

# PRESIDENTIAL ADDRESS

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It is exciting to serve as president of NASPAA following Ken Tolo's first full year as our executive director. Ken has done a wonderful job and I want to thank him for his direction and support. My thanks also to Jo Boufford for her outstanding leadership this past year. What a tough act to follow!

This address is the one time when presidents have a captive audience of NASPAA members forced to hear their views on the state of public affairs education. It is also a chance to provide some sense of direction about NASPAA activities in the coming year that build on the efforts of previous leadership. I will try to accomplish both without wearing out my welcome.

NASPAA's strategic focus has emerged under the strong leadership of Kerry Ban, Jo Boufford, and Ken Tolo and the efforts of the national council, particularly Genia Toma and Dan Mazmanian. It is also a testament to the leadership of programs around the country that had members participate in forums and provide feedback on the NASPAA Web site and that have engaged with others in sharing their opinions about the direction of public affairs education. I would like to thank all who contributed to that effort.

The many varied themes that flowed from the strategic planning process are the basis for my remarks today. Seven areas of strategic focus emerged from the process: Accreditation, Institutional Design and Learning, Marketing, Internationalizing and Globalizing, Research, Diversity, and Partnerships.

Let me try to address each of these in ways that reflect NASPAA's challenges and opportunities.

## ACCREDITATION

Accreditation is clearly seen by the membership as the most important activity that NASPAA undertakes. This does not mean that everyone is in agreement about how this should be accomplished. Members raised many

suggestions, ranging from accrediting undergraduate and doctoral programs to moving beyond traditional public affairs programs to include accreditation of criminal justice, health administration, and planning programs as well.

Accreditation serves many purposes. It provides legitimacy in our institutions to ensure that our master's degree programs meet basic quality standards for the field. It provides a way to market to potential students by telling them that they will acquire a seal of approval proving that their learning outcomes were achieved through our programs. Accreditation also provides a way to benchmark our programs against our peers. Finally, it serves as a mechanism to share innovative and creative approaches to public affairs education with each other.

But there are challenges facing NASPAA accreditation, and these must be addressed. First, how do we embrace varied master's-level programs in public affairs without diluting the core elements that make our discipline unique? Second, while accreditation can be seen as a floor in measuring the quality of programs, we must also be in the business of celebrating its most creative and successful programs. NASPAA has struggled with this issue for years. In some ways, *U.S. News and World Report* has, for good or for ill, taken over the excellence function. While NASPAA is consulted in this process, it does not serve as the key entity identifying and measuring excellence in public affairs education. We must decide whether to remain on the sidelines while others measure quality or to become more actively engaged.

Finally, accreditation has moved from a process focused on inputs to one rapidly moving toward outcomes and impacts. This transition, beginning with mission-based accreditation in the early '90s, has been bumpy but largely successful. NASPAA must continue to lead the way in focusing on and ensuring quality of outcomes for its schools and the students they serve.

#### INSTITUTIONAL DESIGN

As I noted earlier in discussing accreditation, many schools are looking for ways to position them-

selves in their institutions to build excellence and regional or national prominence.

The strategic focus of NASPAA should be on assisting these efforts. On more than one occasion, I have talked with program directors facing both opportunities and threats as a result of severe budget constraints confronting their campuses. In many cases, our member schools have dealt with this financial problem and have gained significantly through reorganizations and consolidations. Others have suffered substantial reductions.

NASPAA must work to support members' efforts to build excellence. One of the best ways to accomplish this is by acting as a broker among schools, sharing expertise, knowledge, and ideas. This effort could involve establishing a peer-to-peer support program that would link up programs looking for better ways to build excellence in particular areas where NASPAA member faculty and administrators have been successful. Other opportunities may also arise. We have every right to be proud of our programs, and we must capitalize on the current environment to help increase our members' institutional presence whenever possible.

#### MARKETING

Marketing has been identified by NASPAA as a key focus for future efforts. Its marketing committee, under the excellent leadership of Frank Thompson, has taken action in several areas identified by member schools this year. The Committee, working with NASPAA staff, has helped expand the use of our Web site, has distributed over 15,000 brochures promoting the MPA/MPP degree, has worked to cosponsor numerous public affairs conferences, and has worked with organizations like the Public Employees Roundtable to publicize public sector careers.

Still more needs to be done to help member schools improve the visibility and credibility of our public affairs degrees. A survey by The Council for Excellence in Government shows that, in 2002, the number of young people interested in working in the public sector still lags far behind those desiring work in for-profit organizations.

#### INTERNATIONALIZING AND GLOBALIZING

NASPAA has a long and distinguished history in the international arena. It is safe to say that its current financial health is a function of its historical engagement in international public affairs education. This tradition has continued on several fronts, including our ongoing collaboration with The Network of Institutes and Schools of Public Administration in Central and Eastern Europe, the International Association of Schools and Institutes of Administration, and the Inter-American Network for Public Administration Education. Each has engaged NASPAA members and our International Committee in a range of initiatives.

Our proposed strategic initiative calls for broadening member school participation in international activities and using Web tools and online technology to better connect member schools internationally. NASPAA also needs to engage more effectively in sharing resources with international programs in need of such support. In my university, we have shipped scores of used or underutilized textbooks to Romania and Moldova for use by their fledgling public affairs programs. We need to enlist all of our programs to provide such support.

While not challenging proprietary efforts by public affairs programs, we should identify faculty and program expertise and help match this expertise to international programs through exchanges, technical assistance, and capacity building. NASPAA can then focus its efforts where it adds value to what its members see as important to them.

#### RESEARCH

NASPAA's role in research is focused largely on public affairs education. The *Journal of Public Affairs Education* is a testament to our commitment and belief in the linkages between research and education. This has also been shown through the work of our committee on doctoral education. Hopefully we can continue to build on these efforts, particularly by sharing models to expand student-based research and utilizing *J-PAE* and our Web site to identify and disseminate methods of research that can strengthen our individual programs.

#### DIVERSITY

We have a long-standing commitment to diversity and inclusion within public affairs. This commitment has led to many successes, but it has also had its share of frustrations. It is important for NASPAA to show through its actions and its resources that diversity remains a core value and a clear goal. Our proposed strategic initiative continues to stress the importance of advocacy in hiring and retaining faculty and students who reflect our diverse society. Moreover, we must recommit ourselves to ensuring that the pool of doctoral graduates increasingly reflects the needs of our programs for diverse faculty. We need to do more to hold ourselves accountable to achieve this goal, and we must do a better job of developing and sharing models of success in our programs.

At the University of Nebraska at Omaha, for example, we established, over a decade ago, a minority faculty development program. This identifies persons of color who are master's-level practitioners wishing to pursue careers as faculty in public affairs disciplines. It provides salaries equivalent to three quarters of that of a beginning assistant professor and supports their entry into and completion of doctoral programs in allied fields. Upon degree completion, they are offered a tenure-track position in one of our programs.

This is but one of many such programs that could be adapted or replicated by member institutions. We must do a better job of providing those models to each other.

We must also continue to work more closely with our peer organizations to support diversity efforts. My colleague Phil Rutledge, who chairs the Social Equity Taskforce of the National Academy of Public Administration, and I are exploring ways in which NAPA and NASPAA can work jointly to meet our strategic goals. Other strong partners in this effort are the National Forum for Black Public Administrators and the Conference of Minority Public Administrators and its sister organization, ASPA. We need more NASPAA members to link together with COMPA and similar organizations to see how best to further our diversity goals.

PARTNERSHIPS

Much has been made of the changing nature of public service and public affairs in the last few years. Lester Salamon (2002) has articulated much of this change in the context of the New Governance Paradigm. In his view, we must move from a focus on hierarchy to a focus on networks; we must move from a view of public versus private to a view of public plus private; we must move from an operational mindset of command and control to one that focuses on negotiation and persuasion; and we must move from organizations focused on management skills to those focused on enabling skills.

Clearly, the world of public affairs education I entered some thirty years ago is very different today. Salamon (2002, 9) notes this when he says that a new collaborative approach is necessary because “[p]roblems have become too complex for government to handle on its own, because disagreements exist about the proper ends of public action and because government increasingly lacks the authority to enforce its will on other crucial actors without giving them a meaningful seat at the table.”

NASPAA must also recognize this new environment and build true partnerships that help us achieve our mission. I have mentioned some of these efforts already in the international arena and in diversity, but there are many more strategic alliances we must maintain and build to be successful. Discussions have taken place between NASPAA and the Association of Public Policy Analysis and Management on how we might best sort out responsibilities and activities that serve mutual interests. A number of other examples exist. Our Urban Management Committee is working to develop new joint initiatives with ICMA and other groups to educate the next generation of local government managers. Also, the Nonprofit Management Section continues its outreach to the Association for Research on Nonprofit Organizations and Voluntary Action and the Nonprofit Academic Centers Council, which has worked with NASPAA to redraft guidelines on nonprofit management education. We must continue to identify emerging strategic partners and assess

the costs and benefits of aligning with them to achieve our vision of success.

This is an ambitious agenda, one that cannot succeed without everyone’s support and commitment. We should all be proud of how far NASPAA has come in the last thirty years. It has been blessed with strong leadership and management. It has a solid financial base and continues to reflect well its diverse interests supporting public affairs education.

It is important that all of us work with Ken, the staff, and the Executive Council to make the future one of which we can all be proud. Thank you very much.

REFERENCES

Salamon, Lester, ed. 2002. *The Tools of Government: A Guide to the New Governance*. Oxford University Press.