85th Annual Town Meeting

April 20, 1999

Following opening statements and a brief presentation on the constitution/bylaw adjustments and the budget, questions were received by President Anderson, Secretary-Treasurer Gene Schuster, President-Elect Bill Haid and Executive Director Jerry Sullivan. Gary Smith moderated the open forum.

Q: Mike Allen, University of Texas at Austin, congratulated the Board and recognized the effort and success of the Board, Executive Director and Office staff. He extended his sincere thanks. He stated that inconsistencies within the budget are due to inaccurate data and recognized the difficulty of the task, adding that the membership must prioritize its needs and interests and communicate those to the Board of Directors and Office so that budget priorities are clear. Allen asked that the Board and Office provide an explanation of, with specific detail as to cost and services, the plan for government relations. He asked that the Board consider the consequences of its pursuit of outside revenue, and what it was willing to do to obtain those. Allen pointed out that often these endeavors meant that AACRAO must give something up in return. He asked the Board to consider this in their deliberations and incorporate these ideas into an articulated dialogue with the membership.

A: Haid responded that the Board would consider these issues. Haid expressed his interest in focusing the Board on the priorities of the membership so that the resources will be applied appropriately. He encouraged, and expressed the need for, increased member involvement.

Q: Allen encouraged the membership to heed Schuster's call for action and involvement. He asked the membership whether they were willing to accept an active role in AACRAO. He pointed out that if the membership's answer is no, then the future of the organization rests with very few people, including only the Board and staff. The level of commitment is critical.

A: Smith stated that he expected the response of the membership to be "yes."

Q: Bill Ponder, Pierce College (Tacoma, WA), stated that he was the former Chair of the Professional Access and Equity Committee. He expressed that the Board and the organization must reflect the nation as a whole, and asked about the strategies the Board would employ to ensure a diverse leadership and membership.

A: Haid responded that it was the intention of the Board to seek input from the member committees to set agendas for services, to reach out to new members, and to increase the number of members rather than increasing dues. He stressed that the help of the committees was needed to ensure that the Board and membership would be reflective of society.

Q: Wade Robinson, University of Nebraska at Omaha, pointed out that there was no comparison between the services provided by other associations and those provided by AACRAO included in the table comparing the dues and conference registration of AACRAO with other associations. He asked why the comparison of services was not included.

A: Schuster responded that the Board had configured this table with a general idea of the similarity of member services provided by the other associations.

Robinson asked the membership to raise their hands if they were in favor/against/undecided as to the recommended dues level of $165.

Q: Robinson asked the Board for the approval required for passage of the budget and Constitution and By-Laws changes.

A: Anderson responded that a simple majority would be required for passage of the budget, and that an 80% approval would be required for passage of the Constitution and Bylaws since there were errors printed in the *February Data Dispenser*.

Q: Robinson asked whether the Board of Directors believed that the conference should be self-sufficient.

A: Schuster responded that the Board held the belief that the Annual Meeting should be a break-even event, and that there should be a small contingency within the budget to account for unexpected low attendance to cover a potential loss.

Q: Rick Skeel, University of Oklahoma, expressed concern about the potential for AACRAO to make contractual arrangements with corporate entities that would create a direct conflict with other AACRAO corporate affiliates (such as the recent CDSI Workshop in which CDSI misstated AACRAO's endorsement of its service). Is there a policy to protect the organization against this potential?

A: Sullivan responded that a specific policy was not in place, but noted that a Conflict of Interest policy was under consideration. He explained that the CDSI workshop, for instance, was pursued by AACRAO because it fell within the objectives of TF2000. He described the preventative measures taken by AACRAO in entering the contractual relationship with CDSI, which AACRAO cosponsored with AASCU. Sullivan stated that the membership would be consulted in the institution of a Conflict of Interest policy.

Comment: Ray Barrows, University of Massachusetts - Dartmouth, challenged the membership to contribute to the scholarship fund so that 10 scholarships can be provided at next year's Annual Meeting (rather than 4 as for this year).

Q: Bruce Cunningham, Duke University, explained that two years ago, AACRAO was experiencing all the current problems including office mismanagement, office space rental, etc., while consistently providing services in the areas of publications, *C&U*, *Data Dispenser*, and government relations. Why must the dues now be increased to $165 in order to provide the same level of service as two years ago?

A: Schuster responded that the services provided two years ago were paid for by spending and depleting the reserves that had accumulated.

Q: Cunningham asked: With the dues level of $165, what specific services (in particular publications such as TCP, the FERPA Guide, *Data Dispenser*, and*C&U*) will be provided the membership?

A: Schuster explained the service levels presented in the comparisons (involving 6 more issues of the *Data Dispenser*, 3 in paper, and restoration of the fourth *C&U* issue) but there was great concern that no new publications efforts have been made for two years, exhausting the pipeline. He emphasized the need for members to come forward to volunteer their involvement as authors and writers.

Q: Cunningham asked: Was there any consideration given to splitting the difference between $125 and $165 (such as a dues level of $145)?

A: Schuster added that there was not sufficient financial detail to know whether $165 was an ideal number, and that the exact amount cannot be determined for this reason. He stated that next year's budget will be more accurate as to the costs of services provided, and the dues level will be reassessed at that time.

Q: Richard Yount, East Tennessee State University, asked whether the Board had assessed the cost of changing the name. He also asked whether the Board had considered that the title of "Board of Directors" be changed to "Executive Committee."

A: Schuster said that the Board had done a cursory analysis of the cost of the name change, and added that the Board was seeking a least-cost approach. Schuster responded that none of the board members felt strongly about what the committee was named but as AACRAO became incorporated, the term "Executive Committee" would not be the legal one. He added that AACRAO was seeking to become incorporated as soon as possible.

Q: Christine Kerlin, Everett Community College, questioned the assumptions implicit in the presentation by Secretary-Treasurer, specifically regarding the use of the term "innovation." She asked how money would be spent for this purpose, and asked whether the term referred to risky ventures.

A: Schuster responded that the use of the term "innovation" referred to AACRAO's potential investment in new activities not necessarily riskier, high-yield ventures.

Q: Kerlin asked why OIES (International Education) was expected to be self-supporting whereas other Offices within AACRAO, such as Government Relations, were not expected to be so. She expressed her support for international education and her fear that international education could become segregated and marginalized within AACRAO if this requirement is maintained.

A: Schuster responded that issues regarding OIES continue to be addressed by the Board and added that, as a whole, the current Board held the belief that OIES should be self-supporting. He thanked Kerlin for her concern and hoped other members would make their own preferences known.

Q: Kerlin questioned the Board as to its determination that the Annual Meeting should be a break-even, self-supporting event. She added that she knew of no other organization that did not seek to generate revenue from such events. She expressed her disapproval of the organization's position on this.

A: Schuster responded that the membership had always set a conservative budget and a conservative estimate of attendees for the Annual Meeting, with a contingency included so that the organization will not incur a loss. Further that the Board would most interested in additional member direction on this issue

Q: Kimra Schipporeit, University of Nebraska at Kearney, asked about the number of members who had not chosen to renew, and the reasons for this.

A: Sullivan attempted to respond from memory, indicating that several attempts had been made to contact those not continuing, about 50 had been reached and that only 20% of those indicated financial issues. He added that it was unfortunate that the AACRAO Office did not have the means or staff to keep similar statistics for comparison or to sustain a continuous membership development campaign.

[Note:
There are actually over 300 more members than last year.
The contact results were:

Schools confirmed closed	2
Dues Increase/AACRAO turmoil	4
No Money in Budget	10
No Explanation	36
Will rejoin 1999-2000	5
Not interested anymore	7
Will only join State/Regional	4
Does not meet needs for Medical Schools	1
Total	69

Comment: Gary Gibson, Vanderbilt University, commented that, at this time last year, he was telling AACRAO to get its act together. Gibson said that he had lost trust in the organization over the last few years. He expressed that he knew Gene Schuster and believed he had worked hard and successfully on the budget and AACRAO's recovery. He expressed his intention to give AACRAO one more year to prove itself.

Q: Joe Piekunka, College of Veterinary Medicine, Cornell University, asked whether the Board and Office, in its attempts to build a reserve, had considered owning rather than renting property.

A: Anderson responded that early in 1998 the Executive Director had signed a contract to extend the lease leaving about 9½ years to be at the One Dupont Circle (DC) location.

Q: Piekunka commented that AACRAO has made the profession and the industry more efficient. One example is that SPEEDE has implemented EDI transactions, and pointed out that this has saved institutions much more than the $40 difference between the two proposed membership dues levels (of $125 and $165). He stated that he will vote in favor of the $165 dues level and added that AACRAO needed to continue to be a leader for the profession. Piekunka asked: Would the lower dues level have any effect on EDI/SPEEDE?

A: Schuster responded that no, there would be no effect on EDI/SPEEDE.

Comment: Kathy Plante, University of Shreveport, stated that the name AACRAO had been around for 98 years, and that the symbolism of the organization's history would be maintained in spite of a name change. She stated her support of dropping the word "America," and added that NAFSA had successfully made a name change.

Jerry Sullivan and Gene Schuster remained after the meeting to answer questions of the membership.