fully committed to the principles of diversity, equality and inclusion, we very much welcome thoughtful recommendations. The report has already instigated an important conversation about the social climate of ASC meetings among the Board membership and we hope it will do the same across the wider membership of the ASC.