SIG Council Conference Call
MINUTES
Tuesday, April 13, 2021
1 p.m. PT/2 p.m. MT/3 p.m. CT/4 p.m. ET
Call in number: https://zoom.us/j/96341511103

In Attendance
Brian Gonzalez, PhD – Chair
Robert L. Newton Jr., PhD – Incoming Chair
Kathi Heffner, PhD – Aging
Jaime Hughes, PhD, MPH, MSW – Aging
Amber Blackwood, MPH – BIT
Danielle Jake-Schoffman, PhD – BIT
Amy Leader, DrPH, MPH – Cancer
Karen Syrjala, PhD – Cancer
Matthew Whited, PhD – CVD
Melanie Bean, PhD – CFH
Nora Henrikson, PhD, MPH – EBBM
Carrie Patnode, PhD – EBBM
Courtney Scherr, PhD – HDM
Kassandra Alcaraz, PhD, MPH – Health Equity
Megan J. Shen, PhD – Health Equity

Cerissa L. Blaney, PhD – IPC
Katherine Hall, PhD – MVH
Rebecca Krukowski, PhD – OED
Andrea Graham, PhD – OED
Kathryn Ross, PhD, MPH – OED
Ahnalee Brincks, PhD – OBBI
Angela Pfammatter, PhD – OBBI
Jessica Breland, PhD – PHS
Candace Kroenke, ScD, MPH – PHS
Jessica Dietch, PhD – Sleep
Martin S. Hagger, PhD – TTBCI
Ryan E. Rhodes, PhD – TTBCI
Bushra Sabri, PhD – Violence and Trauma
Veronica Njie-Carr, PhD – Women’s Health
Andrew Schmidt (staff)

Minutes
The February 2021 SIG Council call minutes were approved as written.

Proven Science – Better Health Giving Campaign
Dr. Gonzalez reminded the council that SBM’s new giving campaign was currently underway, with several activities planned during the Annual Meeting. As an additional incentive for SIG participation, the Development Committee instituted a “Battle of the SIGs” to run through the end of the week by which the SIG with the highest percentage of members making a donation will receive bragging rights and special recognition during the closing celebration, in emails, on the SBM website, and on social media.

Health Policy Ambassador Program
Dr. Gonzalez notified the council that SBM’s Health Policy Council has been considering strategies to increase the impact of the Health Policy Ambassador program, and that during a recent Health Policy Council call, the group discussed leveraging the expertise of the SIGs. Interested SIGs could be invited to share publications or other resources suitable for a lay audience that the ambassadors could then pass along to policymakers.

Dr. Gonzalez asked the council whether scheduled calls for resources would be useful, or if a procedure should be put in place by which SIGs can provide relevant materials to the ambassadors on an ad hoc basis. Several chairs noted that it would be difficult to anticipate what resources would be useful for this purpose, while Dr. Bean reported that in her experience as an ambassador, policymakers are keen to share the type of information that they’re looking for. Either having a repository of SIG-recommended materials, or having a quick and easy way for ambassadors to get in touch with SIGs when policymakers ask for particular data, would allow ambassadors to effectively respond. The council also considered the benefit of certain SIGs adding an officer position to liaison with the Health Policy Committee or defining health policy outreach as an existing chair/co-chair responsibility.
Strategic Planning Update

Dr. González provided a preview of an upcoming presentation on SBM’s new strategic framework, which was to be shared in full with the membership during the SBM Business Meeting on the final day of the Annual Meeting. In summary, SBM leadership identified three strategic outcomes (Awareness and Impact, Public Education, and SBM as a Professional Resource) and charged particular groups within the society with working toward those outcomes in the first year of the plan.

Having taken a quick look at the society-wide strategic plan, Dr. Gonzalez asked the council for any new thoughts regarding strategic planning at the SIG level. Council members agreed that any SIG strategic planning exercises should remain optional, but questioned whether a strategic planning component could be incorporated into the existing annual reports or renewal applications. Dr. Whited also asked whether the annual reports or renewal applications could be adjusted to align with the new SBM strategic framework instead of, or in addition to, individual SIGs developing their own strategic plans.

Best Practices for Recruiting SIG Officers/Increasing Engagement in SIG Activities

After a number of chairs reported considerable difficulty with identifying new SIG officers in time for this year’s elections, Dr. Gonzalez invited the council to revisit its ongoing discussion of best practices for SIG leadership recruitment and engaging members in SIG activities. Some of those chairs noted that it seemed particularly difficult to find candidates interested in standing for a SIG election; Dr. Gonzalez asked the council whether moving away from direct elections and either appointing officers or selecting new chairs at random from among interested members would eliminate that hurdle.

Several chairs commented that removing the membership’s voice in elections would represent too much of a tradeoff. While it is important to ensure that the nomination/election process is as easy as possible for potential candidates, more prospective candidates might be reached by making SIG leadership roles more appealing rather than eliminating the election process.

Dr. Graham noted that the OED SIG had adopted a one-year term for student chairs, which represents less of a barrier to entry than other leadership positions. Additional SIG roles with fewer responsibilities and a shorter time commitment than the chair/co-chair position could be useful for engaging more SIG members and developing a leadership pipeline.

Several council members mentioned using their SIGs’ business meetings as recruiting events, introducing any standing committees and sharing other regular opportunities for involvement with the SIG. In addition, members of the Cancer and Physical Activity SIGs reported success with directly recruiting new co-chair candidates rather than relying on open calls for nominations. SIG members who might not otherwise consider themselves for a leadership role may be more likely to volunteer after being asked by the current chair(s).

As diversity, equity, and inclusion efforts become a greater focus of SBM’s strategic framework, Dr. Gonzalez also suggested that SIGs look for ways to incorporate DEI principles into their leadership recruitment, while the SIG Council could explore formalizing a commitment DEI throughout the SIG program as a whole in the coming years.

Open Forum

Dr. Gonzalez closed by welcoming incoming SIG Council Chair Dr. Robert Newton.

Next meeting: June 16, 2021; 11 a.m. ET