

Committee on Equity, Diversity, and Professional Conduct

This report directly follows up on the recommendations our committee made to the Executive Committee (EC) in our April 5, 2021 report, incorporating the feedback we received from the EC in a rich discussion at its April 16, 2021 meeting.

Journals

1. It was noted by EC members during the discussion on April 16, 2021, that many of the guidelines we recommended to diversify the pool of editors, coeditors, and editorial board members and make this pool less “insider-dominated” were already followed in practice. It was agreed that the AEA would share the guidelines it currently follows for new editorial appointments with the membership to improve transparency. These guidelines can now be found on the AEA webpage: <https://www.aeaweb.org/journals/policies/appointment-procedures>.
2. The published guidelines do not cover the selection of lead editors at AEA journals. We recommend that the guidelines for this process also be shared with the membership.
3. The published guidelines note that the EC recommends that the lead editor consider a set of criteria when identifying candidates for editorial positions, which includes diversity considerations:

“Editors are encouraged to consider how a candidate would add to the diversity of the existing board, including (but not limited to) intellectual diversity (methods and fields of study), institutional diversity (where a person works and where they were trained), demographic diversity (including gender, race and ethnicity), and geographic diversity (national and international).”

In our April 5, 2021 report, we recommended developing a more robust system to identify a diverse pool of candidates, especially with regard of institutional diversity. Quoting from that report:

- *An ongoing list should be maintained of candidates for editorship which consists of persons who meet at least two of the following three criteria:*

a. Editorial experience at other journal(s)

b. A record of success at publishing in the Association journals

c. Substantial service as a quality referee for Association journals

Candidates from this list above must be explicitly considered and voted upon by the search committee for a new lead editor appointment, the committee on editorial appointments, and the Executive Committee.

- *There should be a mechanism for Association members to nominate persons for consideration for editorial positions beyond those who might have made it to the list described above. Search committees and the committee on editorial appointments should review this list as a potential source of other qualified candidates for an open editorial position.*

We continue to believe in the value of these recommendations.

The process followed by the *AEJ: Economic Policy* this year to identify new editorial board members, and explained in detail in the *AEJ: Economic Policy* editor’s report, provides a blueprint on how to implement these recommendations, and confirms its value in terms of identifying a more diverse group of candidates, especially on the “insider/outsider” dimension. An added benefit of the process developed

by *AEJ: Economic Policy* is also to expand the potential pool of quality reviewers.

We recommend that other lead editors follow a similar model to identify lists of possible new editorial board members and coeditors.

Search committees for new lead editors should also have access to these lists and consider them when making their recommendations.

Because this process is resource intensive and the lists will require regular updating, the AEA should consider providing the journals additional administrative support and resources to ensure a successful implementation.

Governance

In our April 2021 report, we recommended that the AEA be more transparent with the membership, such as via a dedicated webpage about its governance structure and the process via which it selects candidates for the EC. Information about the nomination process for AEA officers can now be found at: <https://www.aeaweb.org/about-aea/committees/nominating>.

In that report, we also recommended the following changes to the governance structure of the AEA to help address concerns related to its lack of representativeness of the AEA membership:

1. *At least one member of the Executive Committee should represent a teaching-intensive institution*
2. *At least one member of the Executive Committee should be from outside of academia (industry or government).*
3. *At least one member of the Executive Committee should be a junior faculty member*
4. *At least one member of the Executive Committee should be a PhD student.*
5. *The Chairs of CSWEP, CSMGEP, and the Committee on the Status of LGBTQ+ Individuals in the Economics Profession should become Executive Committee members.*

Based on the discussion on April 16, 2021, recommendations 3 and 4 were dropped.

In June 2021, we proposed changes to the AEA bylaws to implement the other recommendations. The changes would have needed to be taken to a vote by the membership in the August election.

Ultimately, the AEA leadership decided not to take these proposed changes to a vote for now. As we understand it, some of the key concerns were:

- the non-R1 classification is unsatisfactory as it leaves out a broad range of institutions that also need better representation.
- the proposed changes would increase the size of the EC to 31 members, with 14 of them voting, which may hinder the EC's ability to conduct its business effectively.
- the EC votes on the budget for the standing committees and it may create a conflict to have representatives of these committees present for these discussions, even as non-voting members.
- the president-elect appoints the chairs of the standing committees, which could give him or her unduly large influence on the composition of the EC.

While the committee understands these concerns, we do note the following:

- From a governance perspective, the most important standing committees to include in the EC are those representing members: CSWEP, CSMGEP, and CSQIEP. Including a representative for each of these three committees would already be a meaningful step while still keeping the size of the EC manageable.
- Another way to address concerns about the size of the EC is to rotate the (non-voting) journal editors that are invited to each EC meeting. More generally, it might be possible to improve the balance between journals' and standing committees' representation without much of an increase in the size of the EC.
- Standing committee representatives could be asked to leave the room when budget decisions relevant to their committees are made.

- The fact that appointments to chair standing committees are staggered over time means that the chairs will have in practice often been appointed by different individuals. Furthermore, this concern may provide a needed impetus to move toward a more democratic process to appoint standing committee chairs.

The AEA leadership asked us instead to consider how informal changes to the nomination process could improve representativeness of the EC without any formal changes to the bylaws. Indeed, during the April 15, 2021 discussion, it was apparent that the process followed by the AEA nomination committee has historically been somewhat ad-hoc and lacking clear guidelines.

We asked CEDPC member Donna Ginther, who has been serving on the AEA nomination committee over the last two years to make some recommendations about best practices for the nomination committee moving forward, based on her observations over the last two cycles. Of these, we stress:

- Continue to be explicit about the importance of diversity along many dimensions, as currently stated at <https://www.aeaweb.org/about-aea/committees/nominating>.
- Develop a consistent set of procedures for the Nominations Committee that is to be distributed with each nomination cycle.
- Cast a wider net for nominations, such as by systematically reaching out to standing committees and regional economic associations for recommendations.

One way to “force” the nomination committee to cast a wider net might be via a more aggressive guidance that states that candidates for elected office (maybe with the exception of the presidency) should ideally not be from the same institutions as individuals that have been elected to the EC over the last, say, four years.

Mental Health

We recommended in our April report that AEA dedicate conference sessions to discuss mental health issues both among students and faculty, and to highlight initiatives toward improvement.

Sam Allgood (who serves both on CEDPC and CEE) is organizing a paper session for the upcoming ASSA meeting on graduate student mental health. The session, titled “Exploring Mental Health Related Issues for Graduate Students,” will be chaired by Lee Badgett.

We believe that the AEA should continue to encourage and sponsor additional opportunities for training of faculty about their roles in promoting student and junior faculty well-being.

New Prizes

We recommended in our April report that the AEA introduce new awards that go beyond research-related or scientific contributions but instead recognize other aspects of professional life, including mentoring, education and training, public service, civic and community engagement, or contributions to the public interest.

Drafts for two new possible AEA prizes to recognize excellence in economic education (“The AEA Distinguished Economic Education Award”) and excellence in service (“The AEA Distinguished Service Award”) have been developed by CEDPC.

Professional Development Support for Department Chairs

We recommended in our April 5, 2021 report that the AEA sponsor a chair meeting to promote professional development and support for department chairs.

Donna Ginther successfully organized such a panel discussion of department chairs at the recent Southern Economic Association Meeting.

We recommend that a similar session be held at the 2023 ASSA Meetings. CEDPC would be happy to organize.

MARIANNE BERTRAND, *Chair*