**Northeast Regional Honors Council**

**Minutes of the 2012 Business Meeting**

Hyatt Regency Baltimore on the Inner Harbor

Baltimore, MD

Saturday, April 14, 2012 (6 – 7 pm)

1. **Welcome and Call to Order**

Dr. Joanna Gonsalves, the region’s President, from Salem State University, opened the meeting at 6:02 pm on April 14, 2012.

1. **Approval of Minutes of October Meeting in Phoenix, AZ**

Dr. Shirley Shultz Myers, Executive Secretary-Treasurer, from Gallaudet University, presented the minutes from the NRHC Business Meeting held in Phoenix Arizona on Friday, October 21, 2012, during the NCHC conference. The minutes were accepted.

1. **Treasurer’s Report**

Dr. Myers presented the financial report, indicating that as of April 8, 2011, the region’s treasury stood at $125,035.66. She noted that we had larger numbers of both revenues and expenses because our bank account was used to receive conference registration payments for the first time this year. The report was accepted.

1. **Report on Baltimore Conference**

Dr. Margaret Roman, NRHC President-Elect and conference chair, from St. Elizabeth College, reported on the conference. Facts she cited:

* Last year’s registration total (Portland, Maine): 330
* This year in Baltimore: 428

That number may or may not be a record; long-time members recall that we had over 400 in Gettysburg in 2003, which was unusual for the trend at the time at around 325-350. We went down in numbers for a few years and have come back up to past trends. We will have to wait to find out if this year’s total is unusual or part of an overall upward trend.

* Of those attending this year, 20% are faculty; 80% are students—supporting observations that the primary draw of this conference is the opportunity for students to present. It lives up to the reputation of serving as a student-centered conference in the best spirit of Honors education.

We budgeted $188 per person for food with a subsidy of $76 per person, early bird registrant. (The actual budgeted cost per registrant was $261.) In the minutes from the summer meeting, we multiplied that $76 subsidy by 250 registrants, coming up with a $19,000 loss. However, the food at a 20% discount only came to a $43 subsidy per person, and if we multiply that actual subsidy by the 428 registrants we had, the loss should be $18, 404. Hence, all in all, we should be in the same ballpark as far as the loss we perceived is concerned.

Dr, Brian Etheridge, Webmaster/Newsletter Editor, from the University of Baltimore, underlined the importance of these numbers because of the complaints about NCHC costs; sometimes NRHC gets lumped in with NCHC, but a significant difference is that our costs, lower overall, also represent most heavily the cost of food. We include many meals while NCHC conferences include few meals yet with a higher registration cost. Also important to note is the region’s aim not to make money but to come out even or lose money since we have had surpluses for many years. (Dr. Patricia Warunek, Fairleigh Dickinson University, volunteered that the food was wonderful.)

Interactive workshops on Friday were packed, but the student-led interactive workshops on Saturday after lunch were sparsely attended with a total attendance of 136 students and faculty out of 428 registrants. Here is a breakdown of attendees at the Saturday workshops: The top two were Leadership with 17 and Stress with 33; for workshops other than these two, we had four workshops with nine people; two with 12; and two with 13. We had scheduled the workshops after lunch in hopes of counteracting the usual slump after the luncheon banquet. We may need to re-think yet again what would work better there—for instance, possibly roundtables and posters. We also may need to find a better time for these student-led interactive workshops.

* We see the Friday night banquet as the only glitch of the conference—We contracted for 375, following the rule of thumb to reduce total registrants by 10% , but this time around almost all registrants (410) stayed for dinner. That’s how some people ended up with macaroni and cheese.

Feedback from Student Caucus

Student representatives—Natalya Mishkova, Community College of Allegheny County, and Jeremiah Sammons, Gallaudet University—summarized student feedback about the Baltimore conference.

Jeremiah: Open Mic on Friday following the banquet was a huge success. Students highly recommend keeping that event for future conferences. So many signed up they had to stop at 12:30 am without everyone’s getting a chance to perform.

Students agreed that the only glitch occurred at the banquet. But, unlike previous caucuses, the representatives fielded comments of satisfaction and appreciation with recommendations for improvement rather than criticisms of failures. Here they are:

* Students loved City-as-Text experiences but wanted a Baltimore native to tell them where to go in Little Italy, what to check in various locations that locals would know. Provide this information in some short form. Also possibly have two different types—free for all explore as we do now and other more guided tours. (Those experienced in City-as-Text did not receive the suggestion for guided tours well since they felt it directly contradicts the purpose of City-as-Text; in fact, perhaps we need more guidance about why we build the options the way we do, and how to go about exploring, observing, and discussing with people in your group.
* Students loved dividing round table and posters over the two mornings. That was a very good change. They appreciated more of a chance of getting to see friends present this way.
* Presenting is excellent but some seemed disrespectful because they did not dress appropriately. They suggest Honors Directors need to give student presenters more guidance. Perhaps the region could provide guides for directors to use; these guidelines could be posted on our web site.
* Students also thought people should be told not to leave a session when a friend is done presenting but to sit through all presentations in that session. However, Dr. Etheridge observed that this behavior is an accepted feature of conference life everywhere. Since it’s hard to watch someone get up and leave during your presentation, perhaps one guideline could be that people get up and leave between presentations, not after one has started or at any time during a presentation.

Dr. Kathy Cooke, NRHC faculty representative, from Quinnipiac University, suggested we might want a DIH session for student leaders to allow them to see what other programs are doing or ask for advice on issues.

Dr. Gordon Atlas, Alfred University, commented that students could be encouraged to socialize with others. He observed that his students stuck together. He did note that one time they were told they could not go out with someone they knew, and that was during the scavenger hunt. He suggested this rule might be a good one for other events, for instance, City-as-Text.

Jeremiah responded that he and Natalya did require people to split up for the scavenger hunt. Most students responded positively but a few did not. We can only encourage, not force. Dr. Agnes Curry, St. Joseph College, suggested a compromise: You may have one other person from your school in your group. Her students did complain about being split up, but she felt they needed to be pushed, and we might need to tolerate the complaining for the greater good.

Dr. Marta Vida Sacks, noted that some have LD or other issues and need friends to help. They should not be forced to out themselves. This possibility was another reason not to force an absolute rule.

Dr. Lori Rubeling, NRHC Vice-President and City-as-Text organizer, from Stevenson University, noted that people were in mixed groups for the discussions that took place after people returned from their City-as-Text experiences.

Dr. Etheridge noted that fraternities and sororities have devised creative ways to have people interact. Some cannot be imitated, but others might be. Student representatives might find it worthwhile to check out fraternities and sororities for interaction strategies.

Please fill out our survey monkey to provide more feedback.

Dr. Roman asked that we thank our student representatives, Ms. Mishkova and Mr. Sammons, for a great job. They received a round of applause.

1. **Old Business**
2. 2013 Conference in Philadelphia, April 4-7, 2013

Dr. Lori Rubeling, 2013 Conference Chair, reported. The 2013 conference will take place April 4-7, 2013 at the Sheraton Society Hill Hotel, situated in an historic neighborhood with cobblestone streets. Near there is Penns Landing, the arts center of Philadelphia. City-as-Text options abound. Dr. Rubeling met with the directors of both of the local hosts this weekend: Philadelphia University (Dr. Marcella McCoy-Deh, Director) and LaSalle University (Dr. Richard Nigro, Director). Local hosts will generate ideas and themes for City-as-Text, and when we have our July planning meeting we can discuss all suggestions and make decisions then. Dr. Deh mentioned the themes of liberty and freedom and lifestyle. Dr. Nigro mentioned the importance to the city’s history of yellow fever. Dr. Lisa Rosner, from Richard Stockton College of New Jersey, said Mutter Museum’s medical exhibit disturbed—in good ways. Dr. Atlas asked if the dates conflicted with spring holidays (Passover, Easter); the answer is no because we specifically sought to avoid these conflicts.

1. 2014 Conference in Niagara, NY, April 3- 5, 2014, on the American side. Dr. Joanna Gonsalves suggested directors encourage everyone to bring passports in order to cross the rainbow bridge into Canada. There is much to see beyond the waterfall—good, bad and ugly—for instance, humanity’s relation to this energy source and different responses of Americans and Canadians in managing it. We have some local institutions ready to help: Dr. Matt Ward from Daemen College and Dr. Rebekka Keaton, Niagara CCCC . Others who might help include the University of Buffalo; Buffalo State; and Niagara University. The room rate is the quite affordable one of $109. We also have secured good rates for the conference center so that, overall, we will have low fees and probably make some money to fill the treasury expended for Baltimore and Philadelphia.
2. **New Business**
3. Future NRHC Conference Sites

Dr. Ross Wheeler, NRHC faculty representative, from Queens College, reported on some ideas about 2015.

* One was New Haven. He has some reservations about taking students to the location of Yale.
* Another is to look to going back to Gettysburg 12 years after our last visit. The facilities in Gettysburg were not first-rate in 2003, our last visit, but a new conference facility developed since then is supposed to be better. We would like to entertain suggestions for places in our western and central parts of our region in order to give others closer to those areas a chance to capitalize on the cheaper travel expenses.

Dr. Wheeler asked where else people would want to go.

* Dr. Rosner commented that Richard Stockton College of New Jersey—a downeaster location—has a conference facility, but the costs would be rather high.
* Dr. Wheeler commented that we did hold a conference at the Pine Barrens in 2004. The conference itself was great. For City-as-Text, we went to Ocean City, *not* Atlantic City. The hotel itself was wonderful, but, on a high-speed highway, it was isolated. Nonetheless, people did hiking and found other interesting things to do.

Dr. Etheridge asked why Baltimore has been so attractive. Is it the climate, the city, the ease of travel? Dr. Wheeler noted that Gettysburg is not easy to get to and yet was enormously popular in 2003. Dr. Amy Bass, The College of New Rochelle, commented that using vans for difficult to reach places otherwise was expensive. She preferred locations on train corridors. Trains are also more reliable than driving, too.

As for other ideas, someone mentioned Providence. Dr. Wheeler noted we had a conference there in 2006 with Dr. Peter Deekle, Roger Williams University, as local host.

NYC, Dr. Wheeler noted, is prohibitively expensive. If you want to pay $200 a night, we have plenty of places to go. $300/night gets us into Manhattan. The Sheraton in downtown Flushing, NY, the location of Dr. Wheeler’s home institution, Queens College, is not interested in having us. If a proposed conference center gets built, we may go there. But for now, Flushing has no other hotel that can accommodate us, except perhaps the LaGuardia Marriott—“which,” Dr. Wheeler deadpanned, “does have its charm.”

Other places briefly mentioned included:

* Hoboken
* DC
* Brooklyn - Dr. Wheeler noted we had a great conference there in 2001**.** But we could not afford it now. DC also is very expensive. Baltimore and Philadelphia became affordable only after the economy tanked in 2008.
* Delaware could be a place to go but we do not have strong representation in the region from Delaware, and we need that for a local hosts.
* Albany is on a train line. Good museums, has interesting urban renewal decision (interesting in that they made bad decisions with poor outcomes).
* Morristown NJ and Harrisburg PA did not draw many because they are not sexy, although Dr. Bass said students loved Morristown and also Harrisburg was a great conference.
* Atlantic City would mean lots of over 21 limits.
* Hamden, CT, home to Quinnipac University has a nice park, according to Dr. Cooke.

Please send ideas.

1. Call for Nominations for the Executive Board

Ms. Julia Fennell, NRHC Immediate Past President, from the Community College of Allegheny County, reported that the open positions include: Vice President, 2 Student Representatives (one-year term each), and 1 Faculty Representative (two-year term)

Dr. Wheeler described the responsibilities of faculty represenatives: serving on the conference planning committee; reviewing scholarship applications; reviewing proposals (he has handled Roundtables and Poster Sessions).

We received one nomination for faculty representative: Dr. Andrew Martino, from Southern New Hampshire University.

We received no nominations for vice-president despite comments from our four members in the four-year presidential cycle about its rewards, such as making them better directors and working with an outstanding group of colleagues.

The secretary-treasurer will send out requests for nominations. Everyone is invited to help recruit as well.

Mr. Sammons and Ms. Mishkova reported the following nominations for the two student representative positions:

1. Brent Barge, Lock Haven University
2. Ramon Rootharam Laguardia Community College (later withdrawn)
3. Freda Raitelu, Laguardia Community College
4. Luis Fernandez, Laguardia Community College
5. Emanuelle Williams, Laguardia Community College
6. Felisha Niebes, Laguardia Community College

Added after the meeting: Elvy Gerez, Monroe College.

Julie Fennell reminded potential student candidates that their coordinators/directors/deans must promise to send the student to the national meeting, our conference, and the summer planning meeting (held in the conference location).

She also reminded all potential nominees for all positions that the region grants travel stipends of $600 per year for each member of the executive board.

1. Election of Jeremiah Sammons to the NCHC Board and Updates from the NCHC Board Meeting in Reno

Mr. Sammons reported that he observed the board had a good number of new members who were recommending changes in policies and new policies. One example is the desire to strengthen (re-establish) links between the national organization and the regional organizations. To begin to address this goal, the NCHC board would like to send a national board representative to each regional conference.

Other ideas and actions:

* Having six members, the students form the largest voting block on the board. They proposed and helped pass awarding scholarships to each region to encourage attendance. Regions can decide how to award the funds.
* Once every five years or so maybe have the national office try to connect with a region and, when the national is in a particular region, have both the regional and national conferences together. Combining , they thought, would be a way to give some who usually cannot afford to go, a taste of national conferences.

Dr. Rosner offered support for this connection. In a world of small budgets, the national now competes with regional conferences. We must discuss and find ways to work toward our common goals together.

1. **Announcements**
2. Call for Materials for the NRHC Newsletter

Dr. Etheridge called for news items, essays, articles, photos, and videos.

Since November, we have had a new primary domain name: nrhchonors.org However, nrhcnewsletter.org will continue to point to our same website for several years, until the domain expires.

Please have students send photos, videos, especially of the flash mob, possibly a slide show of scavenger hunt photos (which our student representatives also will put on the NRHC Facebook page). Another idea is to facilitate blogging during the conference, an idea Amy Bass had offered.

Also please submit items from your newsletters to ours for information sharing but also publicity for your programs.

Last, please participate in follow up discussions from both our DIH to keep discussions going. Dr. Etheridge observed that we often feel energized during a conference only to return to the daily grind. You could continue to get more of the energy you experience here while back at home by continuing the discussion on line.

1. 2011-12 Scholarship Recipients (Partners in the Park, Winterim, Honors Semesters, Minority Fellowships) and 2012-13 application process/deadlines: Dr. Kathy Cooke reported that she and Dr. Wheeler approved five scholarships for the Winterim in Peru experience, one scholarship (only one applicant) for the Grand Canyon semester this fall, and three scholarships for Partners-in-the-Parks experiences this summer. We also awarded seven minority scholarships for conference registration fees although two cancelled.

The region may award up to ten scholarships of $500 each for Winterim or Semester experiences; five of the same amount for Partners-in-the-Parks; and ten minority scholarships.

Some applications are coming from non-member institutions and are therefore disqualified. If you encourage applicants, please also ask them to make sure their institution is a member of the region.

Deadlines:

* March 15 for Partners in the Parks and fall Honors Semesters
* September 15 for Winterim experiences or spring Honors Semesters

More information about the scholarships (except minority scholarships) is at <http://nrhchonors.org/partners-in-the-park-2>

More about recipients including recipients’ reflections may be found at <http://nrhchonors.org/student-reflections>