

Minutes of the Montana Academy of Sciences Fall 2008 Board of Directors Meeting

10/25/2008 10:30am

Present: Jim Barron, Tom Lewis, Rick Douglass, Dan Gretch, Doug Coffin, Keith Parker, Jim Harkins, Carmen Hauck

The minutes from the April meeting were approved. Brief discussion of the participation of Sigma Xi was initiated and it was decided to contact **George McRae** at UM regarding participation from that campus.

Budget Review

Keith Parker presented the current state of the checking account. Our current balance is \$5,327.09. This represents a net expenditure of \$1,244.55 from our balance as of Jan. 1, 2008 of \$6571.64. More informative, however, is a comparison with our balance as of approximately the same time last year (October 26, 2007). At that time, our balance was \$9571.64. Thus, MAS has spent approximately \$4,244.55 in the past year. This net outflow of money is due to: a one-time (or once every 10 years) cost for our new website of \$480.00, the difference between the cost of the annual meeting (\$2810.55) and the income from the meeting (\$1986.00) and the travel awards that MAS provides to two high school students and a high school teacher to attend the national meeting (\$800 each, for a total of \$2400..plus an additional \$600 that we decided to add last year to help offset reduced EPSCOR funding).

We can absorb this deficit (and had expected it), thanks to our income from the Trust. Additionally, we reaffirmed our commitment to continue funding the Junior Academy (primarily through these travel funds) at a **minimum** of current levels (\$2400 total) for the future. However, **Jim Harkins** brought up the increasing costs (approximately \$1160 for students and \$1410 for the teacher) associated with attendance at the national junior academy meeting, and asked if the MAS had any ideas about how these costs could be addressed. The Board was in agreement that these costs are a problem, and that MAS does feel an obligation to help out financially if we possibly can, but that a more pressing problem for the Academy is a lack of participation from among our institutions of higher education in the state, and a declining membership base and participation in our Annual Meeting. The consensus was that MAS may be able to increase funding to the Junior Academy, but that the school district or the MTA also needed to provide some amount of funding. Thus, **Doug Coffin** offered to approach the school district, with the blessing of the Board and on behalf of the MAS, to ask them to help defray these increasing costs. Although not explicitly a 'funding-match' type of agreement, it was informally agreed that it would be easier to justify increasing funding from MAS if other agencies would also help to fund these increasing costs to the students and the teacher.

We also had a brief discussion at this point about other fundraising possibilities in general. **Doug** mentioned potentially getting the MAS on the "Montana Shares" list for charitable contributions. He will look into whether there are rules against this type of thing from the National Association (our own Constitution and Bylaws has nothing prohibiting it). If it is allowable, the Board gave **Doug** permission to see what needed to be done to get MAS on that list. **Doug** also noted that we may have a unique opportunity (depending on how the upcoming election goes) to lobby the legislature for a large

sum of money as an earmark to form the basis of a grant program to be administered and distributed by the MAS or by a “sister” organization that we could potentially set up. **Doug** has experience with this type of fundraising, and feels confident that, given the governor’s wife’s focus on science education and given the State’s unique budget surplus, and assuming that a sympathetic legislature is in place, we might have a chance at securing something like this. Again, the Board gave **Doug** permission to look into this and approach the necessary people to begin thinking along these lines.

Finally, UBS had sent **Jim Barron** some documents regarding the trust to be signed by those appointed by the Board to oversee the trust. It was agreed that the current President, Executive Director and Treasurer should be the ones to sign the documents. However, **Keith Parker** (Treasurer) hopes to relinquish those duties as soon as another can be elected, and so it was decided that only **Jim** and **Doug** would sign at this time. It was also noted that the MAS needs someone knowledgeable about financial matters to help us with oversight (or at least with interpretation of our financial matters). **Rick Douglass** volunteered to ask his acquaintances to see if someone would agree to talk with UBS on our behalf and de-code some of the jargon for us.

Board Membership and Officers –

It was noted that we need to send out an email ballot to our membership soon, to officially elect officers. However, I checked our Constitution and it looks like the ONLY elected officer is the President (!). Section Vice Presidents are elected by the Sections, but recently our sections have not existed in reality. Other officers (Treasurer, Recording Secretary, Executive Director) are appointed by the Board, and “at large” Board members are not shown in the Constitution as elected OR appointed...they just “appear” apparently. Perhaps this means that we need to revisit our Constitution, and get some of this fixed, but my interpretation of it is that we can add whomever we want to the board, whenever we want. As it currently stands, all existing officers’ terms expire on June 30, 2009. We have four “new” board members that need to be agreed upon by the membership (Do they?? I’m not sure): **Rick Douglass, Dan Gretch, Dan Albrecht, and Tom Lewis**. **Jim Barron** has agreed to be president for another two terms, but we need to call for nominations first from among our membership for all offices. **Jim Barron** will send an email to the membership calling for nominations for President, and informing the membership about the new Board members (I’ll assume we don’t need to elect them?), as well as asking for members for the Board from unrepresented institutions. Once the responses are received (within a reasonable time-frame...perhaps one week), and email ballot will be produced and we’ll elect the new president. It was decided that, in practice, the “past president” will become the Executive Director for as long as that person is “past president” – but that we would not amend our Constitution to reflect this.

The Board agreed that **Doug Coffin** would appointed as Executive Director of MAS. Although we did not discuss this, I noted in reading the Constitution that the Executive Director is NOT a voting member of the Board. I would like to change that officially in the Constitution to make that position a voting member (I see no conflict of interest or any other reason why this position should not vote).

Mini-Grant Program

The Board agreed that MAS would initiate a grant program to provide \$500 research grants to undergraduate and graduate students in the six MUS campuses, the three private four-year schools, and

the seven tribal colleges. It was agreed to try to fund ten of these grants, and to attempt to spread them out among the units as much as possible. **Jim** and **Doug** will coordinate on getting the grant announcement produced, but it was agreed that students needed to be at one of the 13 institutions, have a faculty mentor that was a member of MAS (membership can be sent along with the grant application and research proposal) and that the applications be peer reviewed and scored with a minimum score necessary for funding. It was agreed that this program would in future be an annual program, with calls for proposals going out in January, applications due in early March, and funding dispersed in April, with the idea being that students could know by the end of one academic year whether they had funding for a project, and could begin work on the project over the summer or early the following year, so that they could present their results (required) at our Annual Meeting in the April following the award. However, in an attempt to increase participation this coming April, it was decided that we would try to award TWO grant cycles this year, one to be announced in November with funding dispersed in January, and our "normal" announcement to go out in January. We need to discuss whether these grants will be awarded to the student as a check, or whether they will be awarded to the faculty mentor (i.e. through the grants office), but it was felt that, at least for this initial announcement in November, the grants would simply be awarded to the students as a check.

Annual Meeting Preparation

The date for the Annual meeting was set as April 11, 2009. This is Easter weekend, but no other dates would work. Thus, the banquet and keynote will be on Friday, April 10 (Good Friday). The Board realizes that this date may cut into participation this year.

It was agreed that, if we are to sponsor a symposium on Friday the 10th, we need to identify an agency to organize the symposium by December 1 2008, and that the agency needs to have the program substantially together by February 1, 2009. No potential agencies were identified or discussed.

It was agreed to increase the Science Mentor of the Year Award from \$250 to \$350.

We will ask for nominations for the Mershon Award, the Science Mentor of the Year Award early in 2009, with the intent to have those nominations by March 1. We also need to identify a keynote speaker for the banquet.

Jim Barron will continue to be in contact with Sigma Xi and hopefully have greater participation in our Spring meeting.

The idea of Institutional Memberships was discussed, and it was decided to offer institutional memberships at \$1500/year for the two large universities, \$1000/year for the four-year schools, and \$500/year for the tribal colleges. A letter will be drafted to solicit those memberships.

The meeting adjourned at approximately 3:15pm.

Respectfully Submitted,
Jim Barron