

Dear SPE Members,

Friday, July 24, 2020 we held a Members' Town Hall to share updates regarding our planning for the Chapter Conferences and the 2021 Annual Conference in Denver, and to hold an open discussion for members to share insights, concerns, and questions.

We thank everyone who attended; we had more than 130 members sign in over the two-hour meeting. Below is a summary of the meeting, as well as responses to some specific questions that were addressed.

The meeting opened with some preliminary updates from the Board.

Finances - From Ariel Shanberg, Board Treasurer:

Items covered: Financial updates, including discussion of annual budget, current cash balance and projected income in the coming months.

FY2020 Budget (approved by the Board in December 2019)

Summary of Expenses: \$514,418

2020 Annual Conference - 31%
Personnel - 29%
Conference Discounts Waivers - 16%
2020 Chapter Conference - 9%
Legal/Accounting - 4%
Miscellaneous (Supplies, Subs., etc.) - 4%
2021 Annual Conference - 3%
Bank & Credit Card Fees - 3%
Travel - 1%
Website - 1%

Summary of Revenues: \$557,280

2021 Annual Conference - 34%
Membership - 28%
2020 Annual Conference - 20%
2020 Chapter Activity & Conferences - 8%
Fundraising - 6%
Miscellaneous (Advertising, Sales, etc.) - 4%

Summary of SPE's FY20 Fiscal Health through June 2020.

SPE began FY20 with \$160,214 cash on hand (predominantly revenues from 2020 Conference registration and sponsorships). As of June 30, 2020, SPE has \$56,203 cash on hand in addition to its PPP loan of \$38,657.

Most notable challenges are Membership (down by 23%) and 2021 Conference Revenue (down by 100%). Adjusted forecasts reflecting continued decrease in revenues (from membership,

chapter conferences, 2021 conference sponsorships, exhibitor fees, and registrations) show SPE concluding the fiscal year on December 31st with less than \$40,000 cash on hand.

Unprojected legal fees and higher than projected hotel costs for Houston Conference (due to attrition rates) account for increased expenses.

SPE received a PPP loan which covered staff salaries for 8 weeks. The duration of the loan is over, and we are acting in compliance with the terms for the loan to be forgiven.

Additional information:

- SPE was not eligible for the NEA CARE act funds.
- We are currently investigating a Small Business Administration loan, but that appears unlikely.
- Cost savings that have been implemented in the past year include:
 - Last June, SPE closed its office and reduced unnecessary services, and staff transitioned to working from home.
 - SPE staff reduction – SPE has been without an Executive Director since July 2019, and as of August 1, staff has been reduced from 3 to 2 full time staff.

2021 Conference Updates - From Rebecca Nolan, Board Secretary and Chair of the 2021 Conference Committee:

Current status of planning for Denver 2021 is that the call for proposals is out with a deadline of August 15, 2020. View the call here:

<https://www.spenational.org/resources/calls-for-entry/2021-annual-conference-call-for-proposals>

The Peer Review Panel is confirmed, and current plans include planning for an in-person as well as transitioning to hybrid and possibly online. We had almost 800 responses to the Conference Interest Survey, and your responses are very helpful as we move forward with planning. In our planning, we need to consider the health and well-being of our members as well as the financial health and longevity of the organization. SPE has a contract with the hotel in Denver that currently holds us responsible for a large portion of the total contract amount. ***Any changes, be it rescheduling or cancelling at this point, leave us liable for more than \$180,000. This amount goes up in September.*** Although there are current restrictions in place for larger gatherings in Colorado, the hotel anticipates they may not be in March, so are unwilling to renegotiate our contract at this time. We must continue in good faith at this point until we can renegotiate, or other changes occur.

Chapter Conferences Update - From Scott Hilton, Board Member and Chair of Affiliated Chapter Committee and Remote Conference Committee.

All Chapter conferences for fall have been cancelled in-person and will instead be online. The Chapters are working together to plan their conferences to be offered as a united series. Each will be on a different date, beginning September 26 and ending November 7.

Programming is available to members for a single price for the entire series. Passes are \$25 for Regular Members, \$15 for Contingent/Bridge/Senior Members, and \$5 for Students. Non-member pricing is \$155.

In addition to these conferences, SPE Contingent Faculty Caucus co-founder E.L. Jennings will deliver a series of webinars, starting on August 13, addressing the current state of higher education and constantly evolving practices in higher education during the COVID – 19 Pandemic.

More information to follow with calls for entry to Chapter events posting soon.

Code of Conduct Reform Update - From Lauren Greenwald, Board Vice-Chair

Over the past few months we've been revising our Code of Conduct and Anti-Harassment Policy to protect our members, as well as to implement specific procedures for the reporting and documenting of incidents of harassment and for filing grievances. This includes the formation of a dedicated Committee to review reports and an online form to report unacceptable conduct. Any corrective or punitive action SPE takes towards an individual or organization in response to Code of Conduct violations must go through this review process.

Our new Code (including proposed procedures) is currently under review by our legal counsel, to make sure all is correct and in compliance. Our goal is to have it finished and posted to the website as soon as possible.

Moving forward, our new Code of Conduct will apply to all SPE sponsored events - virtual and otherwise. This means anyone participating in a SPE sponsored event will have to read and consent to our code of conduct. It will be included in all future documents, including the vendor prospectus and contracts for the 2021 conference. Our new Code of Conduct will apply to every aspect of participation in SPE events, for members, speakers, vendors, and sponsors alike. This also supports our commitment to create a significantly more inclusive environment for our members.

Member Q & A

Q: How are the Board and the national organization broadly planning to address the issues with Ain-Bad?

A: This relates to the aforementioned Code of Conduct. Our new Code and Procedures are meant to allow us to hold participants accountable for their conduct and make informed decisions moving forward.

We have received feedback from some of our members and from Caucus leadership on this matter, and we are reviewing this now.

If there is any alleged violation of our code of conduct that happens at an SPE event, then it must be officially reported to SPE Board members or the Committee on the Code of Conduct. In the interim while we are waiting for the language to be finalized, any member wishing to report a violation of conduct may do so via email at conduct@spenational.org.

All reports, including those filed using the online form, will be sent to the Code of Conduct Committee for review and investigation. Reports will be forwarded to the SPE Executive Committee for additional review if the Code of Conduct Committee believes follow-up action(s) may be necessary. All reports are confidential, and legal counsel is aiding in establishing the guidelines for anonymous reporting.

SPE is legally restricted to investigate only complaints that have occurred at or during an official SPE event, both in-person and virtual, in the last 3 years.

Our online form is forthcoming, but in the interim, we ask that all concerns about Code of Conduct violations at SPE events be sent to the dedicated email address: conduct@spenational.org

To date, we have not invited any vendors to participate in Denver; however, we welcome feedback on which vendors you would like to see at SPE events.

Q: What are the demographics of the SPE board? What specific steps has/will SPE take in order to be Anti-racist and be fully inclusive and diverse? Will the board expand its leadership to include voices that are not Cis-gender, or white?

Our current Board is listed on our website, and the majority are white, cisgender individuals. The majority are also employed full-time as educators and are tenured or tenure-track. We are committed to making sure that our Board more accurately reflects our membership. Currently, SPE has 1577 members, and the two largest groups are Regular Members at 35% (who are either employed full time or do not fall into the categories of Contingent Faculty, Seniors, or recently graduated) and Students at 36%. We are a changing group of individuals. In the past, the pool was not overly representative necessarily, as we count on membership to nominate and self-nominate. Voter involvement has historically been very low - 11 - 14% on average of membership voted in the past 8 years. We need our members to vote!

The Governance Committee recently decided to re-open the call for nominations to the Board and to extend the deadline in order to expand our pool of nominees to be more inclusive and representational. Currently, an annual membership at the Sustaining Members level is the only financial commitment required to serve on the national board. Without an Executive Director, national board service is a significant time investment. We are investigating ways to create opportunities for more members to serve and to lessen the time commitment during the week of the national conference.

Q: What benefits does SPE offer to members who cannot attend the annual conference?

This is a question we are asking ourselves as well. The most obvious benefit is discounted rates at annual conferences and SPE-sponsored events. For many members, the benefit of SPE is the community at large. Many people who do not belong to a single host institution feel as if SPE is their institution. Additional benefits include:

- Access to SPE's website where you can upload portfolios of your work or browse the online member gallery to view portfolios of fellow members.
- Receive notifications about SPE news and activities, as well as issues facing education and photography now.
- Access to SPE's journal, *Exposure*, and the *Exposure* archive.
- Automatic enrollment in one of SPE's Affiliated Chapters and the option to join any of our SPE Caucuses.

We're planning new year-round programming because we want to offer benefits to our members. In addition, our pivot to hybrid and virtual programming will allow us to continue to explore and offer benefits and engagement opportunities all year.

Q: What are we doing to reach out to younger folks and especially black and brown student photographers?

We need to do more. 36% of our members are students and while we are committed to creating an inclusive and diverse environment, we need to create more ways for students to be involved. One of the primary reasons for the very low conference price for the chapter conferences this fall is to eliminate the historically high price tag, encouraging more young members to participate. Another initiative was developed by FotoFika (created by past and current Board Members) called the FotoFika All Stars, in which students of the class of 2020 were invited to submit their work to be displayed on an online platform. Students from a range of institutions and programs, including 2 year technical and community college programs, were encouraged to participate. To date students from around the world including China, Australia, and New Zealand have joined. See more here: <https://2020allstars.org>

Q: Is the conference model dead at this point?

The conference model is changing, and we are not sure what the next few months will bring. We are planning robust programming for the fall Chapter Conferences and are committed to planning our 2021 conference with the understanding that we may be required to shift to a completely online program. At this point, we are still planning for several potential outcomes.

The member who asked this question further clarified their question as saying that we have an opportunity to use online engagement to lessen the burden on those who can't reliably make the physical conferences and encouraging SPE to continue to augment the conference model for accessibility. The issue of accessibility is one of the many issues our Remote Conference Committee has been working on for our Chapter and future online events.

Q: As schools are shifting to increased online content for the fall, could SPE offer institutions access to the virtual chapter conferences if they have the available funding? In other words, could schools or departments pay for access for all their students or does it need to be done individually?

Absolutely. We have institutional memberships for schools to support their students through membership fees and conference registration. This is under our SPE Partners program. See more here:

<https://www.spenational.org/spe-partnerships>

We are currently exploring more ways students can be engaged in our online content.

Q: Who is hosting the Denver conference?

We have no institutional sponsor for the Denver Conference at this time. One of the Conference Committee members is working to engage a host institution. We are currently working with local groups the Colorado Photographic Arts Center and Denver's Month of Photography to develop our programming and investigate more ways we can collaborate.

Q: Will the contract with the National Conference hotel be voided, relieving us of fiscal responsibility, if Denver is locked down in March?

This would fall under the *force majeure* clause of our contract, and if this occurs, our fiscal responsibility would be voided. However, we cannot predict when / if that will happen, and must continue to plan the conference in the interim.

Q: How is the board planning to move forward with a statement regarding BLM and other systemic issues?

We have been working on this. We acknowledge we should have issued a statement sooner. The Board wanted to create a statement that addressed the real commitment of the organization to BLM and other systemic issues while not appearing disingenuous or tone-deaf. We wanted to consult with SPE Leadership before issuing a statement, and on July 2 we held a meeting with the Board, Chapter and Caucus Leaders. We shared our draft statement regarding BLM and received additional feedback advising against putting out a statement without broader community discussion and feedback.

At this point in the Town Hall, some former Board members offered their perspectives.

One recounted their experience with SPE over a long period of time and through many challenges, including the "culture wars of the 1980s". They stressed that it is upon us as members to work at bringing in younger voices; that the new and younger voices will carry the organization forward. They noted that changes start in our classrooms, and emphasized that at best, the professional staff of SPE is bare bones for the organization, and we as the membership need to make an effort.

A second former Board member responded to the lack of a statement, mentioning they remember checking every day to see if SPE had made a statement. They observed that any statement may generate a backlash, but we must deal with it. This member shared that when they were on the Board, they felt the diversity was there, and while we could be doing more,

that diversity exists in our Caucuses. Even a simple statement indicating what we have done historically (within the caucuses) and that we continue to work this would be positive.

Following these comments, several current members asked to share thoughts with the group.

Concerns were expressed over the need on the part of Chapters for more guidance from the organization on these issues. Chapters are working hard to plan the fall conferences, and they need more leadership from SPE. It was noted that along with a lack of timely Board response on BLM, their silence regarding *Ain't-Bad* magazine's *American South* issue is problematic. Another member asked why SPE would put out a statement if the organization contradicts itself by supporting *Ain't-Bad*?

Board member Deborah Hollis responded to these questions, noting, "my concern is that the publishing industry writ large needs to be held accountable for an unremarkable record of publishing artists in underrepresented communities. However, focusing on one publisher without documented evidence puts SPE in legal jeopardy."

As mentioned earlier in this summary, the Executive Committee has received feedback on this issue. A letter was sent from leadership of the LGBTQ, Multicultural, and Women's Caucuses expressing concerns about *Ain't-Bad* and their presence at SPE events. This is currently being reviewed by the Committee for the Code of Conduct.

We closed our meeting with the renewed commitment to hold more of these Town Halls in the future.

The number of people who joined the Town Hall and the overwhelming response to our survey in June tells us how much our members care about SPE. We care deeply about SPE and want this organization to continue. The Town Hall was convened because we recognize the need for continued conversation to engage in a covid-19 world and maintain community. We want to hear from our members. How can we do better? How can we structure our conversations and our organization moving forward? We thank you all for being part of SPE and contributing to its future.

Note: Below is the statement issued by SPE on BLM and systemic issues facing our organization. It may also be viewed on our website: <https://www.spenational.org/resources/we-stand-in-solidarity-with-black-lives-matter>

The Society for Photographic Education (SPE) is an organization led by members elected through a nomination and voting process that is dedicated to teaching and learning the visual narrative. One of the goals of the Society is to engage in a continuing reappraisal of the nature and meaning of image-making, and with this, we must also continue to examine how we as an organization engage with and respond to the changing world around us.

We stand in solidarity with Black Lives Matter (BLM) and recognize that the history of this professional association is as a predominately-white organization. We acknowledge that creating and maintaining community is hard work, and we face many challenges. Our membership is our most precious resource. We must work harder to provide our members with a safe, supportive, and respectful environment, and we need to continue acting in ways that will result in more diverse and inclusive membership and leadership. We recognize the legacy of exclusion and discrimination in the arts and our own organization — and acknowledge the academic legacy of exclusion — and we are committed to fostering an environment where open, direct communication allows us to lead national conversations about the history and power dynamics in the visual arts. Lastly, but no less important, SPE reaffirms our commitment to make us accountable in diversifying our executive leadership since actions speak louder than words.