



APA Board of Directors - Committee & Task Force Report

BOARD MEETING

DATE: Sunday, April 27, 2008

TO: APA Board of Directors

FROM: Young Planners Group Task Force
Sue Schwartz, FAICP, Chair

SUBJECT: **Young Planners Group Task Force Report:
"Keeping APA Relevant in a Changing Environment"**

ADOPTED POLICY:

Action on this report will constitute ongoing policy.

TYPE OF REPORT:

Action

Information

CONSENT AGENDA

Yes

No

FISCAL NOTE:

All activities will be funded from the currently adopted budget.

DEVELOPMENT PLAN:

Goal 5: Deliver products and services, and build our membership and leadership, in ways that will ensure APA's political, financial, and operational effectiveness.

RECOMMENDATION:

That the Board adopt the recommendations of this report.

ACTION REQUESTED OF THE BOARD:

That the Board adopt the recommendations of this report.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In 2007, APA President Bob Hunter appointed the Young Planners Group Task Force (YPG), in order to address the growing needs of young planners within the APA as well as provide a forum for young planners to be a resource to the organization. APA has recognized that great shifts are occurring in the profession. There is a need to reach out to the next generation of planners as a service to these members, in order to sustain the organization, in order to provide services to a changing professional demographic, and



in order to cultivate the next generation of leaders. The YPG has defined young planners as planning professional under the age of 35.¹

The purpose of this report is to provide insights and recommendations on:

- Demographic shifts within the profession
- What APA can do for Young Planners
- What Young Planners can do for APA

The YPG is comprised of a diverse collection of energetic young planners. We were appointed to serve on the group by APA's national leaders. Some of us work in private practice, while others work for local governments. We are active in our communities and our profession, and we enthusiastically accepted the challenge to address the needs and qualities that make young professionals unique in the community of professional planners.

DEMOGRAPHIC SHIFTS

In 2008, the US News and World Report, ranked the planning profession as a rising profession with strong outlooks and high job satisfaction.² Yet, if the profession seeks to retain its competitive advantage as a rising profession, it will need to address the changing demographic needs. According to the U.S. Census, the share of the Baby Boomers, the generation born between 1946 and 1964 is the largest demographic cohort in the work force today and will enter into the retirement in unprecedented numbers as they come of age. The nation's shifting demographic patterns will be also be reflected within the planning profession. Other professions have also made note of changing demographics. The International City/County Managers Association (ICMA) has an initiative called Next Generation in order to promote the profession and cultivate the next generation of leaders. The planning workforce is changing with pending mass retirements of the Baby Boom generation and APA also needs to recognize that its membership is changing as well.

¹ APA currently has a New Professional (NP) designation for members but this designation can only be achieved by being a recent graduate, in other words, by changing from the Student membership type to New Professional. The YPG determined that the target group for this report relates more to an age or a generation rather than when someone graduated from school or when they became a new professional. In addition, this age corresponds with other professional organizations who have groups targeting the next generation of professionals (such as ULI). The age of 35 seems to be appropriate given that many planners come to the profession after graduate school and are therefore a little older than other professions.

² Nemko, Marty. "Best Careers 2008." U.S. News and World Report. Online edition. Posted 19 Dec 2007. <http://www.usnews.com/features/business/best-careers/best-careers-2008.html>

Other organizations have conducted studies to find out the impact these demographic shifts will have on their profession. In 2002, the Council of State Governments (CSG) and the National Association of State Personnel Executives (NASPE) conducted a workforce survey of all state agencies. The resulting report noted that state governments could lose more than 30% of their workforce to retirement, private sector employers, and alternative careers by 2006. (The same study found that the average age of a state government workforce is 44.5.) The planning workforce is changing with pending mass retirements of the Baby Boom generation a changing membership, and a succeeding generation of workers that is significantly smaller. The APA needs to recognize and embrace these changes and provide new alternatives to outreach and training of young planners to address the challenges the organization will quickly face.

Part of the demographic shift relates to differences between the newest generation joining the workforce and older generations. Planners entering the work force now are shaped by different events and cultural circumstances than their Baby Boom predecessors. They have different skill sets and work expectations as a result. The challenge to the planning profession and to young planners is the ability attract and retain the necessary capacity to fill the positions left by retiring baby boomers, while transforming the profession to meet the changing needs of all its members. Younger workers want flexible schedules, they multi-task, they feel hindered by bureaucracy. Younger planners want career advancement and they aren't afraid of changing jobs to find it. They want to be supervisors. They want to be challenged. Challenge us.

The nation will also experience an increase in ethnic minorities, especially in the Hispanic population. The planning profession seems to be in constant struggle with our mission and professional composition. The profession is dominated by white, middle-class, and highly educated men and women. Less than 10% of APA members are minorities compared with over 30% of in the general population. Historically, men have dominated the profession. We need to look for ways to engage all communities and strengthen efforts to diversity the planning community. The APA started addressing this shift through the APA Diversity Task Force appointed in 2005 to specifically address an increase in diversity to the profession. Yet when combined, the ability to target changing face of the young planner, the organization will not only have to tailor its outreach strategies to attract these young planners but to effectively outreach and retain young minority planners.

WHAT CAN APA DO FOR YOUNG PLANNERS?

1. **Succession Planning** – Employers and APA need to be prepared for the upcoming demographic shift which will leave many leadership positions open. Mentorship is key to individual and professional development. APA could adapt programs used by other organizations, such as Urban Land Institute (ULI), to

structure in time for mentorship and succession planning. The ULI program is designed to match up a small group of young professionals (5-10) with a seasoned professional in the field, who meets with them on a quarterly basis in an informal setting, say over dinner. Local APA chapters could assist in developing this informal mentorship program by identifying experienced professionals and young planners to participate as well as marketing the program via the local chapter website and newsletter. The rest is up to the mentorship group. It is an excellent way for young planners to learn more about the profession, leadership development and work/life balance. In addition, the program provides an avenue for young planners to network with one another and experienced professionals who they may otherwise not meet.

Succession planning is also critical for planning agencies and private firms to understand and to begin to develop strategies to address this shift. APA could develop sessions for the national and chapter conferences on this topic. Perhaps it would be appropriate to publish articles in various APA publications to help educate directors and managers on how to cope with pending retirements and changing demographics.

2. **Planning.org** – The website can be difficult to navigate, and not too visually interesting. There is a lot of information available but it is difficult to tell what is new.
 - a. Paid Access: Many employers, local governments in particular, subscribe to supplemental APA services, such as the Planning Advisory Service (PAS). Many young planners are not aware that these resources are available to them, as employees of the subscribing firm or agency. Anyone working for a subscribing organization can get access to PAS resources online. Instructions are online at www.planning.org/pas/pasforall.htm.
 - b. Networking: Add an optional field in the member database for undergraduate and graduate school. APA already has this information for AICP planners who registered online. This field should be searchable in the membership database to aid with networking and mentorship matchups. A young planner might be more likely to contact someone out of the blue if they had the same alma mater.

3. **Other Communication Mediums** – Did you know there is a Facebook, an internet social networking page, group of planners that call themselves “Friends of the American Planning Association”? This is an interesting tidbit – it seems to have been started by planning students who wanted to create a forum for like-minded Facebookers. The members of this social networking page appear to be students in Planning programs and people who are generally interested with urban planning and design. As of April 8, 2008, there were 670 members.

When the page was initially created, it was simply called American Planning Association. Since it was not an official APA site, the name was soon changed to “Friends of the American Planning Association”. Many other organizations like APA are now using social networking sites. In March the Congress of New Urbanism launched a Facebook page for their members to encourage more interaction among its members. It would be interesting to see how CNU and other membership organizations have handled their relationship with social networking internet sites. APA has had a page on MySpace, since mid-2007.

4. **Targeted Outreach** – The New Professional (NP) membership designation does not accurately capture young professionals as they have been defined in this report. Other allied organizations allow members to self-identify to a young professional group. For example, the Urban Land Institute has a Young Leaders designation that affords members reduced rates for membership. Members who have selected this designation also receive notices for events specifically targeted to them such as networking events and educational opportunities. APA’s Early Career program is a good start in bringing young professionals into the fold, but it does have limitations. Students can register at the student rate for a maximum of three years. When the student eligibility ends, the membership becomes NP. The NP designation can be used for two additional years. The NP designation relates more to recent graduates than the generation – they may overlap but they might not. The lack of targeted outreach makes it difficult to reach out to the next generation of planners.
5. **Recruit Young Planners** – APA should actively seek young planners to serve on committees and task forces organized by the National APA. Chapters and Divisions could also dedicate efforts to recruit young planners for their activities.
6. **Recognition at Conferences** – Planners with the NP or STU member designations (or another form of targeted outreach as explained above) should get name flags that recognize them as such. It would be a simple way to aid with networking among young planners and between generations.
7. **Poster Sessions** – While poster sessions are for students to showcase their work, students are also young planners. The poster sessions allow for structured networking which, perhaps, is what this generation is looking for. Perhaps APA should send notification if the poster sessions (and awards program) at the beginning and towards the end of the semester (January, March, September, November) so that students can be thinking about these programs as the start of the semester and work on class projects. Perhaps there could be an informal poster session section – an impromptu gathering of students who could bring

items at the last minute. APA would need to provide space and a timeslot; students would provide everything else. Informalizing the Poster Session might allow additional participation by students at the national conference.

WHAT CAN YOUNG PLANNERS DO FOR APA

1. **Reception at the Annual APA National Conference for YP/NP** – Young planners could work with the national APA to organize a networking event at the National (or Chapter) conference. This would be similar to the student event although it should be separate.
2. **Targeted mentoring with students** – Since many of us are recent students ourselves, we should be actively engaging with local universities to provide mentoring for students. There are items of interest to young planners in particular such as issues of work/life balance, how to be a planner and a parent, the differences between public and private sector employment, and how to effectively network.
3. **Outreach to Universities** – Young planners should make themselves available to universities to serve on jury panels, to speak about the profession, and for mentoring as previously mentioned.
4. **Get Involved!** – The YPG has prepared a list of ways young planners, and any members, can get involved in APA at their local levels. Contact your chapter president or chapter administrator if you have one. There are many ways to be involved, the chapters just don't know you are interested!

List of Volunteer Activities for Young Planners

- ★ Newsletter – statewide or regional
 - Write articles – it could either be about a topic of interest, an opinion piece, or an interview of a professional. The interview bit is nice because it serves as an entrée to meet a professional perhaps admired.
 - Find advertisers – this could be a good fundraiser for motivated student chapters. Students can take a percentage of the ad sold: the chapter gets money and ads, the student organizations get money and individuals can start networking with professionals.
 - Layout – APA Colorado did this as a fundraiser too; we contracted with the student chapter to do the layout work and provide 1-2 articles per issue
 - Editing
- ★ Website

- Serve as a webmaster: update jobs page, membership database, etc.
 - Redesign the website
- ★ Chapter Elections
 - Nominations Committee: Nominate qualified co-workers/former classmates to Chapter leadership positions
 - Teller Committee: Count ballots
- ★ Offer to take minutes at meetings
 - It would help if you didn't offer sporadically and you did a good job at providing timely minutes back to the board or committee. Otherwise you could be burning some bridges...
- ★ Volunteer at a State Conference – even if you can't attend. There are many opportunities to help out that can be done remotely or in advance of the conference itself
 - Help stamp/label mailings
 - Help design postcard "teasers," conference program
 - Help prepare materials to be handed out such as info packets, gifts, etc.
- ★ Organize social events – you don't have to have an officially sanctioned networking event to get together with coworkers, former classmates, and other planners. Take some initiative, pick a spot and tell people to go there on a certain day after work, tell them to pass it on to other planner friends.

CONCLUSION

Changing demographics will impact many professions in the next few years and APA has made a good first step by appointing the YPG and allowing us to present our findings to the Board of Directors. However, this is just a first step. The organization and many of its long time members (read: our bosses) must adapt to the changing demographic. We aren't asking for foosball tables in the break room. We do seek a work environment and a professional organization where we are challenged and where we can thrive. The members of this committee are eager to continue this work and assist with the implementation of our recommendations or any further charge from President Hunter.



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