

To: Executive Board, American Society of Criminology and Executive Office (EO) Staff

From: Bonnie Fisher, ASC Treasurer

Date: 15 April 2025

Re: Rationale for my no vote to the Long Range Planning Committee's (LRPC) Mid-year Report

I want to explain my no vote on the LRPC's Mid-year Report to the Executive Board (EB). In the LRPC's report to the EB, I *support* hiring a consultant to guide us in the transition (e.g., job description, selection process, budget) and develop next steps for ASC's growth. I *also support* the creation of an ad hoc committee to develop and administer a survey to ASC members. And last, I *support* the creation of Executive Director (ED) Search Committee, with additions that I describe below.

I *disagree* with one recommendation: to hire an interim ED starting in January 2026 and then to hire a permanent ED in January 2027. I also *partially disagree* with another recommendation the composition of an ED Search Committee.

Alternative ED Transition Model Option

The rationale for my disagreement with the LRPC's recommended ED transition model is based on three points. First, there are clear benefits from having Chris remain as Executive Director until January 2027. Second, there are potential uncertainties and costs if the proposed transition plan of the LRPC is adopted. Third, Chris has clearly told the Long Range Planning Committee that he is willing to continue to serve until January 2027.

First, the primary benefit of retaining Chris through 2027 is it allows time for Chris to share his 42 years plus of experience with the newly hired ED and to allow him to build connections between the new ED and the extensive global networks of ASC supporters that Chris has developed and maintained. Furthermore, allowing for retaining Chris through 2026 while simultaneously working collaboratively with the new ED, will likely result in fewer disruptions in the operations of ASC, especially in the ED's and EO staff's tasks, as compared to the LRPC's transition recommendation. This plan also allows the new ED to bring their own views to the ASC but the bonus is that they start with a strong foundation—knowing everything Chris knows from his decades of expertise.

Second, the LRPC transition plan for an interim ED in January 2026 and then to a permanent ED in January 2027 increases uncertainty and risks due to the financial situation ASC is facing. Given ASC's current financial challenges (e.g., falling conference attendance combined with rising student attendance) and external uncertainties (e.g., bond market, stock markets, investments), this is a time to be conservative with ASC's investments and expenses. Also, there

is no advantage to an interim ED who is not fully trained and knowledgeable to do this job and has to be paid. As Chris has described we are entering into uncertain times politically and socially, and this requires having someone as an ED who has a successful history of leading a non-for-profit organization.

Having Chris stay on until January 2027 costs ASC little since he takes no salary. However, it does allow Chris to provide guidance to the new ED on the existing structure of the society's finances, allows them to work together to find ways to grow the society's resources without undue risk.

Third, Chris has clearly told the Long Range Planning Committee that he is willing to continue to serve until January 2027. Below I highlight parts of Chris's 12-19-2024 memo to Claire and the LRPC, my notes from the LRPC Zoom meeting with him on 03-07-2025, and his 03-10-2025 ASC Director Transition email to the LRPC and Finance Committee members. In each of these communications, he clearly states his desire to remain the ED through 2026 and then retire 01-01-2027. He also states that he would work with a newly hired Associate ED during 2026 to train them (e.g., work with his network, including hotel contract consultants, lawyers, audio team, EO Office staff).

Specifically, in his 12-19-2025 memo, Chris wrote:

- 4. When do I need to step aside. As implied above, I had the luxury of "coping with" expansion in my years. So, do I stay longer as I have been at the helm so to speak and know about our ship and bring some value when in rough water, or, step aside because these present and coming times are going to require different skill sets that what I have? At this point, perhaps the best option is to secure an Associate Director to begin work in January of 2026 with the plan that they will become the Executive Director in January of 2027. I will work with them of course in 2026 to prepare for their transition in January 2027. I will continue to work with this individual and the Columbus staff "on the sidelines" so to speak as long as I am needed.*

Second, in my notes from the LRPC's meeting with him on 3-7-2025, Chris reiterated this point—that he would step down as ASC ED January 2027 when the new ED came on after spending a year with this person as the Associate Director to learn the ropes.

And third, in Chris's 3-10-2025 email to LRPC and Finance Committee, again he wrote:

I have given some thought to "things" this past weekend in the aftermath of the LRP Committee discussion on Friday per the transition to the next Executive Director. I have concluded that I do not wish to step down at this point, particularly given the challenging financial situation and political environment we are now in. I will bring this matter to the Board's attention for their review and discussion (i.e., added it to the meeting agenda).

Obviously, a transition will come, sooner or later. While I do not know the transition plans and organizational dynamics of other organizations, I do know our organization. I feel strongly that to have a smooth transition, we will need a year to train/to prepare the next Executive Director. And a rhetorical query - given that there is such a small financial cost associated with my staying on for an additional year, why not?

On the morning of 04-14-2025, I emailed the LRPC and asked them to please present these facts as we know them and not to omit these communications from Chris. I stressed that the transparent inclusion of these pieces of information would allow the EB to make a fully informed decision about the ED transition process, and illustrate Val's well-stated and desirable goal of transparency with the EB that she had mentioned on previous occasions both in EB meetings and LRPC meetings. Unfortunately, Claire emailed the LRPC saying that she has already sent the LRPC report to Chris and so was unable to add these communications to our report. Therefore, I am detailing them in this memo.

This leadership transition model—current ED orienting and training a new ED-- has been used successfully in many non-for-profit organizations and is the preferred plan of action for a smooth leadership transition. To have such an arrangement is a “gift” to the organization—a “positive to have an outgoing leader overlap with the incoming leader” and strengthens the stability of the organization (personal communication with Carol Butler, President, Goering Center for Family and Private Business, University of Cincinnati, <https://business.uc.edu/about/centers-partnerships/goering.html>; she has decades of experience working on transition issues for organizations). According to Carol, between May and November it is ample time to hire and work with a consultant, draft an ED job description, interview candidates, and hire an associate ED who would work with Chris throughout 2026. In fact, she said this process usually takes less than six months.

In sum, I believe that an alternative transition plan for the ED to that proposed by the LRPC is in the best interests of ASC from an organizational perspective and financial one and builds on Chris's expertise. Specifically, Chris would serve as the ED through 2026. A consultant (as recommended by the LRPC) would be hired to work with ED Search Committee (as recommended by the LRPC) starting in May to select a new paid associate ED who would begin in early 2026. Chris would step down at the end of 2026, with the associate ED becoming the new ED in January 2027.

I am asking the EB to discuss and consider the ED transition model option that I have described above as an alternative to the one recommended by the LRPC. I am recommending that the EB amend the LRPC's recommended ED transition model to the one I described.

Composition of the Executive Director Search Committee

I also want to suggest an amendment to the composition of the ED Search Committee. As written in the LRPC report, the Executive Director Search Committee would work with the “interim ED, the Board, and the consultant to (re)define the role and responsibilities of the ED and ...”

Missing from this ED Search Committee, is a current member of the Executive Office. The Columbus staff work closely and often with the ED on operational, procedural and financial issues. Their relationship to the ED is foundational to the successful functioning of ASC, especially the annual conference.

Adding a staff representative to this committee is in line with past staff appointments to an ASC committee. For example, there is a staff representative on the LRPC (Sheena) and an ex-officio staff representative on the Finance Committee (Nicole, who has worked at ASC for 19 years).

I recommend that the ED amend the LRPC recommendation for the composition of the Executive Director Search Committee to include a member of the EO staff on this committee.

In conclusion, I hope my explanation of my rationale for voting no on the LRPC’s Mid-year Report is clear and convincing. I am happy to answer any questions.