

PLANNING THE FUTURE GROWTH OF OUR SECTION  
Labor and Labor Movements  
August 13, 2017

In the past several years we have seen **significant growth in the activities** sponsored by the Labor and Labor Movements section. We had the enormously successful mini-conference on [global precarious labor](#) in Seattle in 2016, which continued our relationship established in recent years with the China Association for Work and Labor (CAWL). We joined with the sections on Economic Sociology, Organizations, Occupations and Work (OOW), and Inequality, Poverty, and Mobility to co-sponsor the [Work in Progress](#) blog, which gives exposure to a wider audience for researchers in our field. We've developed initiatives like our mentoring program to help foster professional development especially for our younger colleagues. We've continued our tradition of holding our annual reception in conjunction with local labor and community-based organizations, to help build ties and awareness between sociologists and practitioners in the labor movement.

**There is much more we could do.** A non-exhaustive list could include things like organizing additional mini-conferences or workshops of various sizes or topics, by ourselves or co-sponsored with other sections. We could expand our programming, and include feature events with guest speakers brought in from outside sociology or from other parts of the world. We could provide travel funds to help defray costs and increase participation among students or non-U.S. scholars at our annual meeting. We could support more activities and social events to promote participation and networking for students and other colleagues. And we could co-sponsor more joint activities with other sections and raise our profile within the profession.

In order to pursue these kinds of initiatives, however, we need to **consider the resources that we have available.** Our finances right now are around where they would normally be in a year in which we do not do a mini-conference, but we have limited room to work with especially for any new initiatives, and as costs go up our reserve goes down. In addition to the costs of our annual reception, we pay \$200 per year to our web manager to help maintain our communications, and we have agreed to help pay to support the Work in Progress blog. We provide a \$250 cash award to the winner of the student paper award, and in years when there are co-winners we have raised additional funds to pay both winners. All of the costs for the Seattle mini-conference were paid with externally-raised funds (with the exception of the reception which was held jointly with our regular section reception.)

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There are various ways we can try to increase our revenue, but, as we enter our 18th year as a section, we should **consider our section dues**. Our regular section dues are and always have been \$10, which is the ASA minimum. The ASA Council sets the base rate for section dues at \$10 a year for Regular and Low Income members, and \$5 a year for Student members, a rate that was last adjusted in 1998. We do not receive our dues money directly; it goes to the ASA. As we are a section with more than 300 members, we receive a base allocation of \$1,000 plus \$2 for each member (**ASA Sections Manual 2013, p. 7**), so in January 2017 we received \$1,816 from the ASA.

Under ASA rules sections can choose to increase their dues above the minimum. A few sections, like PEWS, also produce an ASA journal and so their dues are significantly higher (at \$22 per year for PEWS). But many other sections have already raised their dues above the minimum, like Economic Sociology and OOW (\$12) and Political and CBSM (\$11). In fact, less than a third of all 52 ASA sections still charge the [minimum \\$10 dues](#). According to the ASA, we can keep every dues dollar we get above the ASA minimum. As of August 2, 2017, we had 406 total members, including 253 regular, 128 students and 25 low income. So, if we maintain our current regular membership level then a \$2 dollar increase in regular dues (not including student or low income dues) would net us another \$500 or more per year. Such a dues increase would **significantly increase our capacity and flexibility to do more** as a section. Just as a comparative example, the PEWS section's dues include regular dues of \$12 plus \$10 to pay for their journal. In 2016, PEWS had enough resources that it was able to contribute \$1,000 to our mini-conference in Seattle. The CBSM section also contributed \$1,000, and OOW donated \$500. We are not now in a position to make a similar expenditure from our existing budget.

According to our section [by-laws](#), "Additional dues [beyond the ASA base] may be recommended by the section council and shall take effect if approved by written ballot of the members of the section." There are additional steps to take through the ASA in order to raise section dues (ASA Section Secretary-Treasurer's Handbook, 2016 Edition, pp. 1-2), but any final decision on a dues increase would be subject to a democratic decision and approval of our members. If approved, any dues increase would become effective the following membership year, so that if we were to put the question on the 2018 ASA ballot for our section the increase would take effect in January 2019. Prudent planning for our fiscal future suggests that the section council should start moving now to have such a referendum in 2018.

Respectfully submitted,

Chris Rhomberg,  
Chair, Labor and Labor Movements section, 2016-2017