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Public Policy Division**

Report for the 2011 July Board of Directors' Meeting  
June 16, 2011

### **Discussion Items**

One of NASPA's five goals is "to provide leadership in higher education through policy development and advocacy for students on important international, national, state, and local issues." I'd like for the Board to discuss whether we want to enhance our efforts in public policy to build competency in areas of law, policy and governance among the membership, provide another vehicle for professional development activities, and enhance the engagement of SSAOs. If so, then I suggest that we also should discuss the scope of and the resources provided for the Division's activities.

The Public Policy Division requests guidance from the Board on the scope of the Public Policy Division; specifically, it would be helpful if the Board determined whether it wants NASPA to have a more strategic focus in the area of public policy, to engage members in an inclusive process to establish a public policy agenda, and/or wants the public policy division to position the organization to be "conveners" who create opportunities for conversation about how to influence the national agenda.

In addition, I would like for us to discuss whether we want the Division to consider and advise the board about state and/or regional public policy issues that appear to have significant potential for becoming a national issue and/or for impacting students and/or institutions. If so, I would like to discuss the availability of association resources to achieve this expansion in scope.

Staff resources are necessary in order to take a more strategic focus in the area of public policy. Several years ago, the organization removed the position that was dedicated primarily to the public policy division. While NASPA, particularly through the work of the Executive Director, continues to provide the leadership mentioned in the goal language, the absence of a dedicated staff member has impacted the effectiveness of the volunteer efforts as they relate to member engagement and information dissemination.

### **Action Items**

The following action items would provide guidance for the Public Policy Division. I request that we determine whether

- the Board wishes the Public Policy Division to enhance involvement of members, build competency among members, and/or disseminate information for advocacy.

- the Division should expand its scope to consider and advise the board about state and/or regional public policy issues that appear to have significant potential for becoming a national issue and/or for impacting students and/or institutions.
- the Board wants the Division to propose a framework by which we could engage the membership in establishing a public policy agenda.

### NASPA GOALS

- A.** To provide professional development to our members through the creation and dissemination of high quality experiences, information and exemplary models of practice

Members of the Public Policy Division, under the leadership of Jeanne Miller, addressed this goal through

- Conference presentations at national and regional conferences. Attendance was good and interest was high at sessions.
- Public Policy Briefs for Leadership Exchange;
- Articles for regional newsletters.

Members of the Division set goals for 2011-2012 to enhance our efforts by

- Proposing conference sessions in addition to the “typical” sessions we do at the national conference to include issue-focused presentations and discussions about legal and/or policy issues of importance to the membership. This could also include sessions where we listen to the membership about their interest in and concerns about particular public policy issues.
- Providing learning opportunities for professionals at all levels of the institution and experience
- Creating a webinar on competency areas dealing with law, policy, and governance that can be a vehicle for professional development of NASPA members
- Coordinating the regional conference presentations about public policy
- Coordinating communication with regions through newsletters and/or other vehicles
- Collaborating with the faculty in higher education programs to enhance curriculum in the area of policy and advocacy

- B.** To provide leadership in higher education through policy development and advocacy for students on important international, national, state, and local issues.

Members of the Public Policy Division, under the leadership of Jeanne Miller, addressed this goal through

- Discussion of issues as requested by the Consortium and by the Executive Director; issues included such things as the Carney Veterans Mental Health Bill, the Dream Act, the Veterans Educational Assistance Improvements Act, the NCAA Division 1 basketball proposal, negotiated rule-making, financial aid, and student health insurance policies.
- Advising the Board and the Executive Director about NASPA’s involvement in efforts with other professional organizations (through signing on letters, communicating with legislators, etc.)
- Participating in the Higher Education Mental Health Alliance

For 2011-2012, the members of the Public Policy Division expect to continue to respond to such issues as they arise; in addition, we hope to:

- Guide discussions, as appropriate, that are more proactive than reactive in nature;
- Create opportunities for members to influence the national agenda for higher education;
- Enhance the involvement and influence of members in local and regional policy issues
- Disseminate a directory with helpful contact information
- Educate members about funding sources available to campuses that relate to public policy issues (such as those available for working with underrepresented students, building community colleges, etc.)

## **Joint Statement on Campus Safety**

May 2011

In keeping with educational mission and historical expectation, American universities and colleges have provided, and continue to provide, safe and well-ordered campuses. However, a small number of violent events in academe—in particular, a handful of horrific rampage killings--remind of the need to safeguard carefully against tragic exceptions to the rule.

Safety on American campuses continues to be a priority for faculty and staff, who recognize that postsecondary education is a privilege and do all they can to support the educational mission of colleges and universities. Safety education and preventing, responding, and recovering from crisis situations are fundamental responsibilities of faculty, staff, and college administrators providing safe environments for our students. The members of the undersigned organizations reflect the commitment of student affairs professionals on campuses nationwide to provide the best possible living and learning environments for students in our nation's colleges and universities.

To protect against violence, we affirm two traditional principles. First, we emphasize the utility of civil and nonviolent expression and conduct. In an environment that is supposed to facilitate the peaceful reconciliation of conflict and create a marketplace of ideas, resolution of differences should be achieved by the power of reason and persuasion, not by the force of arms.

Second, cognizant that criminally motivated or criminally insane persons may reject reason in favor of violence, we acknowledge the utility of a university or college police or public safety department, which will carefully recruit, expertly train, and appropriately arm personnel that it closely supervises.

Our fundamental purpose in keeping our students, faculty, staff, and visitors safe in an environment where learning occurs is common to all of us; the challenges we face and the ways we address those challenges vary greatly. Legislative mandates, no matter how well intentioned, rarely match the needs of all possible institutions in the most efficient and effective way.

Additionally, the intensity and breadth of media coverage of incidents that are actually rare on campuses can lead to erroneous conclusions and demands for legislation that may strain the resources of institutions, divert attention from other pressing concerns, and fail to address the issues effectively. Institutional administration and their concomitant governing boards are best suited for making policy determining the best ways in which to keep our students safe. When legislative discussions do ensue, it is

critical that institutions of higher education be included in order to bring forward all information that should advise legislation.

Due to our roles on campus, we are often on the front line educating about safety and preventing, responding to, and recovering from crisis situations. There is no single easy solution to keeping our campuses safe. We must continue to work collaboratively in order to promulgate policy and practice that supports rather than impedes the work of those serving on our campuses so that the threats to learning environments are minimized.

The realities of the world are present on our campuses. The experts on these campuses do outstanding work keeping the members of our campus communities safe. Through our continued work and with the support of those with whom we collaborate, we will continue to provide for students, employees, and visitors, the freedom to learn, engage, and discover on our nation's campuses.

ACPA – College Student Educators International

Association for Student Conduct Administration

Association of College & University Housing Officers – International

Association of College Unions International

NASPA – Student Affairs Administrators in Higher Education

National Association for Campus Activities

National Orientation Directors Association

**Guiding Principles** (adapted from “*In Search of Safer Communities: Emerging Practices for Student Affairs in Addressing Campus Violence,*” published by NASPA)

- (1) We recognize that all situations are unique and all campuses are unique.
- (2) There is no single best answer to a problem or emergency; there are various possibilities. Decision making at the local level will come with practice, based on guidance from professional associations, best practice, and state and federal agencies.
- (3) We can work hard to take care of each other, but we cannot prevent every act of violent behavior on our campuses.
- (4) We know there is a link between alcohol and campus violence. Therefore, any consideration about best practices for managing violence must also address the issue of alcohol use.
- (5) We know there is a link between guns and campus violence and concur with IACLEA’s (International Association of Campus Law Enforcement Administrators, Incorporated) conclusion in a 2008 paper that allowing guns on campus is likely to have unintended negative consequences. (see also *2011 Statement Against Concealed Weapon Carry in University Residences*, issued by the Association for Student Conduct Administration (ASCA), the Association of College and University Housing Officers—International (ACUHO-I), and the National Intramural-Recreational Sports Association (NIRSA))
- (6) The work around violence must start long before students reach our campuses. We need to partner with K-12 educators to understand research and practice around issues such as bullying and peer mediation and to design and implement broad-based interventions.
- (7) The vast majority of people with mental health issues are not violent. The ADA has enabled more students to be successful on campus. We have expanded our support services for students with disabilities and welcome their full participation in all aspects of the academic community.