

LASA Business Meeting

May 25, 2012; 6:30 – 8:15 pm; San Francisco Marriott Marquis

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President's Report

LASA President Maria Hermínia Tavares de Almeida greeted those present and indicated that the Congress was going well. Unfortunately, LASA was not able to benefit from the participation of several scholars from Latin America who were denied visas to enter the United States.

Report of the Secretariat

Executive Director Milagros Pereyra-Rojas reported that in 2011 LASA membership increased 20 percent over the previous year, to over 6600 individual and institutional members. Membership numbers for 2012 currently are lagging slightly behind those for 2011, but it is expected that individuals who either renew at the Congress or become new members here will add to this number.

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The Secretariat is already working hard on preparations for LASA2013 in Washington DC, which will be the first of the Congresses to be held annually. The Call for Papers is in the LASA2012 Program Book.

Treasurer's Report

Treasurer Cristina Eguizabal reported that LASA has an Endowment overseen by an

Investment Committee consisting of the LASA president, the LASA executive director, the LASA treasurer and four pro bono investment experts. The Endowment is professionally managed by Morgan Stanley Smith Barney. The Endowment's performance has been more robust in previous years than of late. In 2011 the Endowment stood at \$4.1 million and had a return of 6.79 percent; currently it is returning 6.9 percent and stands at \$4.38 million. Thirty percent is invested in Social Responsibility Investment funds (SRI) and 70 percent in traditional instruments such as equities, fixed income, etc.

Report of the XXX Congress Program Committee

Program Co-chairs Gabriella Nouzeilles and Timothy Power reported that this Congress is the second to host pre-conference workshops and that they seem to be going well. The Co-chairs had asked for suggestions for themes related to the main topic of the Congress. They also had traveled to Pittsburgh to physically schedule the sessions in the available rooms to try to avoid problems such as scheduling popular speakers in small rooms. This had seemed to work well. The participants appear to be happy with the hotel as well as its location; meeting room sizes seem ample.

The membership response to the LASA2012 Call for Papers was excellent and the number of proposals submitted had increased 70 percent over the Toronto Congress. The Co-chairs had not been able to secure a keynote speaker although they had attempted to obtain a commitment first from former Argentine President Michelle Bachelet and then from Tabaré Vázquez, former president of Uruguay.

The smart phone application for the Congress program, an innovation of the LASA Executive Director, proved to be excellent. It contains all the information in the program book but is much easier to use, and can be updated in real time. This Congress “app” may end up replacing the printed program book at future Congresses.

An additional good idea was to pair the Welcoming Reception with the Award Ceremony to bring more attention to the award recipients. The close proximity of the site for the social welcome following the “formal” welcome was also very much appreciated.

It was suggested by a member of the audience that a mobile microphone be made available in some of the larger meeting rooms at the hotel.

Vice President’s Report

Evelyne Huber reported on two duties of LASA vice presidents.. One is to chair the Commission on Academic Freedom. The Commission had inherited a complaint concerning the Arizona law on bilingual education and what should/should not be taught. The members of the Commission decided that this was more a matter of educational policy and suggested to the proponents that they instead submit a resolution for consideration. They had chosen not to do so.

A second responsibility of the vice president is to chair the Sub-Committee on Resolutions. The LASA By-laws indicate that proposed resolutions must be received at least 30 days prior to a given Congress and be submitted by at least 30 current members to be valid. Huber noted that three had been received. The Sub-Committee accepted two (one on Obama

Policy and the other on Honduras) for recommendation to the Executive Council (EC) with only minor revisions and made changes to a third resolution regarding the “Cuban Five” detained in the United States. The Sub-Committee proposed a shortened text for that third resolution, and the EC recommended that it go forward with the changes if the proponents accepted them. Huber was able to speak with a spokesperson for the proponents and the changes were accepted. All three resolutions will be presented to the membership for voting. Huber reminded the members at the meeting that according to the By-laws, twenty percent of the membership must vote for a resolution and the majority of those voting must be in favor of a resolution for it to pass.

A question was asked regarding the timeline for the vote on resolutions. Huber responded that LASA must (e)mail the texts of the resolutions and requests for votes no more than 15 days after the Congresses and votes must be received within 60 days of the (e)mailing.

There was a question from the floor about a proposed resolution submitted just today about the denial of visas to Cubans who had been accepted as participants in LASA2012. Huber responded that she and President Tavares de Almeida had written a letter to Secretary Clinton that essentially covers the sentiment expressed in the resolution. The letter will be sent as soon as possible. Several members present in the meeting encouraged faxing of the letter for quick receipt and that it be placed on the LASA website.

In the discussion that ensued, some audience members were of the opinion that Congresses should be held only outside the United States until such time that LASA can be sure that visas for non-U.S.

participants will not be denied. As much pressure as possible should be put on the administration and the State Department to guarantee that denials do not occur, they said. And, if Congresses continued to be held here, it would indicate that LASA accepts visa denials as a matter of course. President Tavares de Almeida responded that there had actually been more visas denied for Toronto than for here in the United States. Because of the size of the Congresses, there are few countries in which LASA is able to host the meeting. It is impossible to assure members that Congresses will be held only in countries for which visas will not be denied. In addition, to be able to adequately evaluate the move to an annual Congress the EC had decided to hold at least three consecutive Congresses in the United States, LASA2013 through LASA2015. At the end of this time the EC will evaluate the effect of the change and decide if the change should be made permanent, she noted.

From the floor it was suggested that there be a contingency plan for Chicago in case visas are denied. Perhaps LASA could move the Congress to Mexico or Canada. Speakers on the dais noted that hotels will not sign contracts allowing clients to break them at any point because of factors internal to the client organizations. And, when contracts are canceled past certain dates, as occurred for LASA2007 when the Association pulled out of Boston, huge penalties apply.

As to an earlier suggestion from the floor that the situation of denial of visas for Cubans is different from that of other Latin American and Caribbean scholars, both Tavares de Almeida and Huber responded that the result is the same: Congress participants are denied the opportunity to hear from, and to interact with, those scholars whose entries are denied.

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