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TO: Executive Board, American Society of Criminology

FROM: Claire M. Renzetti, Chair, Long-Range Planning Committee, on behalf of the Committee: Shawn Bushway, Sheena Case, Bonnie Fisher, Valerie Jenness, and Min Xie

DATE: April 15, 2025

RE: LRPC Mid-year Report [Approved by the LRPC April 11, 2025 by vote: 5-1-0]

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In 2017, the ASC Board asked the Executive Director (ED) to submit a plan for the Executive Director Transition in expectation of his retirement. The current ED submitted a plan that was approved by the ASC Long-Range Planning Committee (LRPC) and the ASC Executive Board in 2018. That plan stated that the ED would retire in January 2026 after an (incredible) 42 years of service in the ED role. That plan was not implemented, however. In August 2024, the Executive Board was in unanimous agreement that the “Board should install a new Long-Range Planning Committee to begin the long-range planning anew” (letter dated August 6, 2024). The January 2026 retirement date for the current ED’s retirement is fast approaching and, of course, we not only wish to respect the retirement date originally specified by the current ED but also make the transition to a new ED as successful as possible.

The newly reconstituted LRPC was charged with:

- 1) Proposing an ED transition plan along with a financial plan associated with that transition;
- 2) Examining the formal structure of ASC to enumerate the core offices (elective and administrative and to delineate their functions; and
- 3) Providing guidance on the development of a vision for ASC’s future that attends to the needs and expectations of the membership, including identifying priorities in strategic initiatives, communications, and branding.

The Committee began meeting in December 2024 and met once a month since then. We took the first part of our charge — to develop a transition plan for the ED position — as our top priority.

To address this issue, we reviewed numerous ASC documents (e.g., the constitution and by-laws, reports of previous LRPCs, financial statements, roles and responsibilities of the ED and EO staff) as well as documents and websites of professional organizations we thought were most comparable to ASC and with which we were most familiar (see Appendix A). Several members of the committee also talked to colleagues in other organizations, including EDs, Administrative Officers, and Meeting Managers, and to two consultants who specialize in ED transitions

The current ED was invited to our March meeting to share his thoughts about the ED role and the transition process, including the timeline. During this meeting, the ED outlined the serious challenges that face ASC in the current political and economic climate. He also emphasized the complexity involved in doing the work of the ASC ED. In light of these challenges, the current ED expressed his willingness to delay his retirement and continue as the ED for the foreseeable future.

We agree with the ED that there are serious long-term challenges facing the ASC. Indeed, we think many non-profit professional organizations like the ASC face similar challenges related to the changing political and economic environment in which they exist, operate, and evolve. We think this reality makes a timely, smooth, and successful ED transition all the more important. Our goal — the goal of the Board, the ED and EO staff, and all ASC members — is to ensure that ASC not only survives these challenges but thrives as we move forward in uncertain times defined by changes in the external environment in which we operate. In that spirit, we bring the following recommendations to the Board:

*First*, we recommend that the Board honor the current ED's retirement date of January 1, 2026, as specified in the previous transition plan and as originally selected by the current ED. We want to emphasize that this recommendation is in no way intended to disparage the current ED's performance in the role. The current ED has led the organization for more than four decades during which time the organization has weathered various crises and has maintained strong financial health. He has earned the right to retire as he had planned.

We can think of no greater tribute to the current ED's work than taking action now to provide ASC with the leadership it needs to meet the new challenges ahead. As we move in this direction, it is also appropriate to contemplate other ways to honor the leadership and legacy of the current ED. Therefore, our *second* recommendation is for the organization to publicly express appreciation of the ED's service by hosting a retirement celebration at the 2025 annual meeting in November and bestowing the title "Executive Director Emeritus" on him.

Everyone agrees that we are entering a particularly difficult period of financial and political challenges. These challenges will undoubtedly require us to change how we operate in fundamental ways. The LPRC believes that the plan we propose in this report will allow ASC to implement the most up-to-date best practices for non-profit professional organization management. The Board's fiduciary duties as both ASC's governing body and as individual Board members are legally defined not only in terms of financial matters and oversight but also require Board members to ensure that the organization is adhering to its mission and following the law (duty of obedience) and to make informed and carefully considered decisions that they believe to be in the best interests of the organization (duty of care), even if those decisions are counter to their own interests or the interests of subgroups of the organization (duty of loyalty). We believe that the recommendations in this report are in keeping with these fiduciary duties and will help ensure the future growth and health of ASC.

*Third*, we recommend that the Board hire a consultant with experience in ED transitions in non-profit professional organizations. The consultant can guide the transition process and ensure that it proceeds smoothly.

*Fourth*, we recommend that the Board authorize hiring an *interim* ED, who would serve for at least one year, but whose tenure could be extended if deemed necessary. Specialists in leadership transitions in non-profit professional organizations identify the use of an interim ED as a best practice for organizations undergoing a leadership transition, particularly if the previous ED served for a long period of time. As one firm explains:

An Interim Executive Director is a competent and impartial leader who can guide organizations through a period of change within a specific timeframe. They provide stability and consistency while inspiring the board, staff, and stakeholders to adapt strategically during a time of uncertainty.

An interim leader can help organizations navigate through a potentially detrimental period by managing change and uncertainty, maintaining daily operations, and assisting the board and staff in laying the groundwork for success while a deliberate search for a new Executive Director is conducted. ([Support Center, n.d.](#))

Hiring an interim ED who is not interested in the job as a permanent appointment will give ASC time to (re)define the position so that the roles and responsibilities of the ED reflect the organization's vision for its future (see our sixth recommendation below). An interim ED can also provide those most involved in the transition with a more objective perspective on ASC's structure, organization, and operations as well as envisioning our future. Leadership transition specialists emphasize that this "outsider" perspective is especially important in organizations with a long history and a long-standing ED. The interim ED should be someone with demonstrated leadership experience in organizations like ASC, but who will *not* be a candidate for the position. This individual brings a fresh viewpoint and is then able to make suggestions about needed changes that those deeply involved in the organization for a long time may overlook ([The Bridgespan Group, Inc., 2009](#)). And they can do so without an apparent conflict of interest. For example, Nancy Kidd, former ED for

the American Sociological Association and the National Communications Association, now offers these services as an interim ED for organizations like ours (see [Nancy Kidd Consulting, LLC](#)).

*Fifth*, we recommend that the Board appoint an Executive Director Search Committee. The consultant will advise the Board on the timing of the committee appointment and the charge to the committee, but we envision the committee being charged with working collaboratively with the interim ED, the Board, and the consultant to (re)define the roles and responsibilities of the ED and identify the qualifications and skills needed to successfully fulfill these roles and responsibilities as well as the compensation range associated with this paid position. The committee will develop the position announcement, advertise the call for applications widely to ensure the greatest diversity in the applicant pool, evaluate applications and identify candidates for preliminary interviews, conduct preliminary interviews with the short-listed candidates, and provide the Board with a list of recommended finalists. The Board, search committee, interim ED, and consultant will then decide on and implement the final steps of the hiring process. The Board, of course, ultimately makes the final decision on the next permanent ED.

For the Board and the search committee to identify the skills and qualifications required for a successful ED, they need an accurate assessment of the membership's views on ASC's future. Therefore, our *sixth* recommendation is for the Board to appoint an ad-hoc committee to develop and administer a survey of the ASC membership. The survey will be designed to measure what the membership sees as ASC's strengths as well as the areas that need attention to successfully meet the challenges the organization faces moving forward. Most importantly, the survey should assess the *direction* and *focus* members would like to see ASC take over the next ten years. The survey should also collect data on members' engagement with the organization (e.g., years as a member, participation in annual meetings, service to the organization, ways they would be incentivized to be more involved, etc.). We also recommend that the survey be sent to individuals who have not renewed their membership over the past five years to determine their reasons for withdrawing from the organization and what might motivate them to renew their ASC membership. Those who receive the survey could also be encouraged to share it with colleagues whom they know are not/have not been ASC members so their feedback may be used to identify ways to grow membership. The Society for the Study of Social Problems (SSSP) recently conducted such a survey and thanked those who responded for playing an important role in planning for the future ([SSSP Member Survey Thank You](#)). The ad-hoc committee working on behalf of ASC could request SSSP's survey and use it as a model for the ASC survey.

The LRPC will continue to meet and work with the consultant to develop a financial plan for the transition that we have proposed should the Board accept our recommendations. This plan will include the cost of hiring an interim ED. However, the financial plan for hiring the new ED will be difficult to estimate until the Board and search committee in collaboration with the transition consultant and the interim ED determine the specific parameters of the position (e.g., full-time vs. part-time) and the desired skills and qualifications of the ED (e.g., academic background vs. professional organization

background, years of experience). In addition, we are convinced that our charge to examine the formal structure of ASC and enumerate the functions of staff positions should also be deferred until the roles and responsibilities of the ED position have been fully specified, which should be done in collaboration with the consultant and the interim ED. Indeed, doing so should be one of the important goals to be accomplished by the interim ED in collaboration with the President and the Board. Ultimately, the new ED, once hired, should evaluate the structure and operations of the Executive Office (EO) and make recommendations to the Board regarding the (re)structuring of the ED's role and the roles of EO staff to optimize the organization's ability to meet its goals and thrive into the future.

If the Board approves the LRPC's recommendations, we will develop a timeline for implementation. At this point, however, we *suggest* the following timeline, which we recognize may change based on the advice of the transition consultant:

April 2025: ASC Executive Board approval of the transition plan recommendations delineated in this report.

May 2025: LRPC provides the Executive Board with our recommendation of a transition consultant to assist with further transition planning and implementation, including identifying and hiring an interim ED. Board approval of the LRPC's recommendation of a consultant and consultant hired. We wish to emphasize that the LRPC unanimously agrees that hiring a transition consultant is critically important and should be the first step in the transition process.

June-August 2025: LRPC, in collaboration with the consultant, develops a budget for the transition to an interim ED, including the interim ED's compensation package and presents it to the Board for review and approval.

August-November 2025: Recruitment of and interviews with candidates for the interim ED position.

November 2025: Celebration of the leadership and service of the retiring ED at the annual meeting. LRPC makes its recommendation to the Board for hiring the interim ED. Executive Board approval of the interim ED recommendation.

November 2025-January 2026: Interim ED meets with the current ED as well as the Board, the LRPC, and the consultant in preparation for assuming the role.

January 2026: Interim ED begins work. (The retired ED will be available to answer questions and provide advice to the interim, as needed.)

January-March 2026: Ad-hoc committee develops membership survey.

March 2026: Survey is distributed to the membership as well as individuals who have not renewed their membership in the past five years. Board appoints a search committee for

hiring the permanent ED and approves hiring a search firm to assist with developing the position description, recruiting applicants, and scheduling interviews.

April 2026: Survey results are analyzed and shared with the Executive Board, the search committee, the search firm, and the consultant to help shape interview questions and other aspects of the search.

April-July 2026: Search for the permanent ED is underway.

August 2026: The search committee sends their recommendation for the new, permanent ED to the Board for discussion and approval. Board offers the position to the successful candidate.

January 1, 2027: New, permanent ED begins work.

Again, we recognize it may be necessary to revise the timeline. We will look to the transition consultant for guidance on this matter.

In summary, everyone agrees that ASC is entering a particularly difficult period of financial and political challenges. These challenges will undoubtedly require us to change how our organization operates in fundamental ways. The majority of LRPC members believe that the plan we propose in this report will allow ASC to implement the most up-to-date best practices for non-profit professional organization management. The Board's fiduciary duties as both ASC's governing body and as individual Board members are legally defined not only in terms of financial matters and oversight but also require Board members to ensure that the organization is adhering to its mission and following the law (duty of obedience) and to make informed and carefully considered decisions that they believe to be in the best interests of the organization (duty of care), even if those decisions are counter to their own interests or the interests of subgroups of the organization (duty of loyalty). We believe that the recommendations in this report are in keeping with these fiduciary duties and will help ensure the future growth and health of ASC.

## Appendix A

### How Does ASC Compare with Organizations with Similar Membership and Other Relevant Factors

In our meeting with the ED on March 7, 2024, he emphasized the complexity of ASC and the many tasks he and the EO staff must complete throughout the year and especially leading up to and during the annual meeting. Some members of the LRPC spoke with ED's and staff at organizations we feel are fairly comparable to ASC and also reviewed the organizations' websites to get a sense of their structure and functioning. This is not intended as a one-for-one comparison but rather a broad overview of some basic indicators that we were able to gather from our brief conversations and website perusals.

#### [American Society of Criminology](#)

30 committees, 21 divisions, 2 major journals (*Criminology*, *Crimology and Public Policy*) and the newsletter (other journals are division journals)

Annual meeting: ~1,250 sessions and events, ~4,000 attendees from ~50 countries)

#### [American Sociological Association](#)

53 sections (i.e., divisions; the largest have 700-900+ members; the smallest, Biology & Society, has 67 members; most have memberships of 200-450)

8 communities (these are affinity groups of members within the organization: e.g., Community College Faculty, First-generation and Working-class Sociologists, Sociologists Teaching in Carceral Settings)

13 journals

Governance: Executive Council (elected board); Executive Committee (President, President-elect, Immediate Past-President, Secretary-Treasurer, a Council member at large elected by the Executive Council, & the ED, who is a non-voting member); 9 standing committees

Annual meeting: ~600 programmatic sessions (ASA does *not* accept all papers/abstracts submitted for presentation at the annual meeting): 3,000 research papers by ~4,500 presenters, 5,000+ attendees (ASA's annual meeting is held in the same city as SSSP's annual meeting and overlaps with SSSP's annual meeting on 2 days)

#### [Academy of Criminal Justice Sciences](#)

13 sections (i.e., divisions)

17 standing committees & 4 ad-hoc committees

3 journals (*Justice Quarterly*, *Journal of Criminal Justice Education*, *Justice Evaluation Journal*) plus a newsletter

Annual Meeting: There is an annual meeting but details about attendance and number of sessions were not found

ACJS has a national office; the address is a PO box in Greenbelt, MD. John Worrall is the ED; he is a FT faculty member at UT Dallas. The ED position is part-time. ACJS staff are an association manager and an association coordinator.

### [Society for the Study of Social Problems](#)

20 divisions (a couple of these recently combined, so until 2025, there were 22 or 23 divisions)

4 elected standing committees & 23 committees appointed by the Board; 6 ad-hoc committees

1 journal (*Social Problems*) and 1 edited publication (*Agenda for Social Justice*, an edited volume published by Policy Press and edited by a committee of SSSP members, one of whom also serves on the Society's Editorial and Publications Committee); all divisions have a newsletter by these are managed by members of each division, although they are emailed to division members through the EO

Governance: an elected Board; Elroi Windsor is the ED; they are a faculty member at the University of West Georgia and the ED position is part-time. (It is worth noting that Windsor recently transitioned into the ED position. There was no "training period" during which Windsor "shadowed" or shared responsibilities with the ED they were replacing. The day the former ED stepped down was the day Windsor began in the role.) The Executive Office is at the University of Tennessee, Knoxville. The Administrative Officer, Michele Koontz, is not a faculty member and her position is full-time. The EO staff are: an assistant to the AO, an IT specialist, and a graduate student assistant and webmaster. All of these positions (ED, AD, EO staff) have employment contracts; each individual serves at the will of the Board and each receives an annual performance review.

Annual Meeting: 537 attendees in 2024, 112 sessions (436 presentations); (SSSP's annual meeting is held in the same city as ASA's annual meeting with 2 days overlap) It is worth noting that SSSP has a separate paid, contractual position of Meeting Manager. Michele Koontz is the meeting manager but her contract and performance evaluation for this role are completely separate from her AO position.

### [Law & Society Association](#)

LSA does not have divisions or sections, but it does have Collaborative Research Networks. According to their website, "Collaborative Research Networks (CRNs) are a vehicle for scholars with common interests to connect with each other, share their work, and pursue



sociological research in common as part of the Law and Society Association. CRNs organize session for the LSA Annual Meetings and develop cross-disciplinary and cross-national research projects. The subject matter of a CRN can be broad in scope or narrowly focused on a particular subject area or methodology. All research networks are governed by the CRN Coordinating Committee, which reviews new applications and renews existing CRNs” ([LSA CRNs](#)).

8 standing committees; 4 ad-hoc committees

1 journal (*Law & Society Review*)

8 standing committees + 4 annual meeting committees (program, early career workshops, grad student workshops, local arrangements) + 4 prize committees + 4 ad-hoc committees (N = 22)

Governance: President (2-year term), President-elect (2-year term), Treasurer (3-year term), Secretary (2-year term); the Executive Officer (5-year term, which is renewable); the journal editor is also an officer. The Board is made up of 8 elected members who serve 3-year terms. The year their term begins is referred to as their “class year.” The Executive Committee includes all officers + a class rep from each class year of the Board of Trustees. The current Executive Officer is Steve Boutcher, Research Associate Professor at University of Massachusetts, Amherst. The Executive Office is located in Amherst, MA and in addition to Boutcher, includes staff: Associate Director of Operations, Program Manager, and Communications Manager.

Annual Meeting: Participants from 60 countries; every 5 years, LSA hosts an international meeting, usually co-hosted by regional professional organizations (next one is in 2027).