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Helping the Angels Come Out

by Elizabeth Griego, NASPA President



There is a story about Michelangelo pushing a huge piece of rock down a street. A curious neighbor sitting lazily outside his house inquired why he was laboring over an old piece of stone. Michelangelo is said to have answered, "Because there is an angel in that rock that wants to come out."

I love this story because it reminds us of the work we do every day in student affairs. We work with students individually; we design processes, policies, and learning experiences to help our students discover and work to become their best selves — to have their angels come out. (OK, sometimes it also feels like we are pushing rocks). The public agenda for higher education today reinforces that in order to find those angels, we in student affairs need to join with faculty to deeply engage students, whether through George Kuh's high-impact educational practices, Sharon Parks' "asking big questions and discovering worthy dreams," or Parker Palmer's advocacy for connecting

students' individual stories to the larger stories of their academic disciplines.

Task Force Reports

This month, two important joint NASPA/ACPA task forces will conclude their past year's work with published reports examining just these educational practices, as well as the future design of our profession. Over the next several months, the NASPA Executive Board will place primary focus on how to consider and implement recommendations from these two seminal reports.

◆ The task force on the future of student affairs includes definitions of new ways of working as well as implications for our future work as a profession in its report, *Envisioning the Future of Student Affairs* (February 2010). The NASPA Executive Board invites comments and reactions to the questions raised in this report. In particular, we will focus on the [recommendation that NASPA should unify with ACPA](#) as one professional association. Discussion on this matter has been ongoing. Committees have been formed to envision eight key aspects of what a single new unified association would look like, and the NASPA Web site continues to invite your input. Dialogue sessions are organized for the NASPA Annual Conference. In July, the governing boards of ACPA and NASPA will meet for the first time to discuss whether to take this matter to the vote of the membership of both associations.

◆ The task force formed to study the professional competency areas for student affairs practitioners has completed pioneering work in defining 10 professional competencies (knowledge, skills, and attitudes) expected of student affairs professionals, regardless of their areas of specialization or positional roles. This report will be available for membership review and comment at the Annual Conference in Chicago and will also be posted on the NASPA website. Members are encouraged to [submit comments](#). The final report will be available in July 2010.

Goals for the Presidency

Exploring the implications and implementation of these two anticipated reports were two of the eight goals

I listed for my NASPA presidency when I was asked a year ago to serve. Additional goals I hope to bring the considerable resources of our strong association to bear over the next year include:

- ◆ Working with the NASPA staff to mentor our members and contribute effectively to the national dialogue to develop, assess, align and improve learning results for the good work you continue to do.
- ◆ Supporting professional development and networking through alternative modes of program delivery in this stressed economy of reduced budgets.
- ◆ Expanding and deepening our research and practice on preventing violence through the *Enough Is Enough* campaign.
- ◆ Exploring how student affairs can be even more effective in conducting our work in the context of our international, interdependent, sustainably aware global society.

Please know that I am grateful for the privilege of serving as your NASPA president, particularly in a year that holds the potential for such consequential decision making about our association. I am mindful of the weight of responsibility in leading us to do what is most right for our association, which holds so much meaning for us. I welcome and encourage your feedback at all times, and I encourage your communication as the year unfolds. It is challenging and important work to help the angels come out.