

REPORT OF THE PRESIDENT

Steve Leigh presented comments and provided the following written report:

Please accept my appreciation and thanks to you, our members, for your involvement with and dedication to the Association. As usual, during our annual business meeting, we'll engage in the routine business of our association and celebrate the accomplishments of our outstanding colleagues with awards. Like last year, the business meeting will be broadcast live and recorded for those who are participating virtually this year.

The AABA has pursued numerous initiatives this year to address issues specific to the association as well as more general issues. Several initiatives been a substantial in their scope, involving tremendous commitment and hard work of many members. I thank all for their efforts and dedication to the discipline and to the AABA. We are a strong and innovative group, with a bright future.

Task Force on the Ethical Study of Human Materials

The Task Force on the Ethical Study of Human Materials has continued its extremely important work in the last year, and we thank co-chairs Drs. Ben Auerbach and Fatimah Jackson for their sustained leadership. Details of the rationale and formation of the committee were discussed in last year's President's Report and during the Presidential Panel. The importance of the Task Force has only increased in the last year, with a survey completed in mid-2022, as well as a preliminary survey report and a webinar with members of the Presidential Panel in late 2022. The report, [analyzing survey results](#) is available on the AABA website along with a recording of the webinar. The webinar included panelists from the conference event so that they could expand on the survey and address questions that emerged from the survey. The Task Force is continuing to move ahead on important issues, including coordination with granting agencies and cognate associations to increase our capabilities to address issues involved with our work and scholarship with human materials.

As noted last year, the Task Force decided to focus on treatment of African American human materials across many domains. An objective of this work, in the long run, will be to help develop policies, guidelines, and best practices that apply broadly to matters involving human materials in research and teaching, as well as in other professional activities. Survey results indicate that a focus on African American issues aligns with member professional activities and interests, with nearly 45% of survey respondents reporting research or other scholarly activities involving African American remains. The initial survey results provide a strong baseline for the Task Force's efforts. In particular, the group anticipates greater engagement with leaders in the African American community, community-based surveys, focus-group based studies, and expanded community partnerships.

We envision the work of the Task Force as helping to set foundations for a sustained advances on the part of the Association to engage positively with communities and to attend to ethical issues in all aspects of our work. This will involve continued work by the Committee on Community Partnership with the many communities with whom we work across our many subfields. In addition, we should expect the Association to develop carefully crafted policies, guidelines, and best-practices that are sensitive to the needs and desires of communities in balance with scholarly practices, objectives, and prospects. An important element of this

process will be a Presidential Panel at the Reno meetings. The Panel, co-sponsored by the Committee on Diversity, Committee on Community Partnership, and the President, will explore community engagement in a broad sense. The panel brings together biological anthropologists from across our field to share their experiences, knowledge, and insights on this issue, with important implications for the Task Force's next steps and for our discipline more widely. The panel will help provide insights and resources for our members, and set foundations for future endeavors.

The Association has benefited tremendously from the sustained efforts and dedication of our Task Force co-chairs, Drs. Jackson and Auerbach. In addition, we sincerely thank Task Force members who are also members of our Committee on Community Partnership (Drs. Shamsi Berry, Ellen Lofaro, Ripan Malhi, and Charlotte Roberts, chair Ben Auerbach). Additional members include Drs. Michael Blakey, Alan Goodman, Joseph Graves, Clarence Gravlee, and Sheela Athreya. Panelists from the 2022 meeting and webinar (Drs. Jennifer Caldwell, Carter Clinton, Joseph Jones, and Carmen Mosley) have graciously agreed to continue to engage with the Task Force. We express our deep appreciation and gratitude for their efforts and insights.

Annual Conferences

The 2022 conference in Denver was well-received by attendees, and while we had fewer presentations and registrations than recent pre-pandemic conferences, our time in Denver was productive and undertaken without major problems. Fortunately, we apparently did not see widespread problems with COVID-19 (our reporting system received fewer than 10 positive reports following conference). Despite this, we know that some members had considerable difficulty recovering from infections that were likely contracted in association with the conference. For 2023, we have continued COVID-19 precautions, although with some easing of 2022.

This year, registration fees were increased over 2022 levels, in part to offset a modest deficit from the 2022 meetings of approximately \$15,000. The deficit can be attributed to fewer registrations in 2022 than in previous years: a year with a typical number of registrations likely would not have resulted in a deficit. This indicates scaling effects of conference attendance, such that higher attendance results in lower marginal costs, greater revenue and thus both less risk and cost pressure for the Association. We are hoping that attendance rebounds to pre-pandemic levels with our 2024 conference in Los Angeles.

We have worked diligently to contain conference costs. For example, registration fees were held at 2019 levels through 2022, despite some inflationary cost pressures. However, given the modest deficit from 2022, I asked the Executive Committee to approve a small increase in registration fees on the assumption that 2023 abstracts and registrations would be comparable to 2022 levels. This measure was approved, and we implemented a fee structure for 2023 based on the fee structure in place for the 2020 Los Angeles meetings (which were not held in-person). The increase--about \$25 for regular members--was intended to cover a deficit on the order of the 2022 conference. Because abstract submissions in 2023 nearly matched 2022 levels and because fees increased slightly, we expect a "break even" year for our 2023 conference. It should be noted that the Association subsidizes conference costs through

endowment income with the goal of keeping our member costs as low as possible. In fact, our registration fees remain remarkably low relative to peer and cognate organizations.

Our Vice President and Program Chair, Dr. Kristi Lewton, led extraordinary efforts throughout the year to conduct our 2023 virtual and in-person conferences. I express my sincere gratitude to her. She has innovated throughout her first year in this position and carried out her responsibilities with noteworthy skill and goodwill, while helping to maintain the rigorous standards of our conference. Like 2022, this involved organizing both in-person and virtual conferences. However, this year, Dr. Lewton was required to add the formidable task of selecting and contracting with a new virtual platform, following the demise of the company with which we worked in 2021 and 2022. Along with Dr. Lewton, we owe considerable thanks to colleagues on the Program Committee for their work in several areas, including abstract review and composing scientific sessions. Our Local Arrangements Committee, Drs. Marin Pilloud and Richard Scott, worked diligently with our Advance Team to help members plan all aspects of our meeting. Additional Advance Team members included Drs. Jonathan Bethard, Kristi Lewton, Leslea Hlusko, and Stephanie Meredith, and, from Burke and Associates, Lori Strong. The team was assisted by talented University of Nevada Reno graduate students, Ashley Baeza, Reecie Dern, Dori Kenessey, and Emily Smith.

Proposed Amendment to the AABA *Constitution and By-Laws*

We have initiated a change the AABA *Constitution and By-Laws* regarding a section on the responsibilities of Local Arrangements Committees. Specifically, the proposed amendment concerns text stipulating responsibilities for Local Arrangements Committees (LAC). Historically, LACs had fiduciary and long-term planning responsibilities for our annual conferences, including arranging hotel contracts, conference logistics, accounting, and other critical tasks. Those responsibilities are now handled by AABA officers along with our business partners at Burk and Associates, Inc. Current LAC members continue to play essential scientific roles, assisting the Program Chair in organizing conferences while helping with general local matters. However, LACs no longer have financial, contractual, and logistical responsibilities.

The proposal to amend the document follows procedures specified by the AABA *Constitution and By-Laws* (Article VII, Amendment). Specifically, five regular AABA members must initiate a change by submitting a request for amendment. Drs. Jamie Hodgkins, Caley Orr, Matthew Sponheimer, Michala Stock, and Anna Warrener, proposed the change, and we thank them for initiating the process. In line with our procedures, their proposal was reviewed and considered by the AABA Executive Committee, receiving unanimous approval. The next step is to discuss and consider this matter at our Annual Business Meeting and Awards Presentation. If the proposal is approved, a final vote will be conducted during our 2024 annual conference business meeting. If not, the *Constitution and By-Laws* will remain unchanged, with no further consideration in 2024.

The current text of our *Constitution and By-Laws* regarding the Local Arrangements Committee states:

Section 2b. Ad Hoc Committees. Each annual meeting of the Association shall be managed by a Local Arrangements Chair appointed by the President, with approval of the Executive Committee, to serve for a term determined by the President. The Local Arrangements Chair is responsible for planning the meeting, overseeing and managing its operations and finances and bringing them to a conclusion, giving a final accounting, and reporting on these activities to the President, the Executive Committee, and the business meeting of the Association. Each Local Arrangements Chair is empowered to appoint an *ad hoc* Local Arrangements Committee to assist in carrying out these duties. Since each meeting will ordinarily have its own Local Arrangements Chair, there may be several such Chairs serving concurrently. The President may, when necessary and with the consent of a majority of the members of the Executive Committee, appoint other *ad hoc* committees to deal with specific issues. *Ad hoc* committees exist for a period of up to three years. Additional years may be added by the President and Executive Committee.

The proposed text states:

Section 2b. Ad Hoc Committees. Each annual meeting of the Association shall be supported by a Local Arrangements Committee appointed by the President to serve until the conclusion of the annual meeting. The Local Arrangements Committee is responsible for supporting the Vice President and Program Chair with local matters related to the annual meetings. The President may, when necessary and with the consent of a majority of the members of the Executive Committee, appoint other *ad hoc* committees to deal with specific issues. *Ad hoc* committees exist for a period of up to three years. Additional years may be added by the President and Executive Committee.

According to our *Constitution and By-Laws*, an affirmative vote will mean that the proposal will be presented at our 2024 meetings in Los Angeles for final deliberations. As noted, a negative vote terminates the process.

Yearbook of Biological Anthropology

Drs. Sheela Athreya and Graciela Cabana will begin their terms as co-editors of the *Yearbook of Biological Anthropology* following this year's conference in Reno. We express our deepest thanks to Dr. Lyle Konigsberg upon completion of his term for guidance of the journal.

AABA Committees

Our Executive Committee has continued its remarkable work on behalf of the Association and its members. We continued with both routine tasks, such as award selections, and other tasks, including revision of the *Constitution and By-Laws*. This year, we will be joined by newly elected members, including Dr. Jonathan Bethard in the role of Treasurer, completing Dr. Graciela Cabana's term as she moves to the *Yearbook*. Dr. Bethard will be joined by newly-elected Early Career Liaison, Dr. Justin Lund, and Student Liaison, Elise Adams. Please join me in congratulating and welcoming our new members. We thank Dr. Cabana as well as outgoing Early Career Liaison Katie Kinkopf and outgoing Student Liaison, Dori Kenessey. Finally, we

thank Drs. Elizabeth DiGangi and Rachel Watkins for their work as Ethics Committee co-chairs from 2021-2022. The Executive Committee is currently working to appoint new Ethics Committee leadership.

In addition to the outstanding work of our standing and *ad hoc* committees, we asked Dr. Anne Grauer to work with the Website Committee, joining Drs. Amy Rector and Ed Hagen, to consider changing our web presence. This may include changes involving integration of membership (currently handled by a third party) with our web systems and abstract platform. The Executive Committee will be considering these matters soon.

AABA Awards

The most gratifying element of our annual conference is celebrating the accomplishments of our colleagues through our awards recognitions. This year, Dr. John Fleagle received the Charles R. Darwin Lifetime Achievement Award. Our Gabriel Lasker Service Distinguished Service Award goes to Dr. Andrea Taylor, and Dr. Cara Ocobock has been awarded the AABA and Leakey Foundation Communication and Outreach Award in Honor of Camilla M. Smith. We are, once again, fortunate to be recognizing such a remarkable group of scholars and colleagues who continue to make fundamental contributions to our discipline.

This year's Cobb Professional Development Awards have been granted to Drs. Irisa Arney, Keegan Selic, Mayowa Titilope Adegboyega, Anna Hardin, and Amelia Villaseñor, with Honorable Mention to Mikel Arlegi. This group has crafted remarkable research projects, and the AABA is pleased to support these efforts, helping to build the foundations for our future. Please join me in congratulating these outstanding junior scholars for their work in critical areas of our field.

Acknowledgment and Appreciation

The AABA Executive Committee, once again, has worked diligently to serve our association and its members. Outgoing Treasurer, Dr. Graciela Cabana, has handled Association finances responsibly and carefully. Secretary Dr. Amy Rector has conducted core business of our Association efficiently and with extraordinary care and attention. History and Honors Committee Chair, Dr. Julianne Rutherford, handled an many excellent applications for our awards. Dr. Chelsey Juarez and the Student Programs Committee have been able, for the second year in a row, to support many students in traveling to the meetings through the Pollitzer Student Travel Grants. Dr. Lauren Schroeder has worked to select Cobb Grant awardees who will make a difference in our field. Dr. Stephanie Meredith helped with many new members to become a part of our Association, along with service on our HCARE committee. Early Career Liaison, Dr. Katie Kinkopf, has taken on a leadership role in addressing accessibility issues in the association. Student Liaison, Dori Kenessey, has played important roles, especially in assisting with local arrangements this year. All told, the Executive Committee has been called upon many times in the last year to advance our Association. President-Elect, Dr. Leslea Hlusko, and Vice President, Dr Kristi Lewton, have consistently supported our members, while contributing to the vibrancy of our annual conference and the overall health of our association. Many thanks to these colleagues in supporting the AABA in many ways.

Our journals continue to flourish through the leadership of Dr. Trudy Turner, Editor-in-Chief of the *American Journal of Biological Anthropology* and Dr. Lyle Konigsberg, Editor of *Yearbook of Biological Anthropology*. We look forward to our new *Yearbook* leaders, Drs. Sheela Athreya and Graciela Cabana, and once again, thank Lyle. We have been supported by our Wiley publisher, Gillian Greenough, and appreciate her work to support research in biological anthropology.

It is important to acknowledge and thank our business partners at Burk and Associates (Brett Burk, Lori Strong, Heide Rohland, Mary-Lou Robinson, Shannon Graney, Jill Drupa and others). They have aided the Association in many ways, including re-negotiating hotel contracts through the pandemic years, hosting webinars, producing monthly newsletters, and helping to undertake our multi-format meetings. In particular, Lori Strong has been a wonderful friend for us, constantly adapting to rapidly changing circumstances and helping association leadership choose the best paths.

I want to thank our members for continuing to advance the discipline in so many ways. Hopefully, our 2023 meetings will give us opportunities to support our students and junior colleagues in advancing their important research and in setting the foundations for the future of our remarkable field.

Finally, I am delighted to have served as AABA President for the last two years. It has been an honor to work with my colleagues in many areas. I have been impressed by the resilience we have shown in the face of COVID-19, even though I remain concerned about its impacts on our communities, particularly our junior colleagues. Despite these concerns, I see innovation and stunning new advances across our varied areas of research, revealing remarkable, perhaps transformative, discoveries in our future. I am grateful that the presidency has provided me with exceptional opportunities to learn more about biological anthropology and for providing me ways to engage with members in so many ways. I will continue to enjoy new findings in our field, and work to advance our research, teaching, and service in our fundamentally important discipline. Thank you.