

Annual Report

ASOR Carolyn Midkiff Strange Committee for Growth, Innovation, and Visibility (GIV)

Submitted November 10, 2025

Committee membership for 2025 consisted of two co-chairs and ten members.

Co-Chairs:

Katherine Larson (class of 2025)

Julia Troche (class of 2026)

Committee Members:

Aaron Brody (class of 2025)

Leticia Rodriguez (class of 2025)

Avary Taylor (class of 2025)

Debora Heard (class of 2026)

Jenail Marshal (class of 2026)

Robyn Price (class of 2026)

Karlene Shippelhoute (class of 2026)

Helen Dixon (class of 2027)

Lisette Marie Jiménez (class of 2027)

Asil Yaman (class of 2027)

Marta Ostovich (ex officio, non-voting)

GIV Committee members also serve on the Board of Trustees, Program, and Early Career Scholars Committees. The committee encourages its members to serve ASOR in multiple capacities in order to facilitate cooperation and communication among ASOR committees. Two members of the GIV Committee, Julia Troche and Debora Heard, also served on the Strategic Planning Task Force. Happily, all members of the Class of 2025 (including Larson as co-chair) have agreed to serve a second three-year term, ensuring continuity and momentum; the Committee is also recruiting new members and hopes to add one or two additional people.

Unlike other ASOR committees, the GIV Committee has no area of direct oversight or jurisdiction; rather, it advises and makes recommendations to ASOR's President, Executive Director, Board, Chairs Coordinating Council, standing and ad hoc committees, and staff. In the fractious domestic and international political climate of 2025, the GIV Committee reasserts its role as focused on making ASOR's annual meeting, publications, membership, awards and honors, fellowships and grants, and projects and initiatives - including cultural heritage initiatives and affiliated archaeological projects - spaces of inclusion and accessibility.

We are grateful for the ongoing support of ASOR's staff and leadership during a challenging year. We especially wish to thank Marta Ostovich for her clear-eyed approach to solving

problems, her commitment to the committee's goals, and her orchestration of ASOR office resources in support of the work of the committee.

Committee Name Change and Federal Backlash Against Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Initiatives

Almost immediately upon assuming office in January 2025, President Trump signed a series of executive orders targeting Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) initiatives. Because ASOR receives federal funding, particularly for its cultural heritage work, and ASOR members are employed in states and universities at which DEI work has been targeted, the Committee voluntarily determined to change its name while maintaining its mission. While some members wished to keep using "DEI" to describe the committee's work, early career members and those at state-run institutions were concerned that having a DEI committee on their CVs made them more vulnerable in the eyes of current or prospective employers, granting agencies, and state and federal governments.

After reviewing language from other organizations and extensive discussion, the Committee proposed "Carolyn Midkiff Strange Committee on Growth, Innovation, and Visibility." The committee wished to honor Carolyn's legacy of strong values and quiet leadership, and is grateful to the Strange family for allowing us to honor her memory in this way. Growth, Innovation, and Visibility point to a future ASOR and field that is broader, bigger, and more vibrant. To grow in those ways will require innovation, as we will have to think and work in different ways than we have before. And yet ASOR cannot lose sight of individual identities and experiences, and ensure that marginalized voices are centered, engaged, and visible.

The name change was proposed to the ASOR Executive Committee and adopted in March 2025. Concurrently, we updated the committee description on ASOR's website and removed the names of individual committee members out of an abundance of caution. The co-chairs agreed to have their names continue to appear, to ensure there is committee visibility and accountability.

GIV Committee Co-Chairs participated in a town hall meeting for ASOR members, addressing ASOR's response to the changing federal landscape, in April. Alongside ASOR's Executive Director, Andy Vaughn, and President, Sharon Herbert, we reaffirmed ASOR's commitment to the committee's mission and guiding principles. Our mantra is: "while our name has changed, our work has not."

Recommendations on Code of Conduct

The Committee developed a Letter of Intent with recommendations for updating ASOR's various policies around harassment and conduct for the Annual Meeting and other ASOR-affiliated work. The LOI was discussed by the Board at its May meeting. The committee is grateful for the Board's thoughtful discussion and feedback. We continue to affirm the need to better align

ASOR's policies with those of peer professional organizations, to develop more transparent processes that ensure accountability, and to protect ASOR from liability. We have had further conversation with Beth Alpert Nakhai about leveraging results from her 10 year study on harassment in field work in support of data-based decision making. Recognizing that policy changes cannot and should not be the work of our committee alone, we continue to discuss these matters with other ASOR Board and Standing Committees to find ways to move these important matters forward.

Engagement and Visibility at the Annual Meeting

The Committee, with the support of the Program Committee and ASOR office, organized several successful initiatives for the 2024 Annual Meeting which will again be offered at the 2025 meeting:

- Committee table with resources, activities, and the opportunity to connect and share experiences
- Family Room of activities for those traveling with children
- Lactation space
- Gender neutral bathrooms
- Printed and online maps showing locations of these spaces
- Resources for presenters and session chairs on best practices for presentation accessibility and inclusive session moderation
- "Get to Know Boston" information on website including Family Friendly Ideas and a Land Acknowledgement and History to highlight the indigenous, enslaved, and immigrant histories of Boston

In preparation for the 2025 meeting, recognizing changes to international travel, visa requirements, and border security in the US, the GIV Committee assembled informational resources for those traveling to Boston from abroad. A selection of these resources are posted on the Travel Information section of the Annual Meeting website (<https://www.asor.org/am/2025/international-travel-2025>).

The Committee also organized a pre-conference walking tour of Boston's first Arabic-speaking neighborhood, known as Little Syria. This upholds our Land Acknowledgment to honor the histories of indigenous, enslaved, and immigrant communities in the areas in which the Annual Meeting takes place.

Cultural Competency Video Project

The Committee has completed storyboards and preliminary scripts for a video series on accessibility, accountability, and cultural competencies for those working on fieldwork projects. However, the logistics remain challenging. Recently the ASOR office has partnered with AIA to apply for an ACLS grant for additional funding to support the production of the videos; we are

optimistic that with an injection of funding and another institutional partner, we can move this project forward in 2026.

Looking Forward

The GIV Committee uses the November in-person meeting to discuss potential initiatives and set priorities for the coming year. In addition to continuing the above work around ASOR's policies on harassment and codes of conduct and the cultural competency videos, the committee is developing pedagogical resources for inclusive classroom practices and intends to develop ways to share those with ASOR members in the coming year.

We continue to have discussions about the role of our committee in a changing world. We recognize that the fact of ASOR having this committee is necessary but not sufficient in building a more inclusive, accessible, and vibrant field that responds to the challenges of the 21st century; our goal remains as it has always been, to be and to provide resources to ASOR staff, committees, board, and members.