

Office of the Ombudspersons

Ombudspersons: Erika Barthelmess, Jessica Light, Marjorie Matocq, and Morty Ortega

Mission: Members of the Office of Ombudspersons are appointed at the discretion of the President to hear and respond appropriately to complaints of unprofessional behavior by any member of the ASM at its annual meeting or in the governance of the ASM through its committee structure. All issues brought before either (or both) of the appointed individuals are resolved as discreetly as possible. The Ombudspersons are entrusted to deal with each situation as they best see fit.

Information Items:

- (1) The Office continued to be active throughout 2022 and 2023, mostly via email and zoom.
- (2) The Office of the Ombudsperson received no submissions regarding unprofessional conduct, although we did receive an inquiry related to the ASM Code of Conduct. The Ombudspersons met via zoom and discussed this inquiry, deciding to make some suggested edits to the Code of Conduct as well as establish some guidelines for awards committees. These suggestions need Board approval during the Board meeting at the annual meeting in Anchorage.
- (3) Small changes not requiring Board approval were made to the Code of Conduct during the past year.
- (4) Over the last year, in collaboration with the Human Diversity Committee, we revised the call and the selection process for the *J Mary Taylor Award for Diversity and Inclusive Excellence*. The Office and the Human Diversity Committee followed our review process and selected a winner. The awardee will be announced during the annual meeting in Anchorage. In the future, the Human Diversity Committee will take over all aspects of the award (advertising for nominations, examining submissions, selecting a winner, and working with the ASM Vice President to create the physical award).
- (5) Jessica requested that the ASM President find an ASM member to serve as the liaison with the Societies Consortium. The ASM President made several inquiries. Currently, no one is attending Consortium activities or reading Consortium materials.
- (6) We looked into conduct training for ASM members (mostly leadership and committees) to be held prior to the annual meeting in July. Unfortunately, Sherry Marts (who trained us prior to the 2019 meetings) is retired and no longer providing training opportunities. Sherry suggested a replacement (Paula Brantner; <https://www.pbworksolutions.com/>) and Jessica communicated with Paula and learned that she offers training but in combination with other services. Email correspondence between the office and the ASM leadership were made regarding this topic, but no decisions were made. The Office recommends that ASM members take Bystander training through their employers and institutions prior to attending the annual meeting. To be a meeting ally, these members must show the Ombudspersons proof of training. The Office recommends that the ASM leadership determine if and how they would like meeting safety training and assistance in the future (see Action Item #2 below).

Action Items:

- (1) We request no funds for the next year to support the *J Mary Taylor Award for Diversity and Inclusive Excellence*. Funds for this award will be requested through the Human Diversity Committee.
- (2) In reference to information item #6 above, funds of an undetermined amount are requested for bystander or similar training prior to the 2024 annual meeting. These funds may also be used to help the society make sure that the Code of Conduct and other safety and ethics protocols are sufficient.

Action items 3-5 were action items for 2021 and 2022, and we would like to repeat them:

(3) In the coming year, we would like to write the committee's by-laws, in consultation with the President or BOD. The by-laws will include aspects such as: should there be a Chair of the Office of the Ombudspersons? Should there be a maximum length of service? Should there be a rotation schedule?

We note that this item was initially brought to Drs. Kelt and Lessa in 2019 following discussions among Jessica, John Koprowski, John Hanson, and Cody Thompson. At that time, we recommended structural changes to the Ombuds office for the ASM bylaws for additional autonomy, more Ombudsperson, and the empowerment of Ombudspersons to act quickly if needed (following the example of other societies). We also recommended rebranding the Human Diversity Committee to the Human Diversity & Ethics Committee (see action item #3 below). The only change made since 2019 is the addition of two Ombudspersons for a total of four in the Office.

This action item is now considered urgent and must be addressed by the leadership as soon as possible.

(4) In the coming year, we would like to discuss how to make our office work more efficiently for the society. There is some overlap between our interests and what we do with the Human Diversity Committee. Other Academic Societies have recognized the importance of diversity, inclusion, and safety issues and have elected positions within their leadership to focus on these goals.

(5) In the coming year, we should re-assess the ASM Code of Conduct and determine if any updates or changes are necessary.

Respectfully submitted,

Erika Barthelmess (barthelmess@stlawu.edu)

Jessica Light (jligh2@tamu.edu)

Marjorie Matocq (mmatocq@cabnr.unr.edu)

Morty Ortega (morty.ortega@uconn.edu)