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NASPAA IN THE 21ST CENTURY

It has been an honor serving as your vice-president and president-elect and member of the executive council this past year, and I am looking forward to becoming president. But first, I would like to recognize outgoing president Genia Toma, who has served us exceptionally well with her thoughtful, firm, and dedicated leadership. Please join me in a show of appreciation for Dr. Toma.

Before I share my aspirations as NASPAA's new president, I want to briefly underscore the obvious about who we are and what we face in thinking about—in fact, thinking *anew* about--our vitally important role as the primary educators of the future generations of public leaders and managers, whether they work in the public, non-profit, or even for-profit sectors. Most likely, before all is said and done, they will experience all three.

Much is in the air in our field, and in the world around us! A fairly random selection from among the journal articles and books on my desk this past week tells the story. It is no longer simply the science and art of *public affairs and administration* that we are preoccupied with, as it is a deeper search for mission and purpose, and a new role in the rapidly evolving world where “government,” as we once understood it, has morphed into “governance;” where public service no longer means simply a job working in government; where the lines between public and non-profit, even public and private,

are blurring; where the nation-state is being transformed--to what, we are not sure; where public administration fashioned along the lines of the industrial models of 20th century, mostly Western nation models, is being challenged from within, and which faces the Herculean challenge of adapting to meet the public needs and services of the world's six billion and growing population, particularly in rapidly developing societies.

We are all familiar with these issues as they are being raised in our literature, but have we faced the implications for what and how we teach and deliver our educational programs, and what we symbolize and represent collectively as an association of leading educators and educational programs? A little taste of the literature:

- “The Repositioning of American Public Administration” [George Frederickson, 1999 Gaus Lecture]
- *The Politics of Quasi-Government* [Jonathan Koppell, 2003]
- “Desperately Seeking Selznick: Cooptation and the Dark Side of Public Management Networks” [Larry O’Toole and Ken Meier, PAR 2004]
- *Post Modern Public Administration: Toward Discourse* [Charles Fox and Hugh Miller, 1995]
- Symposium on “Globalization and International Approaches to Public Affairs Education” [Ed Jennings, et al, J-PAE 2005]
- “The Institutionalization of Private Governance: How Business and Nonprofit Organizations Agree on Transnational Rules” [Philipp Pattberg, Governance 2005]

And, last year’s NASPAA keynote address:

- “Getting Beyond the Right Answers to the Wrong Question in Public Affairs Education [Lester Salamon]

We are in turmoil, even somewhat at sea, I would suggest. But not lost. We are plausibly on the brink of a new age, a new era, which takes me back to the maxim of my old colleague, Peter Drucker, who said so insightfully:

“The greatest danger in times of turbulence is not the turbulence; it is to act with yesterday’s logic.”

So how do we move beyond yesterday's logic in this new era? An era that by all indications will require leaders and managers with skills that extend not only vertically up and down their organizations, but also horizontally across a myriad of stakeholders and a variety of public, private, and nonprofit organizations; an era that will require leaders and managers who are goal- and results-oriented--who are ethically and morally anchored, and sensitive to the humanity of every individual. Leaders and managers who understand that government has an important role to play in the emerging world of *governance*, although this will need to be expressed in ways that are imaginative and flexible, as opposed to bureaucratic and formalized .

If I am correct about this, then our job requires us to pose--and answer--a set of fundamental questions, to which we must devote substantial thought and energy, and to test our provisional answers against the growing body of experience as we move into the new era. For instance:

- How best do we develop educational experiences that incorporate and enhance the wide array of skills and personal qualities that are required of leaders and managers in the emerging world of hybrid-organizations, global competition, systemic jolts and uncertainties, networks and instant communications to ensure the best possible level of public goods and services in society?
- How best do we ensure through experiential learning and our own good example that we instill in the next generation of leaders and managers fidelity to the democratic impulse and democratic institutions, which are at the heart of our culture and civic society?
- How do we ensure a fidelity to the moral and pragmatic imperatives to respect diversity, address the most glaring disparities in society, and cultivate the spirit of cooperation among the different peoples and groups within and beyond our nation's boundaries?
- Finally, how do we engage as individuals and as members of our professional community the most fundamental questions arising today about the "proper functions of government" in the changing world of the 21st century?

I would posit that NASPAA, as an organization, *cannot answer these questions for us!* We would all be aghast if it tried! However, as the premier association for our educational programs and our professional field, it can serve as a stimulating and impartial forum for addressing them. In this capacity, NASPAA will continue to cultivate the necessary discourse, articulate and encourage the incorporation of new educational requisites for our programs, and amplify for all to hear the guiding principles of our profession and our unswerving commitment to quality public service for the public good.

NASPAA can and should be a catalyst for change!

In this vein, this year:

- We will focus our energy on identifying the skills and personal qualities needed in the coming age and look to our 2007 10-year major assessment of the standards for the MPA and MPP degrees;
- We will amplify our role within the international community of public management and public affairs education programs; and
- We will examine closely how best to promote and ensure diversity within our programs and our professional field.

All of this will be undertaken while we continue to improve the long-standing association services provided to each and every one of you, our constituent members.

It will be an exciting year and a challenging one. I take comfort, however, in the fact that under the leadership of our new executive director, Laurel McFarland, her excellent staff, and those of you who serve in so dedicated and effective a manner on our many committees and task forces, together we will make NASPAA a true catalyst for change in public affairs and administration education for the 21st century. I promise you nothing less, nothing more.

Thank you.