Program Committee Guidelines

These guidelines provide an overview of the Program Committee's work over the year, with suggestions for each stage.

Overview

The PC's work consists in two main phases with different stages within each:

- **Phase 1:** Accepting submissions for the conference (*Fall through Spring*)
  - **Phase 1a:** Drafting the Call For Abstracts (CFA) (*Fall*)
  - **Phase 1b:** Disseminating the Call For Abstracts (*Fall and Winter*)
  - **Phase 1c:** Reviewing abstract submissions (*Spring*)
- **Phase 2:** Turning accepted submissions into a conference program (*Spring through Summer*)
  - **Phase 2a:** Determining the skeleton of the program (*Spring or earlier*)
  - **Phase 2b:** Producing the program *(Spring and Summer*)

Phase 1a: Drafting the CFA

- The conference theme will be determined by the executive committee.
- With the conference theme, include sub-themes. These are designed to spark interest that might not be apparent in the theme itself. The executive committee may include lots and lots of sub-themes for you, but try to keep the actual list to 15 or below.
- Look at previous CFAs so you don't have to reinvent the wheel for the rest of the text.
- Send to the President and Local Hosts to review.
- To finalize it, you'll need for the submission forms to be live and up to date. Consult with the Webmaster about this.
- Ideally we have the keynotes already settled on, and they are included in the CFA. However, in the past we've had the CFA go out before this is done, and then we update it later.

Phase 1b: Disseminating the CFA

- Try to create a division of labor within the PC so that one person's job – not the chair or co-chair, though – is to disseminate the CFA.
- The President should have a Friends of NASSP list that they can send the CFA to.
- Try other listservs; the big one is Philos-L, and a social philosophy specific one is FEAST's listserv.
- Post hard copies at your own university; send directly to folks you think might be interested.
- Send it out sometime in the Fall or early Winter. This is one place where sending it out by a specific date isn't really necessary. You just want to give people enough runway to start thinking about it. Almost everyone doesn't submit an abstract until the deadline is very close.
- In the past we've extended the deadline by two weeks once it was close. This results in lots more submissions. In the past, the initial deadline was March 1 and the extended was March 15.

Phase 1c: Reviewing abstract submissions.

- Here's the evaluation procedure we have used:
  - Three members of the PC review the anonymized submissions independently; in any cases where the member knows the identity of the submitter, they recuse themselves from voting, and the submission is referred to the fourth member.
  - If there is unanimity (3 yes or 3 no votes) or near-unanimity (2 yes votes and a maybe or 2 no votes and a maybe), the decision was automatic.
  - In all other cases, we discussed over Zoom the merits of the submission and came to an agreement among the committee.
- We haven't had a set number of submission we sought to accept. In the past, our acceptance rate has been about 85%.
- Try to get back to people within a couple of weeks of the extended deadline. This is an area where sooner is always better, because if we wait too long to tell people they're accepted, funding deadlines for their travel may have passed.
- Include in the emails letting submitters know of the decision a link to the RSVP form. Make sure it includes everything you'll need for the conference. Non-obvious stuff includes: coauthor names and emails, abstracts (they're in the initial submission form, but having everything in one place is valuable). You may also want to ask if people are willing to chair, though we've also tried an opt-out system for chairing, and that worked fine.

Phase 2a: Determining the Skeleton of the Program

- Before you decide which talks go where, think about the overall structure of the program – the skeleton of it. This will include:
  - Cover page.
  - General information
  - Guidelines for chairs and presenters
  - Conference schedule
  - Special thanks page
- Some of the content you can get from previous programs; others (like the guidelines) will come from the accessibility committee.
- The most important thing is to get the conference schedule itself in skeleton form. The skeleton for Day 1 might be something like: Breakfast, Session I, Session II, Lunch, Session III, Keynote – with the corresponding times and rooms for each. Once you add in the details of the talks, it's very hard to see the forest for the trees, so it's good to get this done first.
- Run this by the local hosts and president to make sure the order makes sense, there's enough transit time built in for the schedule, and so on.

Phase 2b: Producing the Program

- Once the skeleton is agreed upon, most of your work will be in putting the schedule together.
- Look for talks that are thematically similar to put together. Don't just go on title, unless it's totally obvious; look over the abstracts, too.

- Know that you won't be able to put thematically perfect sessions together. Typically you will have two papers that go well together and a third that's got some overlap.
- Have the local hosts and President look over the program before it's finalized.
- Once you send it out, that's an opportunity for people to give you feedback.
    - Be sure to ask people explicitly to tell you if they're not coming. Lots of people don't
    - Make sure you are sending it not just to people who have been accepted to the conference, though! There will be some who aren't giving a talk but are still planning on coming; keep them in the loop. I recommend cultivating a detailed email list on a professional service like MailChimp where you can look up someone's contact info quickly if need be.
    - People will email you with constraints on when they can present – "I can't do it Thursday, I only get into town on Friday," that sort of thing. How much you want to honor these is up to you. But if you decide to honor the requests at all, you *must* keep a list of all of them in one place. You will inevitably have to shift talks around as people drop out, but before you do, check the list – you want to make sure that you're not contravening their wishes after you said you wouldn't.
- Be ready to be very responsive to email from the moment the program is disseminated to the time the conference is over.

Other Resources

Be sure to look at previous programs, CFAs, email communications, program committee reports, and so on. It's a lot to try to do this from scratch, so avoid that if you can!