

A message from the President

Friends,

We just completed a great conference in New Orleans. It was very different not having many of our long time friends with us but the economy is taking center stage right now and has affected how we do business. That not only affected our participation but directed much of our conversation in New Orleans. I'll get to that in a minute...

But first, many, many thanks to Melanie Amrhein, Theresa Antworth, and Jerolyn Barnhart who took care of the many details that make a successful conference. They did a wonderful job (as usual).

A sad goodbye to Mary Anne Welch with Shiela Joyner perhaps joining her next year as both received retirement packages just "too good to pass up." Shiela was honored with the "Distinguished Service Award" for her tireless dedication to the association for the past... actually no one really knows how many... years serving as Committee Chair for the Membership Committee. There will be a new sheriff (TBD) in town next summer pulling in those membership dues. Thank you Shiela!!

We look forward to the Spring 2009 conference in Washington DC on April 5-8. Julie Leeper is serving as Program Chair so please forward your session ideas to her. Also, back by popular demand, Chris Zuzack is handling the logistics as Site Chair. Plans for the Fall 2009 conference are also underway. We'll be in St. Petersburg, Florida October 3-7, 2009.

NASSGAP provides a valuable service to its members but we also continue to make a name for ourselves among higher education professionals in general. Our annual survey produces data that has become a staple resource for researchers, reporters, and policymakers every year. Now we add another service by way of TERI and the Pathways to College Network. If you have not seen the **On-line Library**, check it out. It already consolidates a wealth of knowledge but now that we have the structure in place, its potential is enormous. Look for NASSGAP's on-line library to become another staple and continue to make www.nassgap.org a "Favorite" on Internet browsers across the country. Dennis and Mike, keep dreaming big and the rest of us will try to keep up.

Current issues directed much of the conference program as we heard about FAFSA and simplification, HEOPP, Challenge Grant, etc. There are a number of competing ideas on simplification that center mostly on the FAFSA so we need to be vigilant and prepared to contribute to those conversations in a way that emphasizes both the simplicity of the aid experience for the student as well as the efficiency and efficacy of aid programs on all levels.

We are awaiting word on the number of committees that will be formed under Negotiated Rule Making but have already begun plans for NASSGAP's nominations to be on the committees. Marilyn Cargill, Lois Hollis, and myself are on the short list but we may expand that if needed.

Now back to what I alluded to in the opening paragraph...

Two conferences a year has placed a strain on the budgets for many states and perhaps is straining our own volunteer resources. The Executive Committee has discussed going to one conference for about a year now and had a brief discussion with membership at the Spring 2008

conference. Financial events over the past summer seem to have confirmed that one conference is the direction to go. We brought it up again in New Orleans and discussed the good and the bad. Concern was expressed about being in DC for a conference, about having “face time” with NASSGAP colleagues, about the time of year that is best for a single conference, etc. I appreciated the candid and honest conversation. In the end, the membership expressed unanimous support for the Executive Committee’s proposal to move to one conference per year. This is how it will work:

We intend to go with an annual fall conference alternating between state and Washington DC locations, but will delay alternating until we can get the DC conference on an odd numbered year which will allow us to avoid the election circus (and higher costs) of even numbered years. On years (our “fiscal,” not “calendar”) where we are not in DC, we will schedule the Executive Committee meeting in DC so that we retain an annual opportunity to meet with policymakers located in DC. Of course, this is merely a proposed schedule and may change based on the events of the times and what best serves the interests and needs of the association.

Spring 2009	– Executive Committee	in a state
Spring 2009	– Conference	Washington DC (under contract)
Fall 2009	– Conference	St. Petersburg, Florida (under contract)
Spring 2010	– Executive Committee	Washington, DC
Fall 2010	– Conference	in a state
Spring 2011	– Executive Committee	Washington. DC
Fall 2011	– Conference	Washington DC
Spring 2012	– Executive Committee	in a state
Fall 2012	– Conference	in a state
Spring 2013	– Executive Committee	Washington, DC
Fall 2013	– Conference	Washington, DC
Spring 2014	– Executive Committee	in a state

This change will have a ripple effect on how we conduct business – voting, office terms, etc. - so we have implemented an ad hoc committee to review NASSGAP’s By-Laws with a goal of presenting recommendations to the membership at the spring 2009 meeting.

I look forward to the opportunity to represent NASSGAP for the next twelve months. Since many of you have already served in this capacity, I know that you are also aware that the true backbone of NASSGAP lies with the committee chairs. I’ll rely heavily on their knowledge and experience as we continue to make NASSGAP a nationally valued and sought after contributor to the higher education conversation on “student grant & aid programs.”

Keep up the good work.

Regards,

Lee Andes, VA
 President
 NASSGAP 2008-09