

Students and Early Career Psychologists are the Compass for APA



I spend a good deal of time thinking about the future leadership pipeline for our profession during my campaign for APA President. Leading an organization during transformative change requires **reflecting on the future while building upon the past**. We face unprecedented societal problems for which psychology can make essential contributions, and APA itself continues its own strategic advances and partnerships. It is in this context that **I see students and early career psychologists (ECP's) as the "compass" for our organization**, showing us the way forward. After all, it is those entering and new to the profession who have fresh perspectives and emerging skills for the future, based on a firm foundation of the vision, experience and teachings of those of us who support them. Indeed, it is one of the greatest privileges of more senior psychologists to foster the careers of future leaders in the lifecycle of psychology. Like other aspects of collaboration across APA, this illustrates my slogan of "Better Together."

Fostering the careers of students and early career psychologists has been a passion during my entire career.¹ First, as Director of Training in Psychology at Children's National Medical Center, I had the privilege of mentoring graduate students, interns, post-doctoral fellows, and early career psychologists. Then, as Director of the Congressional and Executive Branch Fellowships for the Society for Research in Child Development (SRCD), I had the honor of supporting the career development of a number of early career psychologists seeking to gain specialized experience in public policy. Perhaps most importantly, throughout my involvement in APA governance, **I have been an advocate for advancing the leadership pipeline** with both student and early career membership on boards, committees, and the Council of Representatives. And, when I served as 2015 President of the Society for Child and Family Policy and Practice (Division 37), I made this a priority in my term:

"...one of the highest priorities for me ... this year is to engage students and early career professionals in the activities of the division ... and to create the leadership pipeline for the future."

I was very moved by a recent piece written by early career psychologist, Dr. Jasmine Mote for SSCP [http://sscpweb.org/whats_new/10214217] in which she talks about "liminal spaces," or transitions. It seems that we are in one of our own critical transitions in APA. As we

¹ See also my statement, *Cultivating a More Racially/Ethnically Diverse Psychology Workforce*

face a new post-syndemic² world, we need to nurture and mentor our leadership pipeline more than ever before. **We need renewed energy, innovation, and a long span of dedication** to tackle the issues both internal to psychology and in the world. The most challenging problems – among them, systemic and structural racism, discrimination against sexual and gender minorities, unequal access to care, climate change – call for new ways of doing things. While we work to advance equity and mental/behavioral health as part of public health, routine primary care, and the culture of organizations, we will need fresh perspectives and passionate commitment.

Students and early career psychologists are the way forward across the subfields of psychology, and we need them in greater numbers to seek leadership roles in our association. A recent survey of the demographics of APA governance groups can serve as a point of reference for measuring progress. If I am elected President of APA, I commit to work with the American Psychological Association of Graduate Students (APAGS), the Committee on Early Career Psychologists (CECP), divisions and state/provincial associations to **amplify student and early career psychologist voices in planning future directions**. We will be Better Together.

² See, for example, Gravlee (2020) <https://doi.org/10.1002/ajhb.23482>