

# Scientific and Technological Activities (STAC) Report to the AMS Council, September 2016

You have the STAC report in front of you, which starts on page 30.

As a reminder, STAC consists of 30 science committees and 6 interdisciplinary boards. Of the 49 AMS sponsored conferences and symposia held during 2016, over half were led by STAC committees and boards; 8 STAC-led conferences were held outside of the Annual Meeting. The one remaining meeting for 2016 is the 28<sup>th</sup> Conference on Severe Local Storms to be held in early November in Portland during election week. This means that I will once again have to submit an absentee ballot.

STAC has evolved significantly since my start as Future Commissioner in 2014. The Commissioners (Ward Seguin, Bruce Telfeyan and myself) have made a conscious effort to focus on strengthening our committees and boards while giving them a greater voice in future directions. This change in focus was greatly assisted by three items:

- The STAC web page. This is a huge help, as it has everything you need to run an AMS committee. It is the one-stop shop for STAC. Having this web page has freed up Commissioner time to do other things. My thanks to the IT Department for making this happen and keeping it operating smoothly.
- The development of a STAC best practices document. We combined our past experiences with those of other successful STAC committees and created a living document that helps STAC board and committee chairs and members understand their responsibilities and what they can do to help build their science community. We mention this document every chance we get and it is beginning to have an impact. The vast majority of STAC members want to make a difference, but some simply didn't know what to do. This helps them find their direction.
- Lastly, Council support to trim activities that were unhelpful (the annual committee/board reports) and give the Commissioners time to focus on other activities. In any volunteer organization, you only have so much time to donate and there is a need to prioritize.

In response, our annual STAC board and committee chair meeting held this past January (which we moved to the Sunday prior to the Annual Meeting, based upon input from our B/C chairs) was very interactive. As detailed in the STAC report, we asked our chairs what is working, what needs improvement, and what is missing. Their answers were very illuminating and thoughtful, while also helping us to build community at the same time. One recommendation was to speed the process of new member approval, which we have done. Another recommendation was to hold a summer STAC teleconference, which we did in late August. Again, we asked for input during the telecon and had a number of great suggestions on how to improve conferences that were shared among the chairs. The chairs have been encouraged to try new ways of organizing their conferences and test out new ideas. The next few years should see a number of new ways to engage the community tried out by various STAC groups and we will report on their successes and (perhaps) failures. I am convinced that the end result will be more dynamic meetings and stronger science communities.

At this point in time, I also have two requests of Council. These are listed on the first page of the STAC report.

### **1) Changes in the STAC Responsibilities as defined in AMS Organizational Procedures.**

The STAC Commissioners request that Council consider changes to the AMS Organizational Procedures document regarding the responsibilities of STAC. STAC is presently tasked with:

*ii. Responsibilities:* To assess the progress of research and operations and inform the Council where support seems needed and of cases where important projects are in jeopardy for lack of funds; to receive and review the reports of the scientific and technological activities Committees and Boards and highlight those items on which the Council should take action and to transmit these to the Council with its recommendations; to recommend to the Council the establishment of new Committees and Boards or the dissolution of those no longer serving a useful purpose; to establish and review the terms of reference of the Committees and Boards.

This is fine, but doesn't really describe well what STAC actually does. The

Commissioners ask for Council support to better represent the responsibilities of STAC in the organizational procedures (additions/changes are underlined):

*ii. Responsibilities: **To be responsible to the Council for advancing science and technology by promoting the open exchange of ideas, strengthening our disciplinary communities, enhancing cooperation and dialog among these communities, embracing diversity, celebrating and fostering excellence, and cultivating the next generation of scientists and leaders.** STAC will also* assess the progress of research and operations and inform the Council where support seems needed and of cases where important projects are in jeopardy for lack of funds; to receive **input from** the scientific and technological activities Committees and Boards and highlight those items on which the Council should take action and to transmit these to the Council with its recommendations; to recommend to the Council the establishment of new Committees and Boards or the dissolution of those no longer serving a useful purpose; to establish and review the terms of reference of the Committees and Boards.

If Council agrees, then the STAC Commissioners will work with Secretary Treasurer Rick Rosen to update the STAC responsibilities in the AMS Organizational Procedures document for consideration at the January 2017 Council meeting.

## **2) Proposal for a new AMS Award**

A STAC Committee has recently written a proposal for a new AMS award for a Distinguished Early Career Scientist that would be given out to members of their community. STAC is aware that there have been some discussions of having another early career award within AMS - in addition to the Meisinger award – to help expand recognition of our members in this stage of their careers. The award proposal (from the Committee on Agricultural and Forest Meteorology) develops a strong case for this award and the benefits of recognizing members of their community and, without consideration of other issues, the recommendation to Council from the STAC Commissioners would be to approve the request.

But award requests are rarely that simple, as awards added in one area influence awards in general for a large professional society like AMS. The question for Council comes down to a question of balance between opportunities to recognize exceptional early career members and the potential dilution of award status – both individual awards and perhaps AMS awards in general - that could happen if many AMS committees start giving out these types of awards. Current guidance is that new committee awards are not supported, although the existence of exceptions to current guidance (Banner Miller Award, Charles Mitchell Award, Helmut Landsberg, Outstanding Achievement in Biometeorology, Robert Leviton Student Prize, Max Eaton Student Prize, Spiros Geotis Student Prize, plus Editor's Awards for each journal, etc) leads to committees without such awards to ask to add their own awards.

Council discussion on this issue would be greatly appreciated to either reaffirm, modify or clarify the creation of new awards, particularly those focused upon individual committees. The needed oversight of any expanded awards also deserves careful thought and consideration.

I have very mixed feelings on this topic. On one hand, I think it would be very beneficial to the majority of STAC committees. It would allow them to recognize outstanding members of their community who will never receive a Society-level award. It will help build a stronger community.

However, on the flip side, I worry that AMS could have too many awards and this might dilute the Society level awards. I also worry that some committees/boards will not handle committee awards well and could end up hurting their community. This suggests that oversight may be needed, but I am not convinced that we have the resources to oversee 36 new committee/board awards.