

The SOAR Board of Directors met, in-person and maskless for the first time in more than a year, on June 9 at the Colton Volunteer Fire Dept Hall (beautiful space, thank you CVFD). The experience renewed our commitment to face-to-face classes as soon as possible. We plan to have many classroom experiences for the Spring 2022 semester, but will offer one more semester of Zoom classes in the approaching fall (details soon).

We are sure that our members are also eager for the in-person experience that they are accustomed to. We try to be as agile as possible, but our planning for each semester begins more than six months before classes begin (think back to February). We are further constrained by the limits imposed by organizations from which we draw both presenters and classrooms. Enough excuses—we are coming back!

As we return to scheduling the experiences that our members desire, the Board will encounter challenges. We have been successful in husbanding our resources through the crisis and have learned some lessons about digital operations that are applicable to the “reopening.” As we proceed we will need to provide the accustomed services by reopening the office (our biggest expense) to handle clerical matters and answer the phone. We do hope to reduce expenditures by conducting much business by email and related technologies, about which we have learned a thing or two during the crisis. And (did you guess this was coming?) we will have to reestablish a membership fee to pay for the services. So the Board has much to consider and many decisions to make. We will keep you apprised.

Perhaps our greatest challenge will be to reestablish our membership base. Between a quarter and a third of members participated in the two completed semesters of Zoom sessions—not bad, but not enough to return to pre-COVID operations. We will need to recruit members.

An important part of SOAR’s appeal and success has always been its volunteers. As events unfold, we will notify you of specific opportunities to contribute. We anticipate that communications both internal (newsletter, course information) and external (public relations) will be crucial. Here is a first call for volunteers to join our communications efforts. If you have computer access and basic word-processing skills with the curiosity to learn a few tricks, please reply to this message by announcing your eagerness to participate. We’ll then contact you.

We invite you to SOAR for one more semester on Zoom (instruction will be offered again) in anticipation of soon returning to socializing while learning—true SOARing.