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Of Visions, Values, and Voices: Consolidating ACPA and NASPA

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OF VISIONS, VALUES, AND VOICES: CONSOLIDATING ACPA AND NASPA



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March 27, 2003

At NASPA**The Elephant In the Room: Merging ACPA and NASPA**

Monday, March 24, 2003 — 3:30 - 4:45 p.m.

242 America's Center

At recent meetings of NASPA and ACPA many members have questioned why the student affairs field has two umbrella organizations. This session will explore the topic of organizational unification by offering recommendations and a proposed plan for merging NASPA and ACPA. Please join your professional colleagues as we explore this important topic.

At ACPA**Consolidating/Merging ACPA and NASPA? The Elephant in the Room, Part 1**

Monday, March 31, 2003 — 10:30-11:45 a.m.

Minneapolis Convention Center, 200 J

Part 1 of 3. At recent meetings of ACPA and NASPA many members have questioned why it is necessary to have two umbrella organizations. This three part institute will explore the topic of organizational unification by offering recommendations and a proposed plan for merging the two organizations. During this session there will be a presentation of the white paper "Of Vision, Values, and Voices: Consolidating ACPA and NASPA," and remarks by organizational leaders. Please join your professional colleagues as we explore this important topic. Two open forums will follow this session to discuss the recommendations.

Consolidating/Merging ACPA and NASPA? The Elephant In The Room, Part 2 and 3

Monday, March 31 2003 — 2:00-3:15 p.m.

Minneapolis Convention Center, 200 J

Monday, March 31, 2003 — 3:30-4:45 p.m.

Minneapolis Convention Center, 200 J

Parts 2 and 3. Discussion of paper presented in Part 1. Recommendations contained in the paper will be recapped for attendees. Small groups will discuss the recommendations, comments of General Session panelists, and participants' views of the benefits of and challenges to unification. Each group will record and report the issues generated in the discussions. Comments generated by panelists and participants will be aggregated, analyzed and included in a final report to the leadership of ACPA for review and consideration. (Participants only need to attend one of the two sessions.)

Acknowledgements

We would like to thank the following individuals who shared their ideas with us or reviewed earlier drafts of this paper:

Deb Boykin, College of William and Mary; Stan Carpenter, Texas A & M University; Michael Dannells, Bowling Green State University; Fred Fotis, University of British Columbia; Amy Hirschy, Vanderbilt University; Susan Komives, University of Maryland-College Park; George Kuh, Indiana University; Patrick Love, New York University; and Robert Young, Ohio University.

While all of these individuals influenced our thinking on the topic of organizational consolidation credit or blame for the positions taken in this paper rest solely with the authors.

A need for national leadership in student personnel work is becoming continuously more obvious. . . . Some national agency needs to be available to assist administrators, faculty members, and student personnel officers in their developmental efforts. No such national agency now exists, and a careful canvassing of the student personnel associations which have grown up brings us to the unanimous conclusion that no one of them is able to become that national agency.

- *Student Personnel Point of View*, 1937

Student personnel associations began to appear early in the 20th century. By 1937, the authors of the Student Personnel Point of View (SPPV)(American Council on Education, 1937/1997) noted that the profession had diversified, and now required increased coordination and cooperation. Since the SPPV was written, professional associations have proliferated and calls for inter-organizational collaboration have been supplemented with suggestions for organizational unification. At recent meetings of ACPA and NASPA many members have questioned why it is necessary to have two umbrella organizations. These discussions generated concerns about the lack of a clear voice for student affairs education within academia, cost and resource issues, and the compatibility of the cultures of ACPA and NASPA. In this paper, we discuss the history of the two organizations and the history of other attempts at organizational consolidation; explore the similarities and differences in the organizations' missions and values, structures, and activities; and consider each organization's unique characteristics. We conclude with a set of recommendations concerning organizational consolidation and will raise a number of pertinent questions we feel the profession must address as it considers consolidating ACPA and NASPA.

Background

Although ACPA and NASPA have been different types of organizations over their histories, they have always shared a common goal of providing a professional organization for student affairs professionals. Along with the National Association for Women in Education

(NAWE), which disbanded in 2000, they have been the primary student affairs generalist organizations. The fact that three separate organizations served the field in similar capacities did not escape the student affairs professionals of the 20th century, and there have been a number of attempts to promote cooperation, coordination, or consolidation of the groups.

NAWE was founded in 1916 as the National Association of Deans of Women (NADW), and existed as a subdivision of the National Education Association (NEA). When ACPA was founded in 1924 as the National Association of Appointment Secretaries, the founding meeting took place during the annual meeting of NEA and NADW. In the 1920s and 1930s as ACPA established itself, many of its annual conventions were joint meetings with NADW (American College Personnel Association, 2002; Bloland, 1972).

Tradition has dictated more of the present alignments of personnel groups than either logic or a genuine sharing of goals and interests. . . . Although it does not constitute a real threat, it may be a danger to organizational health.

Kate Hevner Mueller, 1961,
*Student Personnel Work in
Higher Education*

NASPA was founded in 1919 by a group of deans of men who later called the group the National Association of Deans and Advisers of Men (NADAM). Although the other two major organizations were founded and active in the field at that time or shortly afterward, the Deans of Men intentionally chose to remain separate. Their view of their organization was that of an informal, loosely-organized group of deans of men. However, by the 1950s, it had become clear that both the student personnel movement and the influence of women administrators were pervasive in the field and important to its success. In 1952, NADAM chose to broaden its mission, open its membership to women and other administrators, and change its name to NASPA (Rhatigan, 2002).

Several cooperative efforts involving the three groups appeared at mid-century. From the 1930s through 1950s, the organizations belonged to umbrella groups that brought together counseling and student personnel groups. In 1952, the three groups each contributed to the document *Student Disciplinary Records*. In the 1950s, the three groups and others formed the Inter-Association Coordinating Committee. In the 1960s, another umbrella group linked the organizations and others under COSPA (Council of Student Personnel Associations in Higher Education) (Bloland, 1972; Sheeley, 1983).

In 1968, a reorganization of other higher education umbrella organizations prompted a discussion about a reconfiguration of student affairs professional groups. NAWE approached ACPA and NASPA, and the three organizations formed an exploratory committee that became known as the Troika Committee. From 1968 to 1973 they contemplated the philosophical and practical challenges and advantages of a merger. In the end, the NAWE membership voted to remain independent because they were concerned that a merger would leave the profession without a voice for the issues of women professionals and students. However, a number of joint meetings and the coordination of conferences ensued (Sheeley, 1983).

The latter decades of the twentieth century saw more collaborative projects. As student unrest spurred a re-evaluation of the accountability of both students and higher education, NAWE and NASPA joined other professional associations to develop and issued the *Joint Statement on Rights and Freedoms of Students* in 1968 and revised in 1992 (National Association of Student Personnel Administrators, 1992). In 1979, ACPA and NASPA collaborated in the creation of the *Council for the Advancement of Standards* (CAS). In 1987, NASPA produced *A Perspective on Student Affairs* (Sandeem, Albright, Barr, Golseth, Kuh, Lyons, & Rhatigan, 1987), which was a 50th anniversary reflection on the ACPA-linked 1937

Student Personnel Point of View. ACPA and NASPA together produced *Principles of Good Practice for Student Affairs* (American College Personnel Association & National Association of Student Personnel Administrators, 1997) and *Powerful Partnerships: A Shared Responsibility for Learning* (Joint Task Force on Student Learning, 1998) in the late 1990s. In addition to many of the early joint meetings, there was an ACPA-NAWDAC-NASPA conference in 1973, and ACPA and NASPA have more recently co-hosted combined national conferences in 1987 and 1997 (ACPA, 2002; Sheeley, 1983). A joint national conference is being planned for Chicago in 2007.

Today, spurred by questions from the membership and the formation in 2002 of the ACPA-NASPA Blue Ribbon Committee, we are in the midst of the first major consideration in 30 years of a unified student affairs professional organization. Since then NAWA has disbanded, and ACPA and NASPA have broadened their missions to serve similar subpopulations and professional issues. The profession of student affairs has matured and at the turn of the twenty-first century has become a leader in the call for greater collaboration on college campuses. Many of the historical barriers to consolidation have disappeared or weakened, and while new challenges exist, new opportunities have emerged.

Mission and Values

In addition to similar histories, ACPA and NASPA share many commonalities in their missions, values, and functions. Those commonalities indicate organizations that have the same fundamental purposes, share common members and clientele, and embody similar functions and processes. Numerous organizational theorists (e.g., Bergquist, 1993; Schein, 1992) have written about the importance of mission. That importance is reinforced by such educators as Boyer (1987), Chickering and Reisser (1993) and the authors of *Involving Colleges* (Kuh, Schuh, Whitt,

& Associates, 1991). This latter group of authors noted that “the mission serves as a touchstone, influencing the actions and behaviors of all members of the community” (Kuh et al., 1991, p. 43). Similarly Schein (1992) wrote, “one of the most central elements of any culture will be the assumptions the members of the organization share about their identity and ultimate mission or functions” (p. 56). An examination of the mission, values, and functions of both ACPA and NASPA yields a clear picture of two organizations that share a set of basic assumptions that guide their work.

The mission statement of ACPA reads,

The mission of the Association is to support and foster college student learning through the generation and dissemination of knowledge, which informs policies, practices, and programs, for student affairs professionals and the higher education community.¹

That mission is supported by a set of core values and functions. Core values include: a focus on the education and development of the whole student; an emphasis on diversity, human dignity and social justice; access and inclusivity; intellectual freedom and respect; knowledge production and utilization; the importance of personal and professional growth; and the need for outreach and advocacy. To realize those values the association engages in the following core functions: professional development and education; member services; knowledge creation and dissemination, outreach and advocacy; and issue identification and response.

According to its mission statement,

NASPA provides professional development, promotes exemplary practices, and is a leader in policy development. NASPA helps senior student affairs officers and

¹ In the following sections, all quotes and information regarding ACPA and NASPA come from their respective websites.

administrators, student affairs professionals, faculty, and other educators enhance student learning and development. NASPA promotes quality and high expectations; advocates for students; encourages diversity; and excels in research and publication.

To realize its mission, NASPA has established six goals. Those goals address the provision of professional development opportunities to members; leadership and policy advocacy in higher education; the promotion of pluralism, diversity, and internationalism; fostering student learning and successful educational outcomes and the development and maintenance of an efficient and effective organizational infrastructure.

A careful examination of the missions, goals, and functions of the two organizations suggests important commonalities and subtle distinctions (see Table 1). The most evident commonality is a focus on fostering and supporting student development and learning. Other shared goals include emphasizing scholarship, promoting informed and professional practice, encouraging diversity, advancing professional advocacy, and fostering professional development.

TABLE 1.
A Comparison of the Missions, Goals, and Clientele of ACPA and NASPA

ACPA	NASPA
Support and foster student learning	Enhance student learning and development
Generate and disseminate knowledge	Foster scholarship
Inform policy, practice, and programs	Promote practice and develop policy
Promote diversity and human dignity	Encourage diversity
Build an inclusive organization	Maintain a high quality organizational infrastructure
Foster openness and respect	Promotion of pluralism
Advocate for students and professionals	Advocate for students
Encourage professional development	Encourage professional development
Clientele: Student affairs professionals and higher education community	Clientele: Senior student affairs officers, student affairs professionals, faculty, others

However, a reductionistic approach similar to that employed in developing Table 1 may hide the more subtle distinctions in mission that may be evident when holistically examining each organization’s mission. It is important to note that subtle distinctions in mission are frequently indicators of the critical and central core beliefs of an organization (Kuh & Whitt, 1988). Although ACPA and NASPA both hold enhancing student learning as a core value, their emphasis on this goal seems to be different. In their missions, ACPA leads with this goal while NASPA considers it an outcome of its work with professionals and includes it in the second sentence of its mission. Similarly, in its listing of organizational goals ACPA once again lists “education and development of the total student” as the paramount goal while NASPA places “supporting student learning” further down its list of goals. Whether this reflects a difference in the relative importance the two organizations place on this value or whether the difference is simply an artifact of how the mission statements were constructed is unclear, but the apparent difference in listed priorities is nevertheless interesting.

Another, and perhaps more significant, difference is in the identified clienteles of the two groups. ACPA takes a more expansive, and thus less explicit, approach to identifying its core

Separate national student personnel professional organizations. . . [represent] the uncollected strength of our profession. There is a great need to review and recommend unthreatening methods of bringing these fragments together. We are weak. Together we can be strong and make a greater contribution to the individual, to the nation, and to our profession.

William G. Craig, 1962,
*The Student Personnel Profession:
An Instrument of National Goals*

constituents, referring to them as “student affairs professionals and the higher education community.” NASPA’s mission is more explicit, clearly articulating its clientele as “senior student affairs officers and administrators, student affairs professionals, faculty, and other educators.” Of importance here is the primacy of the senior student affairs officer (SSAO), a primacy that has its roots in

the origins of the organization as the National Association of Deans of Men. Traditionally, SSAOs have seen NASPA as their organization, an organization in touch with their goals and professional development needs, that respects their role in the academy and offers support for their activities. NASPA has certainly worked diligently to open its organizational structure and activities to mid-mangers, new professionals, and preparation program faculty (just as ACPA has worked to provide activities and programs to meet the needs of SSAOs), but there are still cultural vestiges and professional perceptions that support the primacy of the SSAO in the organization. (A quick visit to the exhibit areas at the national meetings of the two organizations suggests that vendors believe that the student affairs administrators who control the purse strings attend the NASPA conference and not the ACPA convention. Vendors at the NASPA exhibit area represent a large number of marketing groups, service providers, furniture manufacturers, and consulting firms. The primary focus of these vendors is on service and management functions. The exhibit area at ACPA tends to be smaller and more focused on educational programming and knowledge production and transmission).

A final distinction is the language used to describe the respective organizations. The NASPA mission emphasizes “maintaining, evaluating, and developing a high quality infrastructure to meet current needs and anticipate future trends.” Conversely, the only mention of the organization and its structure in ACPA’s Mission and Core Values is the value of “inclusiveness in and access to association-wide involvement and decision-making.” Perhaps no two statements in the respective organizations’ missions and goal statements so succinctly capture the differences between the two organizations. Growing out of its roots in NADAM and with its strong connection to SSAOs, NASPA has developed a reputation as the “management” organization. That emphasis is exemplified by the use of such management language as

“maintaining,” “evaluating,” “developing,” and “infrastructure” in its mission statement.

Furthermore, the idea that NASPA is focused on the management of student affairs activities is reinforced by the association’s vision as “the leading voice for student affairs *administration, policy and practice*” (italics added).

ACPA has developed a reputation as an organization where effectiveness is valued over efficiency and where effectiveness is correlated with equity. The value of equity is critical in a profession that has its roots in a philosophy of respect, inclusion, and acceptance of individual difference. However, the need to involve all members of the association at all levels of decision-making has left many in the student affairs profession with an impression that ACPA has difficulty making important policy decisions in a timely fashion. Conversely, NASPA is sometimes criticized for making decisions too quickly and without adequate input from members, and then reversing positions when criticized (e.g., the National Registry for Student Affairs Administrators).

The two organizations have different histories and cultural artifacts and they differ on some values, but it is our belief that their commonalities of purpose outweigh those differences. At their hearts (at the level of basic beliefs and assumptions) these organizations are about humanizing the college campus, fostering student learning, growth and development, and supporting and enhancing the student affairs profession. As long as the members keep their eyes on these common goals, the subtle (but not unimportant) differences in the organizations’ missions, goals, and functions can be reconciled.

Membership Characteristics

While it has been noted that the missions of the two organizations emphasize different clientele groups, a rudimentary analysis of the organizations’ membership categories and current

member roles suggest considerable overlap. Table 2 outlines the membership categories for each organization. The membership categories of the two organizations became much more similar in 1998 when ACPA developed an Institutional Membership category. That category was developed for economic and pragmatic reasons (to enhance the number of members in the organization) and not as a way of determining organizational participation or establishing voting rights. This differs from NASPA where:

Each Institutional Member shall have one vote on each matter submitted to a vote by action of the Board of Directors or as otherwise provided in these Bylaws. Such vote shall be cast only by a Professional Affiliate of such Institutional Member officially designated by the Institutional Member as its Voting Delegate and representative.

Limiting voting on NASPA Board Action to Professional Affiliates (a Professional Affiliate who is generally the SSAO of the institution) is an important cultural artifact and distinguishes NASPA from ACPA. In other voting matters such as the election of Board Members, both organizations extend full voting rights to all individual organization members.

TABLE 2.
A Comparison of the Membership Categories of ACPA & NASPA

ACPA	NASPA
General Members (including Institutional Membership)	Institutional Members
	Professional Affiliate ²
Associate Members	Associate Affiliate
	Faculty Affiliate ²
Student Members	Student Affiliate
Transitional Members	
Emeritus Members	Emeritus Affiliate

² NASPA’s categories of Professional and Faculty Affiliate are incorporated in ACPA General Members category.

Of interest to anyone considering consolidation is the overlap in membership between the two organizations. An assessment of the membership of the two organizations utilizing their web-based membership lists yielded the data in Table 3.

TABLE 3.
A Comparison of the 2002 ACPA and NASPA Memberships

	2002 Membership	Percent Shared with Other Association
ACPA	6601	35.2
NASPA	8343	27.9
Dual Membership	2325	----

These data must be interpreted carefully. There were inconsistencies in the names of members between lists (e.g., the same person might be listed as Chris R. Smith on ACPA’s membership list and as C. R. Smith on NASPA’s). Furthermore, it is possible that some errors may have been made when the lists were matched. Finally, it is highly possible that these data underrepresented the number of members shared by the two organizations. As listed in Table 3, shared members are those who were listed on the ACPA or NASPA roles concurrently in 2002. Since many members establish their organizational membership from year to year based on which annual meeting they will attend, a decision often made based on the location of the meetings, it might be more useful to determine how many members of each organization have ever been a member of the other organization.

How does the budget officer look at the request from the dean of students office for travel to meetings of ACPA, APGA, ICPA, IPGA, NAWDC, IAWDC, NASPA, Midwest NASPA, ACUHO, ACU, NASFSA, Financial Aids Officers, AAHE, ACE, etc.? . . . How can we be seen as working together for a common goal?

Elizabeth A. Greenleaf, 1968,
How Others See Us: ACPA Presidential Address

To further understand the nature of concurrent memberships in both organizations, a survey was done at a session on organizational consolidation held at the 2003 Joint Conference of the Ohio Association of Student Personnel Administrators and the Ohio College Personnel Association were surveyed (Gerda, Coomes, & Wilson, 2003). When attendees were asked to indicate if they were currently or had ever been members of both ACPA and NASPA, 12 of 25 respondents (48%) indicated they were currently members of both organizations and 15 of 25 (60%) indicated they have been a member of both organizations in the past.³ Once again, these data should be approached with caution. The fact that the respondents were attending a session on organizational consolidation may indicate a greater openness to the possibility of consolidation. Furthermore, 52 percent of attendees were preparation program faculty or graduate students. It is possible that because faculty members are frequently members of both organizations and graduate students are unclear about the distinctive factors of the respective organizations, one might expect to find them more open to the issue of consolidation.

Organizational Structure

According to Kelly (1983), organizations coordinate their activities by function, structure, purpose, membership, or location. ACPA and NASPA use many of these organizational schemes to direct their work. Furthermore, both associations consist of boards, councils, and committees supported by a national office staff which attends to the day-to-day activities of the association. Tables 4 and 5 offer comparisons of the executive boards and central office organizations of each association.

An examination of the ACPA Executive Council suggests that the primary organizing criteria are function (e.g., President, Treasurer, Secretary); purpose (the Core Councils and

³ When surveyed, 21 respondents (84%) favored organizational consolidation, 2 (8%) favored consolidation with reservations, 1 (4%) was uncertain about consolidation, and 1 (4%) failed to respond.

TABLE 4.
ACPA and NASPA Executive Boards

ACPA	NASPA
President	President
President-Elect	President-Elect
Past President	Past President
Treasurer	2003 Conference Chair
Secretary	Region I Vice President
Director of Commissions	Region II Vice President
Director of State/International Divisions	Region III Vice President
Director-Elect State/International Divisions	Region IV-East Vice President
Member Services and Interests Core Council	Region IV-West Vice President
Core Council for Professional Issues	Region V Vice President
Core Council for Outreach & Advocacy	Region VI Vice President
Generation & Dissemination of Knowledge	Member At-Large
Core Council	Member At-Large
Professional Development Core Council	Professional Standards
Standing Committee for Men	Director Research Division
Standing Committee for Multicultural	National Director of Knowledge
Affairs	Communities
Standing Committee on Disability	Public Policy Division
Standing Committee for Women	
Standing Committee for Lesbian, Gay,	
Bisexual Awareness	
Standing Committee for Graduate Students	
& New Professionals	
Affirmative Action Officer	
Executive Director (Ex-Officio)	

Commissions), and membership (the Standing Committees). NASPA’s Board of Directors is organized around function (e.g., President); purpose (e.g., Research, Professional Standards, Knowledge Communities), and location (the Regions). These differences, as with the differences in the two organizations mission and values, offer subtle, but not inconsequential, distinctions. Perhaps one of the most important of those distinctions is how the two organizations cultivate new members and involve emerging leaders in the organizations at the grass roots level. NASPA has developed an extensive and highly effective set of regional associations as a means for making the organization more accessible and as a “training ground” for new leaders. These

functions (new member orientation and involvement) are fulfilled in ACPA through the various commissions, standing committees, and core councils. Important similarities between the organizations emerge when one considers the roles of the NASPA Knowledge Communities and the Commissions and Standing Committees of ACPA.

Table 5 provides a chart detailing those similarities. An examination of the information in Table 5 discloses that 50% of the ACPA Commission and Standing Committees have counterparts among the NASPA Knowledge Communities. Furthermore, all but three (Information Technology, Graduate and Professional Student Services, and Small Colleges and Universities) of the NASPA Knowledge Communities have comparable sub-units in ACPA.

Table 6 details the central office organizations of both ACPA and NASPA. Once again, what emerges from an examination of this information is an image of two organizations that share much in common in terms of core organizational functions. Both central offices are headed by an executive director. Both organizations have staff who are assigned to member services, information technology, publications, corporate relations, and organizational accounting. As one might expect from an organization with a strong administrative culture, NASPA has built a larger central office staff. The NASPA central office is 67% larger than that of ACPA and includes such functions as organizational fundraising and development, health education, research, and annual meeting planning. The only unique position in ACPA is the Senior Scholar in Residence.

TABLE 5.
A Comparison of the ACPA Commission and Standing Committees
and the NASPA Knowledge Communities

ACPA Commission and Standing Committees	NASPA Knowledge Communities	
Commission for Admissions, Orientation, and First Year Experience	Enrollment Management*	
Commission for Students, Their Activities, and Their Community	Fraternity & Sorority Affairs, Student Leadership Programs	
Commission for Student Development in the Two-year College	Community & 2-year Colleges	
Commission for Academic Affairs Administrators	Student Affairs Professionals Working In and With Academic Affairs	
Commission for Academic Support in Higher Education	Student Affairs Professionals Working In and With Academic Affairs	
Commission for Global Dimensions of Student Development	International Education	
Commission for Administrative Leadership		
Commission for Housing and Residential Life		
Commission for Career Development		
Commission for Counseling and Psychological Services		
Commission for Wellness		
Commission for Assessment for Student Development		
Commission for Professional Preparation		
Commission for Campus Judicial Affairs and Legal Issues		
Commission for Commuter Students and Adult Learners		
Commission for Alcohol and Other Drug Issues		
Standing Committee for Multicultural Affairs		African-American Concerns, Asian Pacific Islander Concerns*, Latino/a Knowledge Community, Native American Concerns*
Standing Committee on Disability		Disability Concerns
Standing Committee for Women		Women in Student Affairs
Standing Committee for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual Awareness	Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual & Transgender Issues	
Standing Committee for Graduate Students & New Professionals	New Professionals & Graduate Students	
Standing Committee for Men		
	Graduate & Professional Students Services	
	Information Technology	
	Small Colleges & Universities	

*Listed in the 2003 NASPA Program Book and Conference Guide and not on the NASPA website.

TABLE 6.
ACPA and NASPA Central Office Staffs

ACPA	NASPA
Executive Director	Executive Director
Assistant Executive Director - Information Technology & Convention Services	Director of Information Technology
Associate Executive Director - Educational Programs and Publications	Executive Assistant/Publications Liaison
Director of Member Services	Coordinator of Membership Services
Director of Marketing and Corporate Relations	Coordinator of Corporate Relations & Development
Operations Manager	Director of Operational Services
Accounts Manager	Accounting Assistant
Senior Scholar in Residence Administrative Assistant	Director of Educational Programs & Public Policy Meeting Planner Associate Executive Director & Director of Development Assistant Director of Information Technology Director, Centers for Research Director, Health Education and Leadership Program (HELP) Director, Health Education and Leadership Program (HELP) Associate Director, Academy for Leadership & Executive Effectiveness

Organizational Distinctiveness

Arguably, it has become increasingly difficult to identify points of organizational distinctiveness between ACPA and NASPA. Advising graduate students and new professionals on significant differences is difficult and a preference for one organization over the other is often a matter of institutional loyalty, the location of the annual conference, or personal preference.

As noted previously, NASPA takes pride in its efforts to meet the needs of senior student affairs officers. While its reputation as an old boys’ network lingers, the current face of NASPA hardly supports it. Since 1990, eight of the 13 presidents have been women. Between 1998 and

2004, six of seven are women. Currently, four of the seven regional vice presidents are women. Racial diversity among NASPA leaders has also increased. Additionally, NASPA developed a reputation for leading the field in areas of technology through the development of its attractive and active website and web-based publications such as NetResults.

ACPA has a strong faculty presence and the Professional Preparation Commission serves the needs of graduate preparation faculty. The Senior Scholars and Emerging Scholars Programs are examples of ACPA's efforts to promote scholarship. The presence of faculty is also noticeable in ACPA's leadership. NASPA presidents tend to be senior student affairs officers or others in senior leadership positions whereas ACPA has been led by both senior administrators and full-time faculty members.⁴ ACPA can also appear more welcoming to new professionals as the commissions and state divisions provide important avenues for leadership opportunities.

Proposal

We are proposing the creation of one national organization for student affairs. After we proposed this session for both conferences, the organizations announced the formation of the Blue Ribbon Committee with the following charge:

1. Conduct an analysis of the environment in which the two organizations operate;
2. Look at the potential synergistic, strategic, operational, and cultural aspects of consolidating the organizations;
3. Evaluate the comparative capabilities and limitations of NASPA and ACPA while considering the impact these factors may have on a consolidated organization;

⁴ It is important to note the NASPA has recently reached out to preparation program faculty through the creation of the Faculty Fellow program.

4. Assess the expectations of the stakeholders (membership, association staff, profession of student affairs, colleges, community colleges, and universities) of ACPA and NASPA and how a possible consolidation might affect stakeholders;
5. Consider the strategic intent and rationale for consolidation;
6. Evaluate and outline the business rationale for consolidation;
7. Evaluate the benefits and risks for the profession of student affairs and ACPA and NASPA with and without consolidation; and
8. Report any additional findings and information the committee deems useful in the evaluation of whether the two associations should consolidate to form a new association.

(<http://www.naspa.org/resources/blueribcom.cfm>)

We support these recommendations and suggest the Committee and individual organization members consider some of the following questions:

1. How might the profession be strengthened by consolidation?
2. What might the profession lose with consolidation?
3. Are there groups of professionals who would be adversely affected by consolidation?
4. How would we manage the large size of the organization and its meetings?
5. Can the two cultures of ACPA and NASPA be combined without one becoming dominant? If one does become dominant, is that reason enough to not consolidate?
6. Will members of historically under-empowered groups be adequately empowered?
7. How will the single organization be organized to promote both involvement and efficiency?
8. How might a single organization be structured to anticipate continued globalization?

9. How should a new organization be governed? How should it be accountable to the membership?
10. How can a single organization support the recruitment, entry, education, and retention of new professionals?
11. Would a single organization remove the element of competition as an incentive to improve?
12. How would consolidation affect the costs to institutions and individuals?
13. How might a single organization interact with other higher education organizations?
14. What kind of timeline should we follow?
15. What other professional organizations might we study to find guidance in our consolidation efforts?

Conclusion

In recommending consolidation we offer the following observations. We have identified many potential advantages of a consolidated organization. First, the financial positions of the organization could be strengthened by reducing duplication of effort and services. Similarly, members would no longer need to choose between the organizations or pay for two memberships and conferences. Second, competing services for placement, professional development (e.g., journals, conferences, seminars), and member services (e.g., insurance, directories) can be enhanced through collaboration. Legislative advocacy for the field can also be strengthened through a common voice.

We certainly do not suggest that consolidation of the two organizations would be done simply. A plethora of complicated issues—many of which we are unaware—surely exist. Financial and legal issues will have to be considered. The implications for state and regional

organizations and functions will need to be evaluated. The reality of staffing (and eliminating staff) must be acknowledged and addressed. That said, we believe that philosophically and practically, tremendous benefits would result from a unified organization. A single organization will allow the profession to move beyond its own needs and engage more readily with the larger world of the academy and with other academic organizations. Consolidation will minimize the duplication of services, products, costly conferences, and central offices. It will clarify for others our roles and responsibilities on our campuses and beyond our campus borders. And, it will simplify our lives. We see many reasons consolidation will be difficult, but are fully confident that the student affairs profession is blessed with enough competent, skilled, and imaginative members to overcome those difficulties. It is in the profession's best interest to seriously consider and then move toward a single organization. We would recommend that the 2007 Joint Convention be the last meeting of the organizations in their current configuration and the first meeting of a totally new organization combining the best that ACPA and NASPA have to offer. ACPA and NASPA share a common vision and support compatible values. Now it is time for the two organizations to speak with a unified voice.

The efficacy of two organizations is debatable. . . . A merger will provide a unified voice to promote changes in higher education congruent with the mission of student affairs. Fear of losing the comfortableness associated with traditions is not sufficient justification for retaining the status quo. Student affairs needs to speak as one voice on issues critical to the profession. Isn't a merger inevitable? If so, then the process should begin.

- Robert D. Brown, 1999, *Shaping the Future*

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