

**NASPAA PRESIDENT'S ADDRESS**  
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*Challenges for NASPAA Programs in 2001 and Beyond*

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I begin by thanking you for selecting me as your president and for giving me the opportunity to serve you as NASPAA president during the coming year. It is a great honor for me to join the ranks of the many distinguished individuals who have preceded me in this position.

It is especially pleasing for me to follow in the footsteps of my good friend Walter Broadnax. However, this is not the first time I have followed in Walter's steps. More than 25 years ago, Walter and I were doctoral students at the Maxwell School. I recall many nights when he and I closed down the Bird Library and ventured out into a cold, snowy night. On those occasions I typically fell into step behind Walter, letting him forge a path across the snow-covered sidewalks. I followed closely in his footsteps in an effort to keep my feet dry and to keep from falling as he led us into the night—probably to our respective parking places. Walter, thanks for your leadership then and thanks for your excellent leadership of NASPAA during the past year. In the coming year I will try to follow in your footsteps, to keep my feet dry, and to keep from falling.

In recent years, several NASPAA presidents have focused our attention as an organization on important external objectives. The Policy Watch initiative has identified several public policy issues that are of direct interest to NASPAA member schools. As a result, NASPAA leadership has represented our interests with the Office of Personnel Management (regarding the future of the PMI program) and the Office of the Assistant Secretary for Postsecondary Education (regarding opportunities for student international exchange and study). The Task Force for Public Service has underscored the importance and nobility of careers in public service and has placed us in the forefront of that important issue. The Small Communities Outreach Project for Environmental Issues (SCOPE) has afforded opportunities for several of our member schools and their students to participate in the public policy-making process. I thank Presidents Wise, Gordon, and Kerwin for their leadership of these initiatives.

Without in any way diminishing the importance of these external and bridging activities of NASPAA, which I pledge to continue, this afternoon I want to identify several challenges for NASPAA programs that I perceive as important in the years immediately ahead. Each of these challenges must be met by our individual programs within the context of their mission, resources, and institutional experience. However, NASPAA can be a resource for problem-solving and a clearinghouse for disseminating information about success stories and best practices. These challenges will provide the framework for

the 2001 Annual Conference under the general theme “Challenges for NASPAA Programs in 2001 and Beyond.”

### **Challenge 1: Information Technology**

Developments in information technology have revolutionized the instruction process for NASPAA programs. Not so long ago we had an accreditation standard for “off-campus” programs. That standard has been replaced by a “distance learning” standard. Developments in instructional technology have occurred on our campuses with lightning speed. Powerpoint presentations are commonplace, especially among the new faculty members we hire, and are no longer even “cool” to the students who inhabit our classrooms. The concept of “classroom” as a physical place is changing as Web-mediated instruction has become the norm on many of our campuses. Some NASPAA programs have entire courses that are offered as Web-based instruction and a few programs offer full degree programs on the Internet. Unless one is an information technology Luddite, there is nothing problematic about these developments, except for the accompanying resource demands for equipment and infrastructure necessary to remain close to the state of the art. Part of the challenge for programs is to encourage faculty of my generation to incorporate information technology into courses. In our program at the University of Georgia, three young professors have conducted workshops for the rest of us in the development of Web-based instruction techniques.

Web-based instruction offers challenges to NASPAA in its capacity as an accrediting organization. To date, two degree programs with curricula that are entirely Web-based have been accredited. Soon we will face, if we have not already faced, situations in which programs seeking accreditation include in their curricula Web-based courses developed and offered by other institutions.

One also can envision a firm building a Web-based public affairs and administration package staffed by high-profile faculty drawn from any of our campuses and marketed as an alternative to graduate degree programs. Participation in such an enterprise would pose interesting choices for some of our colleagues.

Web-based instruction has multiple motives: to provide cheaper per-unit cost education, to increase access to learning for populations separated by distance from traditional campuses, and to gain competitive advantage over other universities with similar degree programs. This latter motivation provides a challenge for programs that have been accustomed to only limited competition for students in their territory. Now, territory has little meaning in this context.

Unspoken in all of these developments is the question of whether Web-mediated instruction is a desirable or acceptable substitute in graduate degree programs for face-to-face instruction. The exciting opportunities provided by the informational technology revolution also present interesting challenges for NASPAA and our member schools.

## **Challenge 2: Internationalization**

Our programs are internationalizing. A few of our programs have been internationalized for a long time. Today, many of our programs are actively and systematically seeking to train international students for careers in public affairs and administration in their own countries, and to prepare U.S. students for careers in largely international venues. More of our programs than ever before are engaged in capacity-building partnerships around the world, with attendant opportunities for faculty and graduate students to test and refine their traditional ways of thinking about public policy and administration. Our programs face the challenges of modifying and developing curricula appropriate for these internationalized learning situations, of incorporating foreign language competencies into their degree programs, and of framing research questions and projects that will enhance our understanding of policy and administration in international settings.

## **Challenge 3: Declining “Publicness” of Our Programs?**

Students from public affairs and administration programs now have more career opportunities in nonprofit organizations and in the private sector. Some of our students have always gone to the private sector. However, one of our most prominent programs reported that in its recent self-study year a majority of program graduates had obtained placement outside the public sector, most in the private sector.

Private sector placement of students from public affairs and administration degree programs may not in itself be problematic. It no doubt is a form of flattery that private sector enterprises seek to employ MPA graduates for reasons having to do with the kinds of analytic skills they are thought to possess, or their presumed familiarity with governmental processes, or a combination of these and other factors. Nevertheless, such developments should at least cause us to think about the implications for our programs if many of our graduates choose private sector over public sector employment. Should we be doing more to heighten a sense of “public purpose” among our students?

## **Challenge 4: Diversity**

Diversity has many meanings: cultural diversity, gender diversity, and racial diversity. All are important. Diversity is a concern in student admissions, program completion, and placement. However, for NASPAA programs, the most pressing concern is the absence of African-American and more recently Latino faculty in our public administration programs. Minorities are not on our faculties because such individuals are not available for our programs to hire. Discrimination in candidate selection may not be totally obliterated, but I believe our problem is in substantial degree a supply problem. Individuals who might have prepared themselves for careers as professors of public affairs and administration instead have opted to prepare themselves for careers in business, law, and other professions that they perceive to be more attractive and rewarding. We must devise ways to encourage young minority men and women to prepare for careers in our profession. The Executive Council heard on Wednesday about the APPAM- and APSIA-sponsored program “to encourage the participation by persons

of color and other under-represented groups in public policy and international affairs.” The Executive Council voted to join the sponsorship of this program. This is an exciting example of the kind of initiative that can contribute to addressing our diversity problem.

NASPAA can help with a solution to the supply line. However, in the end, faculties and program directors make hiring recommendations and deans make hiring decisions. The challenge for our programs is to change the perspective of those making hiring decisions from one that focuses on the obstacles that prevent minority hiring to one that looks for ways to make it happen. NASPAA must contribute to addressing this most important challenge.

### **Challenge 5: Accountability**

The nationwide interest in the accountability of public institutions needs to be taken seriously. I suspect that NASPAA public affairs and administration programs, like many other endeavors, tend to assume that whatever we are doing is worthwhile and necessary and that our value is readily apparent to sensible persons of good will. We assume current funding levels and look for ways to increase our funding.

However, the reality is that state financial support of higher education is not likely to increase in the years immediately ahead. Faced with shrinking resources (the result of lagging economies and/or public resistance to contributing additional resources for government use), governors and legislatures now are looking for ways to redirect resources to those activities that best contribute to building the future of their state. Public affairs and administration programs surely can demonstrate that we contribute to the future of our respective states, communities, and the nation, but only if we take seriously the requirement to demonstrate our accountability. Being willing participants in campus accountability efforts communicates a message that we care about our public trust and serving the public interest. Documenting our performance demonstrates to our external constituencies the quality, effectiveness, and value of our programs. Our programs ought to be campus leaders in the accountability movement. The challenge, of course, is complying with requests for outcome indicators of the value of our programs. Requests for outcome indicators no doubt are well-intentioned. It makes good sense to allocate limited public resources to those public programs and activities that yield the best value-added for expenditures. However, one suspects that those making requests for outcome indicators often do not fully appreciate the difficulties associated with generating valid and reliable outcome measures.

The quest for outcome measures of program performance is not new to programs that have participated in the NASPAA accreditation process or to individuals who have served on our accreditation Commission. Meeting the accountability in higher education challenge is something to which NASPAA ought to be able to make a contribution.

## **Challenge 6: Research**

Research is an integral part of what we as academics do; in many ways our research defines who we are professionally. Yesterday, we honored our colleague Fred Thompson and celebrated the excellence of his research. Research enriches our teaching, is at the core of our doctoral programs, and has the potential to inform public policy debates and decisions.

Research sometimes is individualistic with single researchers making significant contributions to our knowledge. However, increasingly the kinds of research projects needed to advance our knowledge about the most important public management and public policy issues require ranges of data collection and analysis, and therefore levels of funding, that typically are beyond the capacity of individual researchers and their universities.

The National Science Foundation has the capacity to fund big projects, but in the past our best researchers have been remarkably unsuccessful in obtaining NSF grants. The NASPAA initiative to seek NSF funding for research infrastructure, that is, developing data sets for use by multiple researchers, should be refined and continued.

## **Conclusion**

These are some of the challenges I see facing NASPAA as an organization in the year 2001 and beyond. I hope you will join me in addressing them.

Thank you for your attention this afternoon. Thank you for honoring me with your presidency.