

## **SOAR Newsletter February 2021**

SOAR's Spring 2021 virtual semester has begun with an offering of 23 courses, up from 12 in our previous virtual semester. We are not sure when we will be able to offer live, in-person classes as in the days of yore, but your Board is trying to remain flexible in its planning. Of course we wish to return to the model that was so successful and popular for 20 years, but we are also aware, from our recent survey of the membership, that many members enjoy the virtual courses. The next year or so presents our organization with interesting challenges (emphasis on both "interesting" and "challenges"). The situation keeps changing; one day we are optimistic about the efficacy of vaccines and a few days later we learn of new varieties of the virus, which threaten to outflank one or another vaccine. And we must, of course, adapt to the policies of the several universities which generously allow us to use classrooms.

During recent months, the Board has been active in adapting to virtual classrooms, but also in planning for a return to in-person classes. Many SOAR members have taken advantage of the Zoom instruction that has been included in our course offerings so that they could comfortably access other courses in the curriculum. Individual members of the Board have led efforts to digitize our scheduling and registration procedures, which have allowed us to function inexpensively and without an office. When we begin to reopen, the office will be a priority and, naturally, expenses will rise. Plans are being prepared.

Two members have recently joined the Board of Directors. Juanita Babcock has been a member of SOAR since 2006, has taught many topics through the years, has been ambassador for various classes, is currently the chair of the Nominations & Awards Committee, and was awarded the Leon LeBeau Award in the Fall of 2015. Anne Hopkins has been a member of SOAR for 14 years, an ambassador almost every semester, and has presented a Vicarious Voyage about Chile and a class on embroidery.

After our March Board meeting, we expect to be able to give you a preview of potential courses for Fall 2021. We plan for that to be another virtual semester, but we are flexible and hopeful that Spring 2022 may allow a transition to a hybrid semester: on-line, outdoors, small groups. We'll all continue SOARing in both new and accustomed ways.

Keep SOARing!