

November 16, 1984

Keep for Future Reference

TO: OSR Administrative Board

FROM: Janet Bickel, Staff Associate
Division of Student Programs

SUBJECT: Questions Commonly Asked by New Board Members

1. What are the basic responsibilities of OSR Administrative Board Members?

a. Broaden and deepen your understanding of your school's history, mission, current major challenges, and relationships with state and local governments, hospitals and other organizations. The more familiar you are with its workings the more meaningful will be your contributions to discussions of agenda items. Accurately reflecting and reporting on various local developments and controversies, individuals provide a valuable education to AAMC staff and to other Board members.

b. Read materials from AAMC as they are received and decide which are appropriate for posting, pursuing with deans and/or student government leaders, etc. Read meeting materials prior to plane boarding to see if any research or backup are required.

c. Regional chairpersons should maintain liaison with the Group on Student Affairs program chair for the spring meetings and be aware that the OSR budget does not include funds for speakers' or programs for regional meetings. I should be asked to help with these preparations as needed, especially in getting notices about the spring meetings to the reps. Chairpersons may want to design other mailings to their members during the year as supplements to what is sent to the national membership; I can provide labels for these or, secretary-time permitting, these can be mailed directly from the AAMC office.

2. Any suggestions for arranging time off at home institutions?

Given that you are a medical student first and an OSR Board member second (or third or...), sometimes conflict and problems arise in procuring the necessary time away. You should receive a copy of the letter sent to your dean from Dr. Cooper giving the meeting dates, etc. In addition, if you haven't already done so, visit your dean of student affairs to discuss the time commitment off-campus. Your dean may write a brief memo to course directors notifying them of the "honor" and of your planned absences. Personal follow-up several days before the meetings can help smooth the way. Be aware that your fellow students may not always be as excited as you are about your leaving a rotation or class to trip off to Washington.

3. What are the procedures for paying travel expenses associated with meetings?

You may obtain a cash advance to cover expenses by requesting one through me, preferably two weeks before you require it.

Please examine the attached sample of a travel expense report and read the "abstract" in the lower right corner. The only receipts which are required are: a) hotel bill, b) airline or rail ticket, and c) restaurant bills exceeding about \$40 (when paying for other Ad Board members, note under "dinner" rather than "entertainment"; since Ad Board members do not entertain non-AAMC guests, this latter category cannot be appropriately used). Hotel charges should be broken down by day, as shown on the sample.

Auto mileage is reimbursed at \$.20/mile. Phone expenses related to OSR business are reimbursed and should be included under "Miscellaneous". Laundry and movie charges on hotel bills should not be submitted.

These reports should be mailed to me as soon after the meeting as possible. A travel advance may not be requested unless an expense report for any preceding advances has been approved. I reviews each expense report for legitimacy of charges before recommending approval to the Accounts Payable Assistant in the AAMC Business Office who then examines them carefully; the Controller gives one last review. Checks are cut once a week on Friday.

The OSR budget is not "padded"; for each fiscal year, expenses are projected as accurately as possible under numerous categories-- e.g., the Board's lodging, meals and transportation expenses; audio-visual charges during the annual meeting; xerox; long distance phone service; printing; etc. Therefore, while Board members should enjoy themselves during the meetings, requests for reimbursement must be reasonable and opportunities for saving money should be taken advantage of, e.g., air fare-shopping, airport limos (instead of cabs if the cab fare exceeds about \$15). In the past, some Ad Board members have opted to share hotel rooms to decrease expenses. If a Board member is traveling to a Board meeting from an off-campus elective in the U.S., AAMC will cover the transportation even if it is higher than from the home school.

AAMC does not pay for Board members' travel to regional meetings; supposedly you would be attending whether or not you were elected to OSR office. Likewise, AAMC does not pay a Board member's Annual Meeting travel expenses UNLESS his/her school is sending another student, in which case AAMC will cover the Board member's expenses. This provision has the effect of encouraging schools with OSR officers to have more than one student at the Annual Meeting and to develop a stronger OSR base; also then during the Annual Meeting, Board members can devote more energy to helping with the meeting and less to individual school-related concerns.

4. What opportunities do OSR Administrative Board members have to interact with the other Councils' Boards?

For new OSR Board members, the first chance to meet members on the Council of Deans, Academic Societies and Teaching Hospitals Administrative Boards is the orientation for new members on Wednesday of the January meeting. This is largely a series of presentations by AAMC staff on the structure and functions of the AAMC. The other Councils typically begin their meetings late afternoon Wednesday and reconvene on Thursday morning. Their agendas, like ours, are a mixture of Executive Council items and business particular to the individual Board, e.g., meeting plans. The OSR Chair and Chair-Elect attend the COD Thursday morning Board meeting in order to report

on the OSR's Board's deliberations held the previous day and to learn from the deans' discussions. The other members of the OSR Board have the morning free; some may chose to meet informally to work on OSR projects.

All four Boards meet together for lunch at the Hilton on Thursday, typically from 1:00-2:30. The lunches provide the main opportunities for students to converse with the faculty, deans and hospital executive officers; therefore, while students may be tempted to socialize with each other, the other Board members and AAMC staff welcome the chance to get to know you. These are also good opportunities to become more familiar with the perspectives of these other groups; common agenda items for the Executive Council are natural topics for conversation. During the last half hour of the lunch, Dr. Cooper, the AAMC Chairman and the Chairs of the four Boards give brief presentations. Immediately following these, the Executive Council convenes. Board members who wish to may attend as observers.

In previous years, in some instances the OSR Board has been invited to a Wednesday evening function being sponsored for all of the Boards or by one of the Councils. Otherwise, students usually go out together and have a terrific time!

5. What are some of the biggest frustrations that OSR Board members have experienced during their tenure?

Probably the most noticeable discomfort is the sense of continually stepping into the middle of something. Few of the issues before the AAMC are new to those who have been around awhile. Most are continuing sagas, an knowledge of the chapters immediately preceding the present are essential to interpreting today's challenge. Staff members attempt to provide objective and digestible precis of issues, but these are never fully sufficient because of the condensation required. To some extent everyone has trouble with the particularly fast-paced and complex areas, but because students have been around a lot less time than most other AAMC participants, for them the challenge of cogently contributing perspectives is the greatest. Accepting rather than denying this challenge helps to alleviate pressure. This handicap can even be an advantage when it provides energy and creativity which may be absent from the responses of those more steeped in experience.

Brevity of tenure is another frustration; some OSR Board members get comfortable in their role only to find their year over. By comparison, the Council Administrative Board members have three-year terms. Because it may take half a year to formulate a project or survey, with important changes taking several attempts on several fronts as well over a year between initiation and tangible product, a willingness to work on projects without immediate visible results is required for Board participation. This situation parallels students' experience in working for changes at their institutions. Even short-term goals may seem unachievable because of the slowness of moving through the bureaucracy and committees. A little patience goes a long way in the process and should be equated with stamina rather than inactivity.

Occasionally some OSR Board members are disconcerted to discover how much of the time together during the meetings is spent on Executive Council agenda items, which may seem remote from mainline student concerns. This is a controversial area. The OSR was created primarily for the purpose of instituting a student perspective on issues before the AAMC. The whole concept of providing a "student perspective" can also be problematic. Each Board member must make assessments and come to conclusions based on personal experience; the weight of the responsibility of trying to

"represent" the masses cannot be carried long. Probably one of the best ways to come to terms with such potential conflicts is to accept the fact that a lot of what occurs at meetings is a personal education on a large variety of subjects and that OSR provides an essential function for AAMC when its Board members offer reflections and comments on the programs and policies under discussion.

The OSR Chairperson is very sensitive to the need to reserve time for consideration of OSR business. Board members can assist this process in two different ways. First, be familiar ahead of time with Executive Council agenda items so that discussion can be as focused as possible (while retaining the freedom to ask questions and get the background necessary to understand the issues). Secondly, be aware that each group and each individual has a finite amount of energy. New Boards can easily spread themselves too thinly over a plethora of areas; given the large number of topics raised at the Annual Meeting and recommendations for OSR Board action, this "cover it all" approach is understandable, but it usually is not in the long-run productive. Choices about areas upon which the most energy should be concentrated are difficult but necessary. So be thinking about how you feel the Board might want to prioritize its time and efforts.