



Dear Colleagues:



At the recent, first-ever White House summit on community colleges, President Obama said, “By 2020, America will once again lead the world in producing college graduates. And I believe community colleges will play a huge part in meeting this goal, by producing an additional five million degrees and certificates in the next 10 years.”

Community colleges play an expanded role in realizing the president’s—and our—ambitions for an educated populace, strong workforce, durable economy, and global understanding and stability, NASPA commits itself to deeper support and stronger partnerships in support of these shared goals.

Community colleges are models of institutionalizing advocacy, effective student support programs, and the vital connections between the classroom, services, and community needs. Community college colleagues continue to improve student opportunities through transfer-ready programs and new technical education and vocational programs, including those in the biotechnology and green technology fields.

In spring 2010, I met with NASPA community college division leaders to discuss how we could strengthen partnerships across institutional types to best support student success. As President Obama rolls out his initiatives, and as NASPA reviews professional standards and competencies and the future of our profession, it is clear that the barriers between institutions of all types must come down. Community colleges excel in providing tutoring, advising, counseling, and basic skills centers to raise academic success rates. Student affairs and student services professionals know that without our work, many students will not reach or remain in the classroom. Larger institutions with greater research funding, internship opportunities that reach out to community colleges, and stronger transfer bridges and academic support programs find that students benefit from the close collaboration.

Now more than ever, community college student affairs practitioners need professional development to better address the demands of their institutions. In response to a recent questionnaire sent by NASPA division leaders, community college colleagues cite professional development as the most important reason to be active in NASPA.

In the last several years, NASPA has broadened its focus to enhance professional development opportunities for community college professionals. The NASPA Annual Conference will once again include a pre-conference Community College Institute (CCI), this year focusing on student engagement. Another longstanding NASPA professional development opportunity for community colleges is the Student Services Institute, a program offered on campus for 30 or more staff members and customized in response to a pre-institute assessment of campus and staff needs. Both programs include nationally recognized NASPA members as faculty. The inaugural Community College Executive Leadership Experience will also be held in conjunction with the 2011 NASPA Annual Conference. This unique two-year program is designed to give a leadership edge to those who aspire to executive positions within community colleges.

A majority of those who responded to the Community College Division’s questionnaire noted that they joined NASPA, attended NASPA events, and first participated in their professional association through the encouragement of a colleague or SSAO, a good reminder of the importance of invitation and support. Survey respondents also noted that budget challenges may limit their full participation in NASPA, providing evidence of how some colleagues lack the institutional funding to become professional members.

As we examine our association and move to represent the profession on a larger scale, we have work to do within our membership. We have nothing less than a national agenda as our incentive.

Sincerely,
Elizabeth Griego
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NASPA President

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Leadership Exchange is published four times a year for senior student affairs officers in higher education. Letters to the editor are welcome. For subscription information and advertising opportunities, please contact the NASPA office.

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