

## **MINUTES OF THE DECEMBER 5, 2011, STRATEGIC PLANNING AND PROGRAMS COMMITTEE MEETING**

The Strategic Planning and Programs Committee (“the Committee”) of the Board of Regents of the Smithsonian Institution held a meeting on December 5, 2011, at 11:00 a.m. Participating were Committee Chair France Córdova and Committee members Judy Huret, Shirley Ann Jackson, Senator Patrick Leahy, John McCarter, and Paul Neely.

Staff in attendance included Secretary G. Wayne Clough; Chief of Staff to the Secretary Patricia Bartlett; Assistant Secretary for Education and Access Claudine Brown; Director of the National Museum for African American History and Culture Lonnie Bunch; Under Secretary for History, Art, and Culture Richard Kurin; Chief of Staff to the Regents John K. Lapiana; General Counsel Judith Leonard; Director of Communications and External Affairs Evelyn Lieberman; Assistant to Senator Patrick Leahy Kevin McDonald; and Under Secretary for Science Eva Pell.

The Chair called the meeting to order at 11:00 a.m.

### **APPROVAL OF THE SEPTEMBER 12, 2011, MINUTES**

The Committee approved the draft minutes of the September 12, 2011, meeting without comment.

### **MEETING OVERVIEW**

Dr. Cordova noted that although approving minutes was the only action item on the agenda, the Committee would be engaged on a series of key strategic initiatives, including two major efforts on which the Board and the Secretary sought Committee input —the ongoing development of the pan-Institutional education strategy and the launch of a campus master planning effort.

### **EXHIBITION CALENDAR REVIEW**

Dr. Cordova directed the Committee’s attention to the exhibition calendar and reminded members that the calendar was designed to help senior management and the Regents identify early potentially controversial exhibitions and allow for thoughtful planning. She noted that the Committee’s role was not to approve or reject planned exhibitions, but to provide “fresh eyes” and advice on addressing the issues and controversies an exhibition may generate.

**Jefferson at the Smithsonian.** Dr. Kurin began the calendar review with two exhibitions that the Committee has been closely monitoring – “Jefferson’s Bible” at the National Museum of American history and “Slavery at Jefferson’s Monticello: Paradox of Liberty,” organized by the National Museum of African American History and Culture with the Thomas Jefferson Foundation.

Dr. Kurin noted that the public reaction to “Jefferson’s Bible” has been generally positive. He explained that prior to the exhibition’s opening (November 11, 2011), copies of the “Bible” were provided to an ad hoc interfaith group. Reactions were “encouraging” and supported the Smithsonian’s sensitive handling of a potentially sensitive subject.

Dr. Kurin stressed the breadth of Jefferson scholarship and interest at the Smithsonian, which reflect his complex character and contributions. He briefly surveyed other Jefferson-related programming and objects at the Smithsonian, including a planned webinar (modeled after the successful 2009 Lincoln Bicentennial webinar) following the opening of the Monticello exhibition on January 27, 2012.

Mr. Bunch recalled that one of his first tasks as founding director of NMAAHC was to conduct thousands of hours of interviews with stakeholders to identify the stories of African American history and culture that were most important for the new museum to tell. “Time and time again,” he said, the difficult and not well-understood issue of slavery was identified. The challenge for the museum became, Mr. Bunch explained, to tell the story of slavery in an engaging and accessible way “ripe with scholarship.” He sees the Monticello story as an opportunity for the museum to test a number of theories and ideas on effectively approaching slavery in America.

The exhibition will focus primarily on six Monticello slave families. Due to the extensive research already conducted by the Jefferson Foundation, the exhibition will be able to document family lives both during slavery and after emancipation. Because Sally Hemmings’ family will be one of the six, both Dr. Kurin and Mr. Bunch expected some debate on Thomas Jefferson’s relationship with her. Mr. Bunch said that the exhibition will note that the “overwhelming” historical evidence supports the conclusion that Jefferson fathered children with Hemmings, but also acknowledge that the debate continues.

**Roads of Arabia.** Dr. Kurin noted that the Arthur M. Sackler Gallery planned to open “Roads of Arabia” in October 2012. The exhibition will examine the pre-history of trade routes and centers in the Arabian Peninsula, the roads to Mecca during the Islamic period, and the emergence of the modern Saudi state. The exhibition, which has been hosted at the Louvre, the Hermitage, and several other European venues, will be sponsored by ExxonMobil.

**Ai Weiwei.** Dr. Kurin informed the Committee that the Sackler and the Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden will host two exhibitions by the well-known and controversial Chinese human rights activist, Ai Weiwei. The Sackler exhibition will open on April 28, 2012; the Hirshhorn exhibition will open in October 2012.

**The Art of Video Games.** On March 16, 2012, “The Art of the Video Game” will open at the Smithsonian American Art Museum. While the exhibition has not be subject to an official SD-603 review, the museum is preparing for any adverse reactions from groups that may be opposed to considering video-games (including those that may contain violence) as serious art.

## EDUCATION STRATEGIC PLANNING

Dr. Cordova reminded the Committee that at its May 2011 meeting, Assistant Secretary for Education and Access Claudine Brown presented an overview of the Smithsonian's efforts to develop a pan-Institutional education strategy. Since that meeting, she has engaged in discussion with the Executive Committee and other stakeholder to refine the plan.

Ms. Brown noted that the Smithsonian's overarching strategic plan calls for revitalizing education and broadening access. Ms. Brown said that her work seeks to align educational efforts with that plan. Her staff is exploring ways to leverage work already being done in the various units to increase the breath and effectiveness of Smithsonian education.

A priority outcome for the Office of Education and Access will be to have broadened access by producing and delivering educational experiences, service and products. She described opportunities that have been identified while developing the pan-Institutional education plan, including better partnerships with individual Smithsonian affiliate museums. In addition, she stressed that the Youth Access Grants process has been "incredibly promising" so far.

To broaden access and improve education, Ms. Brown reviewed two key internal priorities: (1) creating an institution-wide learning community that is skilled at acquiring, creating, and sharing knowledge; and (2) supporting innovation by creating an institution-wide culture that integrates evaluation into its educational practice.

Ms. Brown also identified four "promising strategic initiatives" across the Smithsonian:

- Science in Context
- Democracy in Action
- Culture in Transition; and
- Creativity and Innovation.

To provide the Committee with a sense on how each of these initiatives would advance education and access, Ms. Brown discussed in detail the "Science in Context" program, highlighting how it could leverage existing Smithsonian assets and the Youth Access Grant program. Broadening science and math understanding through "Science in Context" will illustrate the "synchronicity" between what the Smithsonian does and what the world needs, by presenting youth "a point of entry" to key knowledge and life skills.

Ms. Huret said she was very encouraged by the progress on the educational strategy's progress and asked what the Smithsonian considers the pivotal learning moment for this initiative and whether the strategy will call for participants to continue the learning process in their local communities. Ms. Brown said that the Smithsonian is committed to "introducing people to immersive experiences" that they can also do in their home communities as well as develop on-line communities to further the educational experience.

In response to Mr. Neely's question, Ms. Brown said that the "really big new thing" from planning the education strategy is an acknowledgement that the Smithsonian's "true audience

is the world and one of the assets of the museum experience is immersion; [the Smithsonian has] to figure out to create those quality immersive experiences for people who will never come to our museums.”

On behalf of both the Executive Committee and the Secretary, Dr. Cordova solicited further guidance from members on both the evolution of the education plan’s contents as well as ways to craft the most effective presentation for the Regents.

## **CAMPUS MASTER PLANNING**

Dr. Cordova noted that over the past two years, the Secretary and his education and facilities teams have been considering possible uses of the Arts and Industries Building for education outreach. She added that pending legislation in Congress now calls for the Building to be designated as the home of the new Smithsonian Museum of the American Latino. As part of that proposed legislation, the Regents are being directed to prepare a “plan of action” on, among other things, funding and constructing an underground annex to the Building.

She explained that the proposed legislation has prompted the staff to consider a more formal and comprehensive approach not only to the use of the Arts and Industries Building (A&I) as a museum, but also better uses of facilities adjacent to it.

Ms. McNally described the initial steps toward creating a campus master plan. The scope of the plan will include A&I, the Castle, the Quadrangle, the Enid A. Haupt Garden, the Freer and Sackler Galleries, the Hirshhorn, and the National Museum of African Art. She noted that this presentation will be made to the Facilities Committee at its December 7, 2011, meeting and that she anticipated a substantive presentation to the full Board of Regents at its April 2012 meeting.

A retreat was conducted on October 31, 2011, with a diverse set of Smithsonian staff to begin envisioning both the approach to the effort as well as its scope. Ms. McNally said discussions focused first on the Smithsonian’s programming needs and then on integrating those needs with the campus components. The Smithsonian has a “tremendous backlog of information” on some of the buildings—many studies, for example, have been conducted on potential uses for A&I and the Castle—but not much has been done on a holistic approach to the entire “campus.” She said that there has been general agreement to move quickly and to begin taking advantage of the available structures as early as 2014. The “most exciting” result of the retreat was the group’s adoption of the “campus concept.”

Ms. McNally then provided brief capsules of some of the participants’ ideas for the individual facilities considered in the initial campus planning exercise. Secretary Clough said that the process was “really opening our eyes to the possibilities” of using these facilities more synergistically and effectively.

Mr. McCarter and Ms. Huret encouraged staff to take a more expansive view of the “campus” concept to also include the entire National Mall, including the National Gallery of Art, National

Archives, the U.S. Botanical Garden, and the Library of Congress.

#### **KEY INITIATIVES UPDATE**

Dr. Pell briefed the Committee on a potential donation to the Smithsonian National Zoo.

Dr. Kurin then advised the Committee that a meeting would be held later in the week with museum professionals and archeological experts to discuss next steps on proposed “Shipwrecked” (Tang Cargo) exhibition at the Sackler.

#### **ADJOURNMENT**

The Chair thanked the Committee members and staff for their participation. The meeting was adjourned at 12:40 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

France Córdova  
Chair