Structural Racism Accountability Committee
Report to the Board of Trustees
Recommendations for APA Elections Process

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APA Division of Diversity & Health Equity

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Executive Summary

The Board of Trustees Structural Racism Accountability Committee (SRAC) ensures that 2021 objectives from the APA Presidential Task Force to Address Structural Racism through Psychiatry (TSFR) are implemented through evaluating success, recommending improvements, and ensuring sustainability and accountability.

The SRAC met and discussed the two-year pilot to level the playing field for all APA candidates. The SRAC conducted two meetings: The first on Tuesday March 28, 2023, to review the March 2023 Report of the Elections Committee Executive Summary, the requested actions for consideration by the BOT and to review of the APA Presidents' M/UR Workgroup Report. The second SRAC meeting took place on April 14, 2023, convened with the intention to discuss, review and make recommendations for the BOT to consider regarding the APA Elections process.

Overall, the SRAC is recommending moving forward with a centralized approach to campaigning while incorporating more strategies that allow candidates to convey their messages creatively and effectively. While the SRAC appreciates the need for a level playing field and the intention behind the election restrictions, committee members noted that, overall, restrictions should be lessened in order to accomplish three objectives:
(1) eliminating unfair advantages
(2) sparking enthusiasm for APA and for the election
(3) allowing candidates sufficient space to establish recognition and allow voters to know them and their platform.

The SRAC would like to thank the APA Elections Committee, chaired by Dr. Josepha Cheong, for their hard work and comprehensive reports, that all served as helpful resources for SRAC to develop its recommendations.

SRAC Recommendations to the BOT

1. Allow candidates to use additional communication channels to campaign to APA voting membership (e.g., social media, DB's announcing candidates from their district branch).

2. Allow APA administration to post candidate announcements monthly to respective APA component communities. This would begin after the candidates are officially announced in Psych News.

3. Allow candidates to campaign through unpaid social media and allow followers to share posts.

4. Allow district branches and area councils to conduct town halls to increase exposure to candidates, increase the number of candidates running per office, and potentially increase equity. District branches and area councils **MUST INCLUDE ALL CANDIDATES** in a

designated election category as part of the town hall, not just candidate(s) from your district branch or area council. These town halls can occur at no cost to the APA and would be managed directly by the DB's and Area Councils.

5. Allow supporters to campaign if they abide by election guidelines.
6. Continue pre-recorded Candidate videos (replying to a pre-determined set of questions) which is posted to the APA website and allow candidates to send the video link to their supporters.
7. Continue production of APA Election Guide to the Candidates, which is posted on the APA election website and Psych News.

8. Create an APA Election Community that will be in use only between candidates being announced and polls closing (typically November 1 – January 31st). All candidates will be added to the community and all voting APA members will be invited to opt-in to the community.

9. Discontinue the current endorsement process of posting a list of supporters to the APA to the APA website.

10. Discontinue the Meet-the-Candidate Town Halls series due to low interest and participation rate in conjunction with increased member volunteer and staff time.
11. Future consideration - use push communication/text to send out ballots and increase voter turnout. This method would need more research to determine factors such as costs, legal limitations, etc. Not recommended for 2023 elections.

Requested Action for Consideration by the Board of Trustees

<u>**ACTION:**</u> **Will the Board of Trustees vote to accept the election campaign guidelines as recommended by the Structural Racism Accountability Committee?**

Upon acceptance administration will update the election guidelines accordingly to ensure alignment of the Board-approved actions.

Special thank you to APA Governance Staff (Monique Morman and Chiharu Tobita) and Legal Counsel (Colleen Coyle) for their review of this document and Ashley Mild (Government Relations) for conducting candidate telephone surveys.

Appendix A

SRAC Committee Members
Rebecca Brendel, M.D., J.D. - President
Petros Levounis, M.D., M.A. – President Elect
Vivian B. Pender, M.D. – Immediate-Past President
Felix Torres, M.D., M.B.A. – MUR Trustee
Vasilis "Bill" K. Pozios, M.D. – Assembly Speaker-elect
Gail Robinson, M.D. – Chair of Membership Committee
Walter Wilson, Jr., M.D., MHA - Chair of Council on Council on Minority Mental Health and Health Disparities
Magnolia Swanson, M.D. - Assembly Committee on Resident-Fellow Member
Linda Vukelich - General Member: District Branch Executive
Linda Nahulu, M.D. – General Member
Octavio Martinez, M.D. – General Member
Ruby Castilla-Puentes, M.D. – General Member

Invited Guests:
Richard F. Summers, M.D.
Cheryl Wills, M.D.

APA Administrative Staff
Regina James, M.D. - Chief, DDHE
Colleen Coyle, J.D. - Legal Counsel
Gabriel Escontrias, Jr. Ed.D. - Managing Director, DDHE

Appendix B

2023 Candidate Response Survey
Out of 14 candidates, 7 candidates responded – a 50% response rate.

Question 1:

- During the 2023 election cycle, the APA Elections Committee focused on its commitment to leveling the playing field and ensuring a fair and equitable process with specific campaign guidelines in an effort to meet that goal, regardless of access to resources such as finances, technology, or influence. Please select how much you agree or disagree with the following statement based on your experience: The committee accomplished its goal.
  o Strongly Agree
  o Agree
  o Neutral
  o Disagree
  o Strongly Disagree

- ➢ **Out of 7 Candidates who responded, 5 Candidates (71%) agreed or strongly agreed that the Committee accomplished its goal to level the playing field and ensure a fair and equitable process.**
- ➢ Out of 7 Candidates who responded, 1 Candidate (14%) strongly disagreed that the Committee accomplished its goal to level the playing field and ensure a fair and equitable process.
- ➢ Out of 7 Candidates who responded, 1 Candidate (14%) was neutral with the Committee's goal to level the playing field and ensure a fair and equitable process.

- If Disagree or Strongly Disagree, please share your opinion of ways to ensure an equitable and fair election process.
- ❖ *"…the complete ban on the use of social media will end up favoring those already well established/well known, candidates who had more time/money to travel to more in person meetings, less reach to younger members who are more likely to use social media."*

Question 2:

- From your perspective as a candidate, how satisfied were you with the overall election process?
  o Highly Satisfactory
  o Satisfactory

- o   Neutral
- o   Unsatisfactory
- o   Highly Unsatisfactory

- ➢ **Out of 7 Candidates who responded, 5 Candidates (71%) rated the overall election process as satisfied or highly satisfied.**
- ➢ Out of 7 Candidates who responded, 2 Candidates (29%) rated the overall election process as neutral.

Question 3:

- • Is there anything that you would like to share about your experience (positive or negative) about the overall APA election process?
- ❖ *"It felt like there was a lot of up front work. The APA Staff was GREAT! It was challenging to know what could or could not be done to campaign, in terms of speaking with others."*
- ❖ *"The APA staff was very helpful, but the whole process felt a bit overwhelming…."*
- ❖ *"The use of list serves in academia and with residents is the main concern as it can result in more academic representation than clinical representation. You might limit the use of private list serves and not the use of list serves for the APA. We are not diverse in our leadership representation from a geographic or type of practice viewpoint. That would change if a candidate could not get heavy resident voting with little effort. Note that elections can be determined and have been by 6 votes."*
- ❖ *"It was very time consuming and not very enjoyable."*
- ❖ *"Not being able to share more directly with others felt limiting."*
- ❖ *"As a resident, it is much harder to reach out to others within the Boards confines of "campaigning". This is because as residents, we are largely isolated to our program cohorts and do not have the large networks of established physicians running for other board positions. Many of my co-residents did not even know what the APA was (even though they are already members paid by our program) so not being able to promote ourselves on a more public level, such as social media or at local chapter meetings, makes it much more difficult to feel like we are truly connecting with peers about our platform. Especially if residents are part of very small programs with limited resident-to-resident exposure. Additionally, many of the residents I spoke to, had their APA emails filtered to their junk mail and had no idea about the elections until I spoke with them. If voting levels are continually low, this may be an important area to take a look at to find ways to better engage with APA members."*

Question 4:

- • Were the requirements and instructions of the APA Election Guide to the Candidates clear?
- ➢ **Out of 7 Candidates, 5 Candidates (71%) agreed that the requirements and instructions**

of the Guide to the Candidates were clear.

➢ Out of 7 Candidates, 2 Candidates (29%) did not agree that the requirements and instructions of the Guide to the Candidates were clear.

- If no, describe how this activity/publication can be improved.
- ❖ *"More clarity on use of social media. If there is a complete ban on social media then that should be clearly stated."*
- ❖ *"…emails from supporters should be allowed. Some candidates hired or had staff send out single emails to thousands of individuals which I did not have staff or family available to do…so playing field was NOT leveled this way."*

Question 5:
- Were the requirements and instructions for the virtual Meet-the-Candidates Town Halls clear?
- ➢ **Out of 7 Candidates who responded, all Candidates (100%) agreed that the requirements and instructions for the virtual Meet-the-Candidates Town Halls were clear.**

Question 6:
- Were the requirements and instructions of the APA Election Guide to the Candidates clear?
- ➢ **Out of 7 Candidates who responded, all Candidates (100%) agreed that the requirements and instructions of the website were clear.**

Question 7:
- Is there anything that you would like to share about your experience (positive or negative) specifically about the APA-managed campaign activities?
- ❖ *"I tried so hard and believe it was wasted effort."*
- ❖ *"APA staff was incredibly helpful and supportive."*
- ❖ *"The APA Staff was GREAT during the process."*
- ❖ *"This structure made the process easier than an open competition."*
- ❖ *"Very restrictive and made the process less fun than it should be."*

Question 8:
- Were the new APA Election Guidelines clear?
- ➢ **Out of 7 Candidates who responded, 4 Candidates (57%) agreed that the guidelines were clear.**
- ➢ Out of 7 Candidates who responded, 3 Candidates (43%) did not agree that the guidelines were clear.

- If no, describe how can the language in the guidelines or the guidelines themselves can be improved.
- ❖ *"The changes in the campaigning process left some of us uncertain about what was acceptable, especially around emails and social media."*
- ❖ *"Simpler instructions on campaigning."*

Question 9:

- Did you observe any "gray areas" regarding the guidelines that the Elections Committee could review to clarify for future elections?
- ➢ **Out of 7 Candidates who responded, 4 (57%) Candidates did not observe gray areas regarding the guidelines.**
- ➢ Out of 7 Candidates who responded, 3 (43%) Candidates did observe any gray areas regarding the guidelines.

- If yes, please share your concern and/or suggestion.
- ❖ *"As previously mentioned, the lack of clarity around the use of social media."*
- ❖ *"Prohibiting any campaigning while in a meeting or event is very difficult...and onerous."*
- ❖ *"Use of email and social media to campaign."*

Question 10:

- Is there anything that you would like to share about your experience (positive or negative) specifically about the new APA election guidelines?
- ❖ *"Exhausted from trying to reach out individually and disappointed so much that i did not have the ability to reach many."*
- ❖ *"For me the process was straightforward."*
- ❖ *"I think that they are well intentioned; it may be that it just will take some time to get adjusted to the change in the process."*
- ❖ *"Overly restrictive and those with manpower found a way around the rules."*
- ❖ *"This is an updated survey--as the previous one was written before it was clear that there was a total ban on social media."*

2023 Candidate Phone Response Survey
Out of 14 candidates, 11 candidates responded – a 78.6% response rate.

1. During the 2022 election cycle, the APA Elections Committee tried to ensure a fair and equitable process for candidates, by enforcing specific campaign election guidelines (e.g., virtual meet the candidate's town hall, newsletter Q and A). Based on your experience, did this process level the playing field for all candidates?

Value	Percent	Responses
Strongly Agree	18.2%	2
Agree	18.2%	2
Neutral	9.1%	1
Disagree	18.2%	2
Strongly Disagree	27.3%	3
Comments	72.7%	8

Comments

Because of the way that there was such a limited ability to get the word out, what ended up happening was that people who were known better to prevail. Harder for people who are less well known it was harder to get name recognition. If APA adopts this process people will grow used to it, but right now, people are having issues adjusting to the change.

I agree with the I felt like the committee was not run well. I think leveling the playing field is great, but if you had a spouse or someone who worked for you who could write 1000s of emails for you, it worked well for you. I think that not having the mass emails and surrogates, you evened the score. Not spending the money of travel and tiny gifts was a good thing. the whole process was exhausting and onerous as it was. If it was changed back, I still wouldn't be happy.

I think the process might have achieved equality, but it did not achieve equity. So that concept of leveling the playing field, I get some visual in terms of the difference between

equality and equity and people standing on boxes, you know, looking over our fence. So that was my experience. It is in several realm. And I've said this before, and I'll keep saying it. The concept of equity is something new to the APA. And since those efforts have been recent that such that, people who don't have a 15 or 20 year tenure in the organization, are now coming to the table in leadership position. And if they don't have 10 or 15 years history with people around the table, then if after a couple of years, you are able to show the competence of someone who's been involved for the last 15 or 20 years. The people who can speak on your behalf are muzzled, and they were marveled by this process. And so yeah, leveled the playing field. So everybody had an equal chance, but they did nothing to address equality.

Much of the goal of being a leader in the APA is being able to represent the APA and to have connections with people in the APA. An election should allow you to build connections and leverage connections to engage people in the process and build enthusiasm. By not being allowed to do that, it led to the lowest turnout in history. The intent was good but the logic was flawed. If someone doesn't have the connections, which does not require money, but building connections.

2. **Overall, how would you rate the 2022 election process?**

Value	Percent	Responses
Highly Satisfied	10.0%	1
Satisfied	30.0%	3
Neutral	10.0%	1
Comments	50.0%	5
		Totals: 10

Comments
I think that by allowing a more vigorous candidate a candidacy, we can engage more of our membership, which is ultimately what the APA is striving for. So I think that this much more passive approach is not what our democracy needs or our organization requires, since we want people to feel like they have an active voice.
And the more they can participate in campaigning, the more they can feel ownership in the process.

Recognize that not winning my election creates implicit bias. Very disappointing as a candidate.

3. Were the new APA Election Guidelines clear?

Value	Percent	Responses
Yes	10.0%	1
Comments	90.0%	9

Totals: 10

Comments

I felt they were a little cerebral but more friendly and approachable guidelines would be helpful.

Mostly clear.

Such as they were, they were fine.

Unsatisfied. Highly unsatisfied. If the rules hadn't been in place I don't know if the outcome would have been different but it might have been. I will never know. But I've just never I've, you know, never seen anything like this process, it boggles the mind.

4. Were the requirements and instructions of the Special Edition APA Election Newsletter clear?

Value	Percent	Responses
Yes	70.0%	7
No	10.0%	1
Comments	50.0%	5

Comments

Again, the information was clear. I just think the process was inappropriate, but in terms of the question you posed, yeah.

It was such a foreign process that, you know, someone entering into it for the very first time, would not know what to do and would be afraid of crossing the line. As a candidate, you err on the side of not violating the process and holding back, instead of pushing through and taking a chance to violate the guidelines to win. It was a mess, and I didn't approve of the Chair's tone regarding candidates not understanding the rules. There seemed to be a level of frustration or intolerance because candidates ask for clarification.

Understood the verbal presentation and my notes, but I didn't go over them.

5. **Were the requirements and instructions for the virtual Meet- the-Candidates Town Halls clear?**

Value	Percent	Responses
Yes	88.9%	8
Comments	55.6%	5

Comments

Its the process not the instructions that are not clear.

Neutral.

I think that with the Zoom link there was confusion. Needs a little fixing.

To the candidates yes, the members who didn't participate, probably not.

6. **Were the requirements and instructions of the individual candidate website hosted on the APA Election Website clear?**

Value	Percent	Responses
Yes	90.0%	9
Comments	40.0%	4

Comments

Exceptionally clear

Neutral

7. **What other activities could be implemented in the future to ensure a fair and equitable process for the candidates? (e.g. debate between candidates with moderator)?**

Response ID	Response
1	Need to get different geographic views at the top, you would need to have people from similar areas or viewpoints against each other. Fix how you look at things. Bias against people who graduate from state universities. It is an implicit bias that Ivy league is superior. May want elected representation who is a practicing clinician and someone who is an employee not of a university. Need work on systems where most of psychiatry is working and being pushed out by others.

3	Allow current leaders to endorse candidates. You could coordinate candidate forums with the district branches.
7	Not sure. I am not sure if 2 years is enough to see if this is going to work. Some minor alterations of the process could help, but not huge changes to stay the course. Not traveling to all of the Area meetings or other meetings would be a barrier in thinking about running for future elections. Continuing to keep this and might keep people interested and keep it more level.
9	1) A serious drawback is in the candidates not having the ability to campaign on their own in their own creative way with the website and communications or group emails. Individual communications were very labor intensive. 2) The interest of the electorate was already low 2 years ago. Less than 10,000 people or less than 25%. In the last 2 years it was less than 5,000 people or 8%. Any interest was killed by this pilot. The new uniform, restrictive policy inhibited election interest. 3) The election rules created paranoia amongst candidates. 4) Post election, in the South, racism is still very real. The process did nothing to fix this and I still wonder if there is still discrimination against foreign or international candidates. There is still a lot of lack of diversity in the south and Area 5 is fraught with the issue. Women are not a minority anymore and should not be considered a minority.
11	Not sure. I think it was great that we weren't able to campaign, only individual messages. I think it should be ok for people to talk to people openly. It would have been helpful to meet others who have run to understand what to expect.

8. Have you run for APA office before? If yes, why was this campaign better or worse than the last?

Value	Percent	Responses
Yes	40.0%	4
No	60.0%	6
Comments	60.0%	6

Comments

It was a good experience because it forced me to think about the future of psychiatry and role I would be taking on. Need to know a lot about APA and have confidence. This was a better experience in the past because I knew more. It was a bad experience because it was East Coast where everyone was voting vs. West Coast with lower turn out vs the south where nobody voted. To win, you have to focus campaigning on only one area of the country to win.

The only time I've run as a candidate for APA office has been under these new guidelines. So, we've established that it was a negative experience for me. And so if we're comparing year to

year or, you know, guidelines to guidelines I have no other set of guidelines to apply.

This campaign was better because previously we had to send too many emails.

Prohibiting using the constant contact was helpful. Not to permitting creating own website and other resources was a good thing.It made it more level of a playing field for everyone.

9. **What did you do to campaign and garner name recognition and get your message out?**

Response ID Response

1   Had experience in emails and phone calls and tried to use personal contacts. It was out there from someone to buy up to date lists and decided not to do that because it went against my principles. I was shocked that this was something that was happening. It was blinded so you couldn't tell who was actually selling them. It came through someone who was reaching out from someone else. Spent 2 full weekends sending individual emails to members. It was exhausting. Made phone calls and I am unsure if they made a difference. I did not have a lot of contacts with residency programs and that can increase votes by 200-300 members by having a resident reach out on your behalf and that creates an unfair advantage. Did not call people who would be inappropriate, such as BOT members. Also, I didn't speak poorly of other candidates. The experience makes me not ever want to run again.

3   I engage in one on one with the persons I knew and had previously engaged with either in person or through other forms of communication.

6   Nothing, other than taking advantage of the allowed resources. I did everything I was supposed to but individual campaigning was not allowed.

8   Very little, it wasn't allowed. I didn't do anything outside what was available.

10   People work with or know, knew I was running and spread the word individually. I attended as many meetings as I could, but I didn't talk about the fact that I was running.

10.   The Board limited the amount and type of campaigning that can be done two years ago- do you think the limitations on campaigning were helpful to you?

Comments

Except supporters couldn't campaign for you, that was not helpful. Not allowing   candidates to send at least one campaign message on listservs was not helpful.

I think they leveled the playing field. I am in a position where I can't readily travel,so needing to complete in a different way with people who have more accessibility wouldn't be possible. So this really was quite fair for everyone.

It didn't make it so I couldn't do anything else in my life. It is time consuming to run, but it doesn't keep you from having a career. It also means that not only academics have a greater advantage. It is now more contained and less onerous.

See above.

11.   Are there forms of communication you were not permitted to use that you think should be allowed so that you can reach more people?

ResponseID	Response
1	Put together your message and then have it sent out on all APA listservs once for all candidates by APA. Most people read their email from APA, so it would help. Videos also help to show people's personality. Need to creates systems to find out if candidates are strong speakers and able to be the best messenger for the voice of psychiatry. Someone who is smart, cooperative and brings different view points. When was the last time a full- time, practicing clinician was President of APA? That might speak to members. APA has changed my life and made me a much different person than I would have been from my exposure to the NE, but I am not sure the opposite is true of other candidates getting an understanding of other areas of the country. Leadership at the top does not look anything like the membership. This needs to be fixed.
3	Social media should be used. People need to be able to speak on your behalf. There should be no restriction for people making the effort to reach out to voters when they want without the requirement that they have a pre-established relationship. In typical campaigns, voter campaigns, constituents may not necessarily know who the candidates are. And so to say, if you didn't already have a relationship with them, that you can't reach out to them, or that you can't have someone speak on your behalf, or someone can't tell all their friends to vote for you, doesn't make sense. As I just said, again, I just

think it's the most ridiculous thing I've ever heard on the planet. And I don't think there was anything democratic about it. And I also believe that in a rigorous race, meaning having multiple competitors and really good people running that often times by reaching out to your constituents, you have a way to build interest not only in the election, but also the organization. And I think that the low voter turnout is reflective of that. The process seemed to think that people were watching their emails and only using old antiquated forms of communication, paper and email are what really hurt the APA as it relates to this race. Because there are other platforms that people use in terms of communication that we were not allowed to use, and particularly as it relates to people of a younger generation, the same people or the younger generation that the organization is seeking to capture as well and keep.

5	Should allow a limited number of communications through listservs.
7	Yes, social media should not be banned. APA could approve what is posted, but it should be allowed to be used to encourage people to vote.
9	Yes, the group emails, announcements in meetings, being able to campaign in groups. I think the pilot failed and it needs to go away. The intent to make it fair was good but the restrictions were too many.
11	I am not a social media person, so I am not really sure if I could have used that or if it would have been helpful. I don't have other recommendations.