

# NASPAA

## Task Force on Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion:

### Toward a Comprehensive Framework and Action Plan

### September, 2020

#### Background and Overview

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During summer and early fall of 2020, six members of the Diversity and Social Equity Committee of NASPAA joined with six members of NASPAA's Executive Council to form an ad hoc Task Force to review background materials and propose a comprehensive Framework for a Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Action Plan to guide NASPAA's work on these important issues over the coming years. This Taskforce was initiated in response to the killing of George Floyd and a desire for NASPAA to move toward intentional actions to become a model for member institutions in the fight against anti-Black racism, discrimination, and inequity. This Action Plan is intentionally designed as a **Framework** so that it can be built on and tweaked over time as the organization makes ever more progress to comprehensively integrate diversity, equity, and inclusion goals in the following key areas:

1. Accreditation
2. Teaching and Learning
3. Delivering Diversity in NASPAA and our Field
4. Research and Recognition
5. Annual Conference Planning

This initial version includes ***embedded Action Plan objectives and strategies***. We anticipate that all NASPAA committees and sections will be engaged with this work, although we recognize the particular significant role of the following standing committees:

- Annual Conference Committee
- Commission on Peer Review and Accreditation (COPRA)
- COPRA Eligibility Committee
- Data Committee
- Diversity & Social Equity Committee
- Doctoral Education Committee
- Executive Council
- Policy Issues Committee
- Research and Data Science Committee
- Standards Committee

The Task Force recommends the Executive Council ensures annual review of progress and related updates to NASPAA members as progress is made toward an ever more diverse, inclusive, and equitable membership-serving organization.

### **Task Force members:**

- Brandi Blessett, co-chair, University of Cincinnati
- Laura Bloomberg, co-chair, University of Minnesota
- David Abrahams, Bowie State University
- RaJade M. Berry-James, North Carolina State University
- Rachel Emas, Rutgers University-Newark
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### **Organizational Mission and Guiding Principles**

The Task Force was guided by the mission of NASPAA and this public statement of commitment issued by the organization in summer, 2020:

NASPAA's twofold mission is to ensure excellence in education and training for public service and to promote the ideal of public service.

As a global standard in public service education, NASPAA has publicly committed to do all in our power to:

1. Dismantle systemic racism and discrimination
2. Advance policy solutions to address police brutality and structural violence against black people
3. Provide transformative and inclusive education
4. Address our own inequities and hold ourselves accountable
5. Uplift individuals and communities of color
6. Advocate for social justice
7. Build a new, inclusive civic square consistent with our public service values

## **Definition of Terms**

As a starting point for this work, the Task Force advanced recommendations based on the following key definitions:

**Diversity:** Within NASPAA, an organization with a global focus and membership, the concept of diversity is reflective of people with identities that have been systematically oppressed in their own national context, underrepresented in higher education broadly, and/or marginalized in the fields of public service. While anti-Black racism, systemic oppression of indigenous people, and white supremacy are global issues, we also recognize that specific definitions of diversity may vary by country and among NASPAA Schools.

At NASPAA, we particularly identify diversity as the “representation of differences relating to social identity categories including, but not limited to, race, ethnicity, gender, gender identity, socioeconomic class, nationality, religion, sexual orientation, disability, age, and socioeconomic background” (NASPAA Standards, 2019)<sup>1</sup>, and those at the intersections.

- Given the statement of principles (listed above) our collective expectation should be that this framing of diversity is illustrated by NASPAA’s staff, actions, programs and initiatives, and throughout its leadership and committee structures.

**Equity:** In using this term, NASPAA seeks to establish systems and practices that are fair and just, based on a recognition of individual differences and sociopolitical contexts that disproportionately advantage or disadvantage some groups of people more than others.

Equity is reflected in fair treatment, access, opportunity, and advancement for all people, while at the same time striving to identify and eliminate barriers that have prevented the full participation of some groups. Improving equity involves increasing justice and fairness within the procedures and processes of institutions or systems, as well as in their distribution of resources.

**Inclusion:** In using this term, NASPAA seeks to create an environment where all NASPAA affiliated stakeholders have an opportunity to contribute and participate, and where all individuals are invited and welcome. Within NASPAA, we intentionally include multiple and potentially divergent perspectives into a shared community of inquiry and engagement.

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<sup>1</sup>Commission on Peer Review (COPRA). (2019). NASPAA Standards: Accreditation Standards for Master’s degree programs. Retrieved from <https://www.naspaa.org/sites/default/files/docs/2019-10/NASPAA%20Accreditation%20Standards%20-%202019%20FINAL%20DRAFT%20no%20rationale.pdf>

Inclusion is the act of creating environments in which any individual or group can be and feel welcomed, respected, supported, and valued in order to fully participate. Inclusion creates conditions that support a sense of belonging across multiple identities and communities. An inclusive and welcoming climate embraces differences and offers respect in words and actions for all people.

**Cultural Competence:** In using this term, NASPAA seeks to ensure that all NASPAA affiliated stakeholders have the knowledge, skills, and abilities to engage with and deliver services to all groups throughout society.

"The pursuit of cultural competency represents a window of opportunity to expand traditional knowledge, skills, and abilities (KSAs) into more effective KSAs that promote a public sector workforce who possesses the knowledge, skills, abilities, awareness, and attitudes to eliminate the existing gap or divide that exists between cultural and social groups." (RM Berry-James, 2012)<sup>2</sup>.

## Executive Recommendations and Priority Actions

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While the remaining sections of this report outline a broad array of both strategic and tactical actions recommended for the short, medium, and long term, the Task Force has identified 3 cross cutting priority areas for the Executive Council to consider first. These priorities are grounded in the Mission and Guiding Principles of the organization to specifically "*provide transformative and inclusive education*," "*address our own inequities and hold ourselves accountable*," and "*build a new, inclusive civic square consistent with our public service values*."

### 1) Training

- a) Short-term actions
  - i) Develop and provide Senior Executive Training (concurrent with the Accreditation Institute) that includes focus on
    - (1) Equity
    - (2) Inclusion
    - (3) Cultural competence
    - (4) Dismantling institutional racism
  - ii) Expand Site Visitor Training to ensure inclusion of key DEI principles, practices and priorities
    - (1) Host trainings at local conferences to increase diverse representation

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<sup>2</sup> Berry-James, R.M. (2012). Cultural Competency in Health Care: Standards, Practices and Measures. In *Cultural Competency for Public Administrators* (pp. 181-196). Eds. Kristen Norman-Major & Susan T. Gooden. New York, NY: M.E. Sharpe.

- b) Medium-term actions
  - i) Develop a training video for NASPAA website that honors both similarities and distinctions between global and US-based dimensions of diversity.
  - ii) Develop a virtual Cultural Competence Certificate for NASPAA members.
    - (1) Partner with member schools to allow participants to transfer credits into accredited programs.
  - iii) Develop DEI training, webinars, video briefs, and other materials for instructors, administrators, staff, and leaders on integrating DEI into program curricula.
    - (1) Expand *Institute for Innovative Teaching and Learning for Public Service's* DEI focus.
    - (2) Create a DEI Conference track to help all programs discuss strategy, commitment, diversity, inclusivity, and engagement.

## 2) Support for Minority Serving Institutions

- a) Short-term actions
  - i) Create a funding and implementation structure to expand NASPAA membership and support accreditation for HBCUs/MSIs
- b) Medium-term actions
  - i) Establish HBCU Consortium to recruit potential member institutions into NASPAA.
    - (1) Gather data on how NASPAA may best support public service programs within MSIs
    - (2) Strengthen partnerships with HBCU programs
      - (a) Establish pre-conference workshops that opens opportunities to HBCU grads interested in MPA/MPP programs
  - ii) Deepen pipeline project
    - (1) Review and collaborate with Dr. Kyle Farmbry's Diversity in Academic Project
    - (2) Share information associated with recruitment and retention strategies to diversify faculty
    - (3) Seek funding opportunities for MPA/MPP and Ph.D. students from underrepresented groups
    - (4) Create and nurture pathways for diverse candidates to assume leadership roles within NASPAA
      - (a) Executive Council, COPRA, Site Visitor Teams, Committee Chairs

## 3) Data Collection and Assessment

- a) Short-term actions
  - i) Review and revise (as necessary) NASPAA data collection with respect to diversity - ensure data collection on DEI dimensions is thorough for students and faculty to ensure representation
    - (1) Explicitly identify Black (African American)

- (2) Aggregate data to identify country of origin for Black, Latino, and Asian populations
- (3) Be mindful of intersectionality
- ii) Analyze all NAPSAA public reporting data; ensure accessibility of aggregate data to member organizations
- iii) Access Conformance of Accreditation data
  - (1) ID programs cited for diversity standard (faculty and students)
    - (a) For cited programs, what is the monitoring and reporting process?
    - (b) Clarify explicit criteria for denials
  - (2) ID schools that have been cited/denied based on diversity standard
  - (3) Analyze comparison data for denied schools vs. accredited schools regarding the application of the diversity standard
    - (a) Understand inconsistencies across program reviews for accredited vs. non-accredited programs
- b) Medium-term actions
  - i) Track all programs in NASPAA Badging Initiative for DEI
  - ii) Analyze MPA/MPP programs climate of inclusiveness
    - (1) What specific cultural competence training(s) do programs offer/require/support?
    - (2) How many faculty and staff complete training?
    - (3) What trends exist (e.g. participation by tenured v tenure-track faculty; participation by length of time in program)?

## DEI Framework and Action Plan

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This plan is designed to identify concrete actions organized around a framework of core NASPAA functions (e.g., accreditation, teaching and learning, awards and recognition, annual conference, etc.). Ideally, these recommendations will spur coordinated planning and action between and among NASPAA staff, the executive council, COPRA, and members engaged in the organization's committee structure. We anticipate that, while the specific actions will likely evolve as we make progress toward our overall DEI goals, the framework itself will remain consistent over time.

### Accreditation

- 1) Short-term actions
  - a) New NASPAA Definition of Diversity should be reflected in Data Collection
    - i) Member institutions should be mindful of NASPAA's definition of diversity to ensure that demographic information is accurate across its program. At NASPAA, we particularly identify diversity as the "representation of differences relating to social identity categories including, but not limited to, race, ethnicity, gender, gender identity, socioeconomic class, nationality, religion, sexual orientation, disability, age, and socioeconomic background" (NASPAA Standards, 2019), and those at the intersections.
    - ii) Given the statement of principles (listed above) our collective expectation should be that this framing of diversity is illustrated by NASPAA's staff, actions, programs and initiatives, and throughout its leadership and committee structures.
      - (1) Explicitly identifies African American
      - (2) Aggregated to identify the country of origin for Black, Latino, and Asian populations
  - b) Training for COPRA
    - i) Senior Executive Training (concurrent with Accreditation Institute)
      - (1) Cultural competence
      - (2) Institutional racism
      - (3) Equity
      - (4) Inclusion
  - c) HBCUs/HSIs
    - i) Line item in NASPAA's budget to support accreditation efforts
    - ii) Create a path to assist with accreditation
      - (1) Plan → Process → Outcomes
- 2) Medium-term actions
  - a) Accessing Conformance
    - i) ID programs cited for diversity standards (faculty and students)

- ii) ID schools that have been cited/denied based on the diversity standards
  - iii) Comparison between denied schools vs. accredited schools regarding the application of the diversity standards
    - (1) Understand inconsistencies across program reviews for accredited vs. non-accredited programs
- b) COPRA
- i) Understand criteria for denials
    - (1) For schools that have been cited/denied, discuss the evaluation process for monitoring progress made
  - ii) The 2019 changes to the NASPAA Accreditation Standards emphasize equity in service delivery and curricula as well as cultural competence in student learning outcomes.
  - iii) Site Visitor Training: Make a special effort to provide site visitor training at regional and local conferences, especially those conferences that are likely to ensure diversity among site visitors.

### **Teaching and Learning**

The 2019 changes to the NASPAA Accreditation Standards emphasize equity and cultural competency, specifically in “preparing students to work with a diverse and changing workforce and society at large” and creating “a climate of inclusiveness” (NASPAA Self-Study Instructions, 2019). NASPAA and its accredited programs have a responsibility to ensure that instructors have the skills and capacity to develop and maintain an equitable and inclusive classroom environment and instill in students the cultural competencies necessary for successful 21st century public service professionals.

*GOAL 1: Provide instructors with the skills and capacity to develop and maintain an equitable curriculum and an inclusive classroom environment.*

- 1) Short-term actions
  - a) Promote and encourage NASPAA members to engage with the work of the AACU Truth, Racial Healing and Transformation (TRHT) Campus Centers
    - i) See the TRHT Centers at Rutgers University - Newark and University of Cincinnati, both located within public administration entities
  - b) Further define the competencies required of instructors to create a climate of inclusiveness in their classrooms
    - i) Share resources and models from other disciplines: Social Work, Public Health, Human Services, Law, Economics, etc.
    - ii) Articulate specific knowledge, skills, and abilities related to establishing an inclusive classroom environment



- c) Initiate and support active discussions about the role of doctoral programs in pedagogical instruction and preparation
  - i) Include voices of current and recent doctoral students
  - ii) Update website on DEI resources and fix broken links
  
- 2) Medium-term actions
  - a) Develop new specific DEI trainings, webinars, video briefs and other materials for instructors, administrators, and leadership on integrating equity and inclusion in degree program curricula
    - i) Expand *Institute for Innovative Teaching and Learning for Public Service's* DEI focus. Resources permanently available on NASPAA's website could include
      - (1) Syllabi and readings suggestions, and training sessions with scenarios and questions
      - (2) Faculty and administrator training materials could be developed from tables of sample strategies for Standard 3.2 and Standard 4.4 (see NASPAA Self-Study Instructions, 2019)
      - (3) Video briefs depicting inclusive and equitable classroom practices
    - ii) Cross post and build on ASPA DSJ Section's series on anti-racism: [www.youtube.com/channel/UCcHj6WvkJONSpws-nm8Fpvg/featured](http://www.youtube.com/channel/UCcHj6WvkJONSpws-nm8Fpvg/featured)
    - iii) *Publicases* should include items from a diverse range of authors and cases explicitly focused on issues of equity and inclusion. All cases should include materials to address the inherent issues of equity and inclusion.
    - iv) *Simulation Network* materials could be developed from tables of sample strategies for Standard 3.2 and Standard (see NASPAA Self-Study Instructions, 2019)
  
  - b) Interface with journals (i.e. JPAE and TPA) to particularly encourage pieces on DEI pedagogy
    - i) Including tested pedagogical strategies, innovative and experiential efforts, simulations, and case studies on DEI
    - ii) Reach out specifically to doctoral student instructors, adjunct instructors, instructors of practice, and other non-tenured instructors to encourage publication and engagement with published DEI papers
  
- 3) Long-term actions
  - a) Continually assess the current state of equity and inclusion in MPA program curricula using programs' DEI plans
    - i) May include: development of specific evaluation criteria for courses to ensure coverage of topics; create stronger mandates for DEI in accreditation; outline and enforce accountability mechanisms for equity and inclusion
    - ii) See Section I: Accreditation
  
  - b) Develop awards and other recognition practices for breakthrough and innovative pedagogy practices around DEI
    - i) See Section IV: Recognition

- c) With ongoing feedback, develop additional instructor support, training, and resources as needed
  - i) Offer guidance on doctoral program training in pedagogy and instruction
  - ii) Assess need for adjunct instructor training in DEI and identify how NASPAA can support these efforts

*GOAL 2: Ensure that data collection on DEI dimensions (especially regarding race, ethnicity, gender, intersectionalities, etc.) is thorough for students and faculty so as to encourage representativeness among both.*

- 1) Short-term actions
  - a) Assess pilot programs in current NASPAA Badging initiative
  - b) All programs and NASPAA regularly analyze data and publicly report results
    - i) 2019 changes to Accreditation reflected in upcoming reporting cycles
  - c) Review/revise NASPAA Annual Report terminology and aggregation
    - i) Definition of “persons of diversity”?
    - ii) “Non-MSI” institutions vs PWI
    - iii) Some faculty and student demographic data displays seem to ignore intersections of identities (Afro-Latinx, etc.)
      - (1) Data includes FT and PT faculty-- should break down to assess types of position: Tenured, Tenure Track, Non-Tenure Track, Part-Time
- 2) Medium-term actions
  - a) Develop reporting guidelines for programs to provide evidence of faculty professional development in promoting a climate of inclusiveness (e.g., Safe/Brave Space training sessions, etc.)
    - i) Collect information on and develop accountability and enforcement mechanisms around topics such as:
      - (1) Which specific cultural competency training(s) did faculty undertake?
      - (2) How many faculty completed training(s)?
      - (3) What trends exist (e.g. junior faculty only completed training, women only, etc.)?
      - (4) How to train adjunct and doctoral student instructors?
  - b) Develop NASPAA DEI Pedagogy Badging or certificates for completed training on integrating equity and inclusion in pedagogy
    - i) Collaborate with relevant organizations to offer badge-eligible activities year round
    - ii) See action items in Goal 1
  - c) Analyze MPA programs’ increased efforts to promote a climate of inclusiveness from programs accredited under the 2019 revised standards
    - i) Assess changes needed in reporting instructions and mechanisms for next reporting cycle
- 3) Long-term actions

- a) Institute reporting guidelines for faculty professional development in promoting a climate of inclusiveness, enforce standards, and hold programs accountable
  - i) Continually review and reassess these guidelines with all stakeholders included

## **Delivering Diversity in NASPAA and our Field**

In the wake of civil unrest that spread across the United States during the summer of 2020. It is imperative that NASPAA, its member institutions, and program graduates are intentional about ways to engage with diverse constituents, as well as work purposefully to dismantle systems of oppression. Administrators, faculty, staff, and practitioners need to have the cultural competence (see term definition above) to effectively work with and on behalf of all individuals, groups, and communities throughout society. Delivery Diversity in NASPAA and our field centers the need to be prepared to have difficult dialogue, promote inclusion, and advance equity. NASPAA's statement declared a commitment to "build a new, inclusive civic square consistent with our public service values." Institutionalizing these values are realized through professional development, creating communities of practice, and developing accountability structures.

- 1) Short-term actions
  - a) Engage a diverse group of NASPAA members to define an "Aspirational NASPAA": what do we want to see for NASPAA in 2050?
  - b) Ensure Executive Director and staff annual evaluations include DEI goals
  - c) Build in NASPAA staff professional development opportunities for continuous improvement related to DEI
  - d) Consider retaining a qualified outside consultant to conduct a DEI audit and review of practices
- 2) Medium-term actions
  - a) Establish accountability structure for diversity within NASPAA as an organization
    - i) Regularly gather stakeholder input to answer this question:
      - (1) How is NASPAA serving the DEI needs and aspirations of member programs?
  - b) Deepen engagement with pipeline projects
    - i) Share information about current NASPAA activities related to helping member programs diversify faculty
    - ii) Broaden pipeline to PhD by supporting efforts to recruit students of color in member programs
      - (1) Seek funding to support doctoral fellowships for students
      - (2) Seek funding to create fellowships for underrepresented students to enter MPA/MPP programs
      - (3) Develop support mechanisms for students at MSIs
    - iii) Establish/amplify/broaden pipeline to diversify faculty in member schools and increase access for underrepresented faculty candidates
      - (1) Review Diversity in Academia (started by Dr. Kyle Farmbry)

- iv) Create and nurture pathways for a diversity of candidates to assume leadership roles within NASPAA (Executive Council, COPRA, Site visit teams, committee chairs)
- c) Establish an HBCU/MSI Initiative
  - i) Engage with HBCUs and MSIs to better understand how NASPAA might support public service programs within these institutions
    - (1) Determine how many HBCU/MSI are members (out of how many eligible programs in total). How many are accredited? How might we identify schools most likely to want to partner?
  - ii) Create/strengthen partnerships with HBCU programs
    - (1) Extend NASPAA support to existing MPA programs at HBCUs
    - (2) Establish pre-conference workshops that open opportunities to HBCU grads interested in MPA/MPP programs
- d) NASPAA Leadership
  - i) Ensure full transparency for appointment to leadership opportunities in NASPAA
    - (1) processes for serving on executive council, COPRA
  - ii) Review and consider changes to by-laws to model aspirational democratic values
    - (1) Nominated/self-nominated
    - (2) Voting procedures
- e) NASPAA staffing
  - i) Create Ombudsperson role within NASPAA

## Research and Recognition

- 1) Short-term actions
  - a) Apply a DEI lens to all NASPAA awards
    - i) All award categories could be reviewed with an eye toward achieving the overall DEI aspirations of NASPAA. Specifically, as they deliberate, the review committees for all awards could be asked to include among the award's review criteria a deliberate consideration of NASPAA's definitions of diversity, equity, and inclusion.
  - b) Refocus and deepen awards with an explicit DEI focus (NASPAA currently confers three annual awards with a specific focus on DEI: The Social Equity Award, The Diversity Award, and the Social Justice Curriculum Award).
- 2) Medium-term actions
  - a) Consider new Awards/Recognition
    - i) Emerging Scholar Award
      - (1) Use of breakthrough practices and innovative pedagogy related to DEI
    - ii) Recognition for Adjunct faculty and doctoral students to develop inclusive classrooms
    - iii) Social Justice Dissertation Award
    - iv) Social Equity Data Award (data collection, analysis, and use to advance equity and inclusion priorities)
    - v) Add an alumni award that highlights work advancing social equity; alternatively make this one of the core criteria for the overall alumni award

- b) Develop and expand the Badging Process with an eye toward DEI principles and aspirations
- c) Create NASPAA initiatives and programs to expand recognition of innovative practices and scholarship in PA programs at MSIs, specifically HBCUs, TCUs, HSIs, and others

### **Annual Conference**

- 1) Review all conference practices with an eye toward amplifying access, equity, and inclusion (*see memo from Diversity and Social Equity Committee to Executive Council, fall 2019*).
- 2) Develop an annual NASPAA Conference DEI training event for participants at all stages of their academic career; consider Annual Racial Healing Summit
  - i) Invite, include, and support doctoral student instructors, adjunct instructors, instructors of practice, and other non-tenured instructors
- 3) Include as a general and ongoing practice a conference panel of recent (last 2-3 years perhaps?) DEI-related award recipients so they can more deeply share their work, innovations, best practices, etc.