

THE SEAWAY CURRENT

Newsletter of the Seaway Section of the Mathematical Association of America

SPRING 2022
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THE SEAWAY CURRENT

The Seaway Current is published at least twice per year by the **Seaway Section** of the **Mathematical Association of America** (MAA) for the benefit of its members. Its pages are open to all members of the MAA and, by invitation to others, for the exchange of information and opinion. Contributed announcements, articles, and editorials are welcome and should be sent to the editor.

Material may be submitted to the editor by e-mail. Opinions expressed in this newsletter are those of the editor or of individual contributors and do not necessarily represent the views of the MAA or of the Seaway Section.

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SEAWAY SECTION NEWS

Due to the Covid-19 Pandemic, the Seaway Section has not had a physical meeting since the fall of 2019. This has caused serious problems with governance of the section, namely, with the nomination and election of new officers. We need to fill the leadership positions in the section for the next year as we approach more normal operations for the section. To accomplish this we propose the following:

For 2022 - 2023 the major offices for the section will be held by:

1. Chair - Leah Bridgers
2. Program Chair - Brad Emmons
3. Past Chair - Ryan Gantner
4. Treasurer - Gordon Craig
5. Secretary - Blair Madore
6. Two-Year College Representative - Claudio DiMarco
7. At-Large Member - Elizabeth Wilcox

In all but two cases this means that the incumbent for 2021-2022 would continue in their present position. The exceptions are Past Chair and Secretary where there would be one-year replacements. This proposal is in violation of our bylaws, which specify the positions that must be elected by parity of year and year modulo 3 (**Article III, Section 4**), but the bylaws were not written with the disruptive potential of a pandemic in mind. If the proposal is passed, the Executive Committee will take up the matter of revising the bylaws in 2022-2023 to be more flexible with respect to officer elections.

We urge you to approve this change in the governance as we try to move into more normal circumstances.

**Look for an electronic ballot, to vote Yes/No
on the above proposal, from the MAA
at the end of June/early July.**

If you have not renewed your MAA membership,
please do so that you receive a ballot!

Siena College will host the FALL 2023 meeting, October 28-29, 2022.

Thank you to Siena College for welcoming the Section to campus, and thank you to the local organizers, headed up by Mohammad Javaheri. Safety measures will be taken, but the local conditions can change with little notice. Be sure to stay tuned to Section announcement venues, like our Facebook group, the webpage, your liaisons, and the Current.

We hope that you can join us in person in Loudonville, NY in October!

Leo James Alex 1942-2021

in memoriam

Written by Angeliki Kazas-Pontisakos and Toke Knudsen, SUNY Oneonta



Leo J. Alex, 1942–2021

Leo J. Alex, Professor Emeritus of Mathematics at the State University of New York College at Oneonta (SUNY Oneonta), died October 28th, 2021, in Oneonta, New York, after a long illness. He was 78 years old. Leo was born on December 3rd, 1942, and grew up in Rochester, Minnesota. He received a B.A. in Mathematics (cum laude) from the University of Minnesota, Twin Cities in 1964 and a Ph.D. in Mathematics from the same institution in 1970. His Ph.D. advisor was Gordon Ernest Keller, who in 1970 moved to the University of Virginia in Charlottesville, Virginia. Leo began his academic career in the Department of Mathematical Sciences at SUNY Oneonta in 1970, where he stayed until his retirement in 2012. He served as department chair from 1988 until his retirement.

Over his career, Leo conducted research on Group Theory and Number Theory. Leo's dissertation was part of the grand project on classification of finite simple groups that received significant attention from the mathematical community beginning in the 1950s. He described it as an exciting time to be a graduate student since you could potentially have a group named after you. That did

not happen to Leo, but his dissertation helped fill gaps in the classification project, which was completed in the 1980s. Leo's work on groups had led him to consider certain Diophantine equations where the variables occur as exponents, such as $1 + 2^x = 3^y$, and it was these equations that allowed him to transition his research into the field of Number Theory. When Leo posed problems related to the equations to the mathematical community in *The American Mathematical Monthly*, he found that the solutions published by the journal were all done by the same person, namely, Lorraine L. Foster. This led to a productive collaboration. Between 1972 and 1995, Leo published a total of 21 research articles, two of which were coauthored with Dean C. Morrow, who also had G. E. Keller as his Ph.D. advisor, and another five with Lorraine L. Foster. Half of his publications were in Group Theory and the other half in Number Theory.

Leo valued teaching as much as research. He was a beloved professor, who mostly taught courses on Algebra, both at the undergraduate and graduate levels. Leo worked hard to help students develop their mathematical skills and was a champion in the department for improving teaching and hiring good educators. He was notorious for the quirkiness and comedy he used to help students grasp difficult mathematical concepts. Dr. Philip Gustafson received his degree in mathematics from SUNY Oneonta in 1988, his Ph.D. in Mathematics from Washington State University, and is now a professor at Colorado Mesa University. He remembers the twinkle in Leo's eyes and the lightness of his step when he would tell his students about the "shoes and socks theorem," which applies to the inverse of a product being equal to the product of the inverses in reverse order: $(ab)^{-1} = b^{-1}a^{-1}$. As Leo put it: "In the morning you put your socks on first and then your shoes, whereas in the evening you take your shoes off first and then your socks." Dr. Richard Cleary graduated from SUNY Oneonta in 1978 with a degree in mathematics, received a Ph.D. from Cornell University, and is currently a professor at Babson College. He recalls a challenging proof in a Number Theory course with different approaches for even and odd numbers. After completing one case, Leo faced the class, smiled, raised his eyebrows, and said: "Well, we're half done. Unless you think about countability. In that case, we have as much work left as we had before we started." Leo's approach made learning the material fun and intriguing. On another occasion, Dr. Gustafson recalls proposing a connection between two ideas during one of Leo's classes. As he recalls it, Leo "... named the proposal after me on the spot and used the moment to initiate a Socratic discussion for the class. ... He would then bring up the proposal by name later in the semester whenever it applied. In these ways, Dr. Alex reached out to the students and helped create an atmosphere of learning and growth in the classroom." Leo often kept in touch with former students who became academics or educators and continued to mentor them after they left SUNY Oneonta.

Leo supervised a group of students preparing for the Putnam Competition in 1985. Two SUNY Oneonta students, Timothy Pantaleoni and Michael Halpin, received excellent scores in the competition, 24 and 19, respectively. This was a source of immense pride for Leo, the department, and the college, with the SUNY Oneonta team ranking higher than the teams from SUNY Albany, Syracuse University, and Colgate University.

Leo served as the department's liaison to the MAA from 1983 to 2012. In that capacity, he supported and encouraged the students in the department to attend meetings of the local MAA Seaway Section. He funded the trips for the department's student club, and he encouraged talented students to give presentations at the meetings.

Leo was a remarkable, generous, and thoughtful colleague, and a source of steady and wise counsel for many. He was a fierce advocate for both his colleagues in the department and for the department's students. Leo's sharp intellect, generous and humble nature, and wide-ranging curiosity and enthusiasm were unique. His absence leaves a large space.

Leo is survived by daughters Melissa (Lisa) Miller, Elizabeth (Liz) Alex, Katherine (Katie) Alex, sons-in-law Steve Miller and Earl Millett, and grandchildren Abigail Miller, Allison Miller, Thalia Millett, George Alex, and Phoebe Alex. Tax-deductible gifts can be made to the James L. and Gladys T. Alex Mathematics Scholarship Award. Checks made payable to the College at Oneonta Foundation, with "In memory of Dr. Leo Alex" on the memo line, may be sent to the Division of College Advancement, 308 Netzer Administration Building, SUNY Oneonta, 108 Ravine Parkway, Oneonta, NY 13820. Gifts can also be made online at <https://oneontaalumni.com/tribute> or over the phone by calling (607) 436-2535.



Leo J. Alex, 1942–2021

You are missed, Leo.

SEAWAY APPRECIATION:

Know a Seaway Section member who is retiring? Or who has won an award? Maybe they just said a few encouraging words at the right time? Or, they're the quiet person who is always in the background and never in the foreground? Or, do you want to write a few words to say good-bye to Section members who are special to you?

Submit a short note to the Seaway Appreciation column! Send Elizabeth Wilcox (elizabeth.wilcox@oswego.edu) an email (Subject Line: Seaway Appreciation) with the person's name and a sentence or two (or a few more!) about their contributions.



SECTION NOTES AND ANNOUNCEMENTS SPRING 2022

St. John Fisher College

Donald L. Muench, Professor of Mathematics and Computer Science at St. John Fisher College, has retired after 56 years on the Faculty. He is also a 67-year member of the MAA and hopes to continue attending meetings of the Section.

Mark McKinzie, Associate Professor of Mathematics at St. John Fisher College has been chosen as the next Chairman of the Department. *(Submitted by Donald L. Muench)*

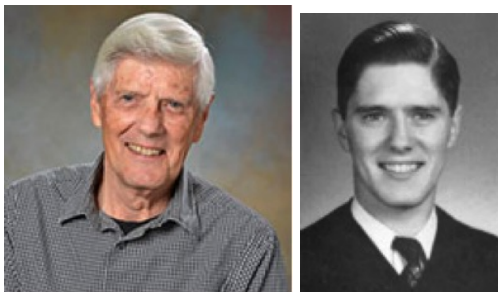
SUNY Plattsburgh

Sam Northshield, long-time submitter of Section News, is become the chair of the SUNY Plattsburgh Math Department in the fall. Congrats, Sam! *(Info submitted by Sam Northshield, announcement written by Elizabeth Wilcox)*

Don Muench *St. John Fisher College*



Commencement 2022



Present Day and 1955 Class Photo

This year, a St. John Fisher icon retires. Don Muench, a (really) long time Fisher professor and (really) long time Seaway Section member has stepped away from the classroom. Don was also a St. John Fisher alumnus, graduating in the very first graduating class of students from our institution.

Don was born and raised in Rochester. He first set foot on the St. John Fisher campus, as a student, in fall of 1951. That's almost 71 years ago. Harry Truman was president, and the show *I Love Lucy* premiered on TV. There was one building on the Fisher campus. (A second would be added in his senior year.) He graduated as a mathematics major in 1955 in St. John Fisher's first graduating class.

He joined the MAA in 1955 as well, as a member of the Seaway Section. He doesn't recall if he attended the spring meeting that year, held at the University at Buffalo. For what it's worth, one of the keynote speakers at that meeting was John Randolph who delivered a talk on "Teaching Computing without a Computer". This May, he celebrates is 67th anniversary of joining the MAA and the Seaway Section.

After graduating, he was drafted into the army. The Korean war was over and the Vietnam war had not yet begun, so he did not serve in an active combat role. In fact, the army had a "scientific and professional" program that helped him in his career. During his two years at Aberdeen Proving Ground in Maryland he worked in a Nuclear Weapons Lab doing mathematics and computations. He took graduate coursework through the University of Delaware during his service. There, he was encouraged to continue his education.

He enrolled at St. John's University in New York after his time in the army. At the time he wasn't really considering pursuing anything beyond a master's degree. Don found himself back in Rochester being 6 credits shy of his master's degree. He was able to finish it up with coursework from the University of Rochester while also teaching at McQuaid High School. With no intention of staying at McQuaid, he looked for employment opportunities. He responded to an ad for the U.S. Naval Academy (USNA) in Annapolis, MD.

Initially rejected for a candidate at USNA, Don was a finalist for a position at Rosary Hill College (now known as Daemen University) in Buffalo. However, the USNA called him and told him they were still interested. Not being able to get to Maryland for an interview due to his commitments at McQuaid, the USNA was willing to fly people to Rochester to interview Don. They hired him on the spot.

Don taught at the Naval Academy for a few years. While back at home visiting his alma mater and his family, the idea of returning to St. John Fisher to teach was planted. This he did, commencing his faculty role at St. John Fisher in 1966. Soon afterward, he became chair of the department. He was responsible for hiring the first Ph.D. on staff in the department and had a role in hiring pretty much everyone else for the next 56 years.

Through the years, Don has taught just about every math class one can think of. He picked up his Doctorate from Idaho State University. He dabbled a bit in computers. Beginning already in the 1960s, there was computer programming on campus, in FORTRAN. Using punchcards, he and his colleagues used the single computer on campus. Instruction began in BASIC using punched paper tape. Demand increased to justify a computer science major. The first computer science graduates were in 1983 and demand for computer science was strong. Don was sent to a Clarkson University summer program to get advanced computer science training. Don was there two consecutive summers doing intensive computer science work. Since then, Don's role was joint in the math program and in computer science.

Don has helped numerous students through independent coursework. He was a part of the St. John Fisher team doing volunteer work for Hurricane Katrina cleanup — 4 times. He has taught English classes via the Bridges for Education program on nine separate occasions in Ukraine, Poland, Bulgaria, Hungary, Estonia, Lithuania, ... (con't on p. 5)

Don Muench - St. John Fisher College

(continued from p. 4)

... Turkey (twice), and China. He has traveled the world extensively and will tell you all about his adventures if you ask him. Having a conversation with Don is an amazing experience, something that countless people have looked forward to on a regular basis. He will absolutely be missed on campus.

He has also been a mainstay at Seaway Section meetings. He estimates to have attended more than 75 of them, often with his wife, Marilyn, attending the banquet and plenary talks as well. He reminisces about his favorite meetings, such as the one at Brock University in 1978.

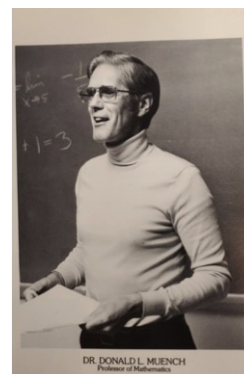
He gave an invited talk at the 1989 spring meeting at Union College, titled *Teaching and Learning the Function Concept using ISETL*. He had a role in planning the spring 2019 meeting at St. John Fisher College. However, he was the lead organizer the other time St. John Fisher College hosted a meeting — in fall 1974 (anyone remember that?). That meeting was unique, as he recalls, because it had a theme connecting all of the presentations: linear algebra. He recalls that it was well-attended and well-received.

Don is looking forward to returning to Seaway meetings. In addition to that, we don't expect that he'll be doing much relaxing in retirement. He has already indicated a desire to sit in on courses to learn to speak Arabic, among other things. We wish him the best; he certainly deserves it.

Written by Ryan Gantner, St. John Fisher College



Joining the Faculty in 1966



1982

UPCOMING SEAWAY SECTION EVENTS

- Spring/Summer 2022 Vote: Voting on the proposal laid out on p. 1
- October 28-29, 2022: Seaway Section Fall Meeting at Siena College, with Mohammad Havaheri as local organizer
- May 5-6, 2023: Seaway Section Spring Meeting at the University of Waterloo, with Diana Skrzydlo as local organizer

WANT TO BE INVOLVED IN THE SECTION?

GOOD! WE WANT YOU INVOLVED!

- Volunteer: Check out the [governance page](#) of the Section website for the list of committees. If something seems up your alley, email the Section Chair, [Leah Bridgers](#), and ask to become a member of that committee. You can also share ideas with committee members, if your idea is related to the charge of that committee and you want some help to get something moving.
- Organize: You can organize a special section on your favorite research or pedagogical topic, or you can organize a workshop or special event at the next meeting. Just get in touch with the Program Chair, [Brad Emmons](#), well in advance of the meeting to get the organization underway.
- Write: You can write articles for the Seaway Current — contact the Editor, [Elizabeth Wilcox](#), for more information — or even contribute news items or articles to the Section webpage or social media group.

Members lead our Section.

REPORTS & MINUTES SINCE FALL 2021

1. TREASURER'S REPORT – SPRING 2022

Gordon Craig, Seaway Section Treasurer

Since our spring meeting at St. Bonaventure was cancelled, we had a virtual business meeting on Saturday April 2nd, at which time I presented financial statements for 2020 and 2021, as well as a budget for 2022. (Since we receive our subvention, which is our funding from the MAA, in January, our financial year coincides with the calendar year.) The summaries are below, and I'd be glad to answer any questions any members might have.

There was very little activity in either year due to the pandemic, so the financial statements are simpler than they normally are. The main takeaway is our subvention has collapsed precipitously, and is now 50% of what it is was pre-pandemic. Fortunately, my predecessors have built up a large reserve, so we can absorb unexpected shocks, but this issue could be a problem in the long term.

The 2022 budget is highly speculative, since we don't know what to expect in terms of attendance at our first post-Covid meeting this fall at Siena College. Projects for the treasury for the near future include formalizing our spending procedures and enhancing oversight of the bank account by other members of the Executive.

Respectfully submitted,

Gordon Craig (Glendon College [York University]), Seaway Section Treasurer

2020 Financial Statement

| | | | |
|----------------------------|--------------|------------|------------|
| Balance as of Jan 1st 2020 | \$13,609.54 | | |
| Revenues | | | |
| MAA Subvention | | \$1,435.00 | |
| Test payment | | \$4.55 | |
| Total | \$1,439.55 | | |
| Expenses | | | |
| Honoraria | | | \$100.00 |
| Speaker Expenses | | | \$259.00 |
| Meeting expenses (Ithaca) | | | \$1,154.01 |
| Office | | | \$134.32 |
| Total | \$(1,647.33) | | |
| Net | \$(207.78) | | |
| Balance as of Jan 1st 2021 | \$13,401.76 | | |

2021 Financial Statement

| | | | |
|-----------------------------------|-------------------|----------|----------|
| Balance as of Jan 1st 2021 | \$13,401.76 | | |
| Revenues | | | |
| MAA Subvention | | \$895.00 | |
| Workshop registration | | \$50.05 | |
| Total | \$945.05 | | |
| Expenses | | | |
| Honoraria | | | \$300.00 |
| Speaker Expenses | | | \$13.99 |
| Office | | | \$504.00 |
| Total | \$(817.99) | | |
| Net | \$127.06 | | |
| Balance as of Jan 1st 2022 | \$13,528.82 | | |
| Current Balance | \$14250.77 | | |

2022 Budget

| | | | |
|---|---------------------|------------|------------|
| Balance as of Jan 1st 2022 | \$13,528.82 | | |
| Revenues | | | |
| MAA Subvention | | \$781.00 | |
| Registration fees | | \$5,500.00 | |
| Total | \$6,281.00 | | |
| Expenses | | | |
| Honoraria | | | \$500.00 |
| Speaker Expenses | | | \$1,000.00 |
| Distinguished Lecturer Program | | | \$500.00 |
| Travel Support for Section Representative | | | \$250.00 |
| Office | | | \$400.00 |
| Total | \$(7,650.00) | | |
| Net | (\$1,369.00) | | |
| Balance as of Jan 1st 2023 | \$12,159.82 | | |

2. THE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE MEETING – January 24, 2022

The Executive Committee and Extended Executive Committee met together via Zoom, 3:00 PM - 3:41 PM.

Current Executive Committee

- Past Chair: Cheryl Chute Miller (2021-2022)
- Chair: Leah Bridgers (2021-2023)
- Program Chair: Brad Emmons (2020-2022)
- Treasurer: Gordon Craig (2020-2023)
- Two-Year College Rep: Claudio A. DiMarco (2021-2023)
- Secretary: Gary Raduns (2019-2022)
- Section Representative: Jeff Johannes (2020-?)
- At-Large Member: Elizabeth Wilcox (2020-2022)

All present.

Due to on-going COVID-19 concerns, the local organizers at Saint Bonaventure University are not able to host the Spring Meeting of the Section on April 1-2, 2022, as planned.

The Executive Committee authorizes Jeff Johannes to negotiate with Talithia Williams regarding her willingness and ability to delay an in-person keynote address to a later meeting or to give a virtual keynote address this spring (as I recall the discussion, Jeff would still prefer some sort of in-person event this Spring with Talithia). If not, he may seek another keynote speaker for a virtual meeting and associated business meeting.

Related notes:

- Our preference is to have the virtual meeting including a keynote speaker and business meeting on April 1 or 2 in place of the planned meeting at St. Bonaventure.
- We should delay announcing cancellation of the meeting at St. Bonaventure until February 5 or when we have a plan in place, whichever is earlier.
- Jeff may offer a little more than our typical honorarium.
- The Business meeting should be announced at least three weeks in advance and include nominations in the announcement.

For information:

- The Fall 2022 Meeting is currently planned for Siena College, October 28-29, 2022.
- The Spring 2023 meeting is currently planned for the University of Waterloo.

Respectfully submitted,

Gary L. Raduns, Jr. (Roberts Wesleyan College), Seaway Section Secretary

3. THE EXECUTIVE & EXTENDED EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE JOINT SESSION – April 1, 2022 (VIRTUAL)

Present: Cheryl Miller, Gary Raduns, Ryan Gantner, Christine Uhl, Brad Emmons, Darren Narayan, Jane Cushman, Bob Rogers, Dan Visscher, Leah Bridgers (chair).

The purpose of this meeting was largely to plan for the business meeting associated with the virtual section meeting on April 2. However, we also received some reports:

Nominations Committee (Gary Towsley, through the chair): Expect electronic voting through the MAA with scheduled elections for chair-elect, secretary, at-large representative, and program chair.

Future Meetings:

- April 2, 2022. Ryan Gantner, keynote, and Business Meeting.
- October 28-29 at Sienna College.
- Spring 2023, site to be determined, hoping to have Talithia Williams speak.

The Committee on Website and Registration is working on a data governance policy relating to recordings and the use and retention of registration information.

The Distinguished Lecturer program is still suspended, but Bob Rogers remains willing to continue until things open up and a successor is selected.

Respectfully submitted,

Gary L. Raduns, Jr. (Roberts Wesleyan College), Seaway Section Secretary

4. THE BUSINESS MEETING – April 2, 2022 from 11:02 am to 11:58 am (VIRTUAL)

Sixteen noted present (not all members of the Association): Cushman, Emmons, Raduns, Gantner, Uhl, Johannes, Madore, Bridgers, Giambone, Louwsma, Miller, Craig, Fox, DiMarco, Dow, Roat.

Status of the minutes of the last business meeting (Fall 2019) was not known at the time of the meeting. [*Seaway*

Current Editor's Note: The Fall 2019 Business Meeting minutes are published in volume 43(4) of the Seaway Current.]

Chair's Report (Leah Bridgers):

- Thanks to Ryan Gantner for his presentation of Richman Games.
- Comments on the circumstances of this abridged meeting.
- Notes from the Section representative

Treasurer's Report (Gordon Craig)

- The treasurer noted a sharp decrease in the subvention over the past two years and noted that departmental memberships may help.
- Based on past expenses and registrations, the treasurer presented a brief budget with income of \$6281 (\$781 subvention, and \$5550 from registrations and fees) and expenses of \$7650 resulting in a projected balance of \$12160 on January 1, 2013.

Program Chair's Report (Brad Emmons)

- Thanks to the participants in the virtual program today.
- The next meeting is scheduled for Sienna College on October 28-29, 2022. We have arranged for the following speakers: Janet Barrett (editor of *Convergence*), Pamela Harris, and Xiao Xiao.
- Plans for a Spring 2023 meeting are underway (Waterloo and St. Bonaventure are under consideration).

There was extended discussion of strategies for communicating with the Section. This seemed to focus on faculty and students within the Section who are not members of the Association.

Respectfully submitted,

Gary L. Raduns, Jr. (Roberts Wesleyan College), Seaway Section Secretary

5. THE EXECUTIVE & EXTENDED EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE JOINT SESSION

May 23, 2022 from 2:15 pm to 3:00 pm (VIRTUAL)

Present: Jeff Johannes, Gary Raduns, Jane Cushman, Elizabeth Wilcox, Gary Towsley, Cheryl Miller, Christine Uhl, Leah Bridgers, Jolie Roat, Patti Frazier Lock, Brad Emmons, Cesar Aguilar, Barren Narayan, Ryan Gantner, Keiko Dow.

The purpose of this meeting was to discuss governance of the Section for 2022-23. The following proposal to the Section was drafted following the meeting and recommended by the Executive Committee by e-mail votes:

Due to the Covid-19 Pandemic, the Seaway Section has not had a physical meeting since the fall of 2019. This has caused serious problems with governance of the section, namely, with the nomination and election of new officers. We need to fill the leadership positions in the section for the next year as we approach more normal operations for the section. To accomplish this, we propose the following:

For 2022 - 2023 the major offices for the section will be held by

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- Two-year College Representative — Claudio DiMarco
- At-Large Member — Elizabeth Wilcox

In all but two cases this means that the incumbent for 2021-2022 would continue in their present position. The exceptions are Past Chair and Secretary where there would be one-year replacements. This proposal is in violation of our bylaws, which specify the positions that must be elected by parity of year and year modulo 3 (Article III, Section 4), but the bylaws were not written with the disruptive potential of a pandemic in mind. If the proposal is passed, the Executive Committee will take up the matter of revising the bylaws in 2022-2023 to be more flexible with respect to officer elections.

Respectfully submitted,

Gary L. Raduns, Jr. (Roberts Wesleyan College), Seaway Section Secretary