



Why Should You Belong to APA?

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One of the first things that newly-elected APA Presidents do is get briefed by staff on the structure, function and activities of APA's organization and its members. When I first became President I knew about as much about APA as the typical member -- I subscribed to the journals, I read parts of the Monitor, gave talks at conventions, and I knew that there was a large organization "somewhere" doing things in support of Psychology. Unlike most APA presidents, I was a total outsider to APA governance, never having had anything to do with its Council of Representatives, task forces or many committees. I paid my dues, used APA when I needed to, but never worked in its trenches. I won the election based on solely on the credits I had earned as an academic-scientist.

Now that I am well into my Presidency, I can say it has been an eye opener for me to discover the range, number and extent of projects, task forces, actions and initiatives meant to further our discipline, advocate for psychological science, and apply psychological knowledge in the service of society. I also had no idea of the large staff infrastructure at APA that serves as our eyes, ears, hands and feet in making sure that psychology gets funded and represented at federal and local levels, in making sure that the very best of science, application and practice come to the attention of policy makers and implementers, and in fostering psychology's collaborations with other scientific disciplines.

I realize I may sound like a cult convert, but I want to share with my colleagues in Division 1 a few of the things that I've learned that APA does for its scientists and scientist-practitioners. I hope it will help dispel the myth that "APA does nothing for scientists or academics," or "my dues go only to support Practice." The more I have learned, the more I have been motivated to contribute time, energy and talents to further these important efforts (as I will outline at the end of this note). If you want to know the whole gamut of things the Science Directorate does, please check out its web page -- www.apa.org/science.

Here are a few highlights in just three areas -- advocacy, training, and what I will call "burning issues." These activities underscore what APA does "behind the scenes" in service to us all.

Advocacy: You probably all know that APA has a large presence on Capitol Hill through its activism for mental health parity and prescription privileges. But did you know that APA has an equally vocal presence for science matters? APA staffers monitor what is happening on the Hill and in Federal Agencies relevant to researchers (NSF and NIH -- including institutes NIMH, NICHD, NCI, NINDS, NIDA, NIAAAA, NIA; and VA, NASA, DOE, DoD, and FDA to name a few -- a lot of alphabet soup, but rich in funds that we want to tap into). They work in many ways to advocate for behavioral science funding, and for report language in federal bills in support of behavioral science research -- by proposing legislative language, by testifying before congressional committees, and by visiting with congressional members and their staff. Much of this work is done in coalitions, and APA's staffers take leading roles. Just for starters, PPO-Science's Karen Studwell chairs the Friends of The NICHD (a coalition that advocates for the National Institute of Child Health and Human Development), PPO-Science's Director Geoff Mumford is the treasurer of the Coalition for National Science Funding, PPO-Science's Heather Kelly is the treasurer of the Defense Research Coalition, and PPO-Science's Pat Kobor is cochair for the Coalition for the Advancement of Health through Behavioral and Social Sciences Research. In addition to "lobbying" efforts, APA staff continually monitor and respond to doings in the federal research and regulation arena. Whenever there are requests for comment on proposed regulations or changes to the research landscape, staff request input from relevant experts and draft a comment or letter from APA. In the last year APA has made comments on a wide variety of proposed legislative and regulative issues from education, animal research, medical records privacy, data sharing, to standards for IRB accreditation. For each of these issues, members

have been asked for their input – to make comments on written documents, to come to Washington to help put on congressional events, such as briefings or research exhibits, or to let APA take them to talk directly to their congressional representatives on the Hill about specific legislative issues. You can find out about these by subscribing to a monthly e-newsletter that will keep you up to date – its called SPIN. Look at it via <http://www.apa.org/ppo/issues/spinhome.html> or sign up by sending an email to ppo@apa.org

APA also advocates in a different way -- there is regular APA representation at major meetings of other societies and organizations (e.g., Society for Neuroscience, American Association for the Advancement of Science, National Academies of Science, etc.), where larger science initiatives and issues are discussed. In these venues APA presents information on such issues as ethics, research regulation and IRBs, or gives comments to National Research Council committees on their scope and work plans. APA has an important place at the science table -- I attend a biannual conference of the presidents of over 60 scientific societies, where psychology is the only social/ behavioral science represented, and have been able to show these physicists, biologists and others of the many ways in which psychology is relevant to issues of national defense, terrorism, and more. APA staff also attend regular meetings with other science groups and with policy makers (for example the Office of Science and Technology Policy -- the white house's advisory arm) to discuss current science opportunities and issues, and consult with federal agencies on applications of behavioral research to their concerns.

Training: APA's most visible student activities occur through its graduate student association, APAGS -- but did you know that the Science Directorate sponsors the "Science Student Council" -- a group of 10 students who engage other science graduate students in convention programming, an extensive web presence, an email network, a grant program and more? The Science Directorate is also involved in some direct training activities. One activity is for more established researchers -- the Science Directorate's "Advanced Training Institutes, " first held in 1999, offer week-long, hands-on courses on cutting-edge methodologies such as fMRI techniques or longitudinal modeling. Another activity is directed toward advanced graduate students and young faculty, the Academic Career Workshop. This workshop, which delves into the nitty gritty of finding, getting and keeping an academic research position, has been offered for several years at convention and at smaller scientific meetings. APA offers many more

opportunities for learning -- from teaching tips for faculty, to a week course on psychology in general for outstanding science undergraduates, to the Exploring Behavior Week outreach to high school students. I will add that each of these activities is something in which you or your students could participate. I am planning to have APA develop the standard text for H.S. psychology courses, to collaborate with APS in promoting psychology science at H.S. science fairs, and to develop new web sites for training H.S. and College teachers in being more effective in their teaching.

"Burning Issues" Activities: You may know about APA's standard governance groups -- the Board of Scientific Affairs (BSA) consists of 9 outstanding scientists (current Chair is Harry Reis, Div 8 Executive Officer), and its three standing Committees, CPTA (Committee on Psychological Tests and Assessments), CARE (Committee on Animal Research & Ethics) and COSA (Committee on Scientific Awards). But you may not know that BSA regularly supports the establishment of working groups or task forces that address timely issues. Recent ones are a working group on Internet research, a task force on testing on the Internet, and a working group on the implications of the genetic revolution for psychological research and knowledge, and an ad hoc group to address current issues in research regulation, especially IRB activities. Each of these groups, comprised of experts in the topics, has been called together to survey the issues and make recommendations about what to do next. For example, the research on the Internet group (chaired by Robert Kraut) is looking at technical, ethical, and other implications of using the internet as a tool for collecting data, as a means of assistance to researchers who are or intend to use this tool. The IRB group is planning to develop informational materials to facilitate IRB-researcher-administration interaction.

I could continue this list of things the science directorate and APA do for social psychologists and social psychology -- I have not even mentioned their regular activities that support the field such as research based awards, student grants, conference awards, and more, that demonstrate that APA respects and supports its scientific foundation. But there is a more important point that I would like to address. This is the *perception* that APA does nothing and what you can do about it. When I mentioned this perception to Science Directorate staff (headed by Dr. Kurt Salzinger), they said it was something they constantly worry about -- and wondered how much their regular efforts -- substantial communications such as, *Psychological Science Agenda*, the bi-monthly newsletter; listserv notes; and the Science sections

in the monthly *Monitor* -- get read or noticed by colleagues. Only you can answer that one -- but I want to remind you that the marvelous activities APA does in support of science are only possible when members (that is YOU!) are generous with their time, effort and attention. In each of their activities, the Science Directorate draws on member expertise, ideas and enthusiasm. So when you read a call for comments on your Division listserv, or read about a new important issue for which APA might be active, know that your input, your response and your opinion are not only important, they are the heart of what APA is all about. I want to assure you that there are eager ears waiting to hear from you -- mine, Bob Sternberg's (APA's president elect who will carry on the scientific tradition), and the staff of the Science Directorate.

Finally, let me mention a few things that I will be focusing on during my presidential tenure, in addi-

tion to helping develop a H.S. text and Psychology Science Fairs. I am working with the heads of APS to find areas in which our organizations can meaningfully collaborate for the benefit of psychological science. I am advancing an initiative to develop a compendium of all research psychologists have done that demonstrates a significant difference in improving some aspect of our lives, individually or collectively. Data are coming in from this survey (to which I would like each of you to contribute, see <http://research.apa.org/survey/compendium/>). When collated and organized by a task force of our experts, this compendium will be invaluable for creating a more positive image of psychology to Congress, the media and to the public.

I hope this quick overview has been of some value to you and encourages you to continue your APA membership, join if you are not, and promote APA to your students. One last word, the Chicago Convention (Aug 22-25) will be the best ever, in part because I am working closely with the Board of Convention Affairs to have many new, amazing features, fabulous events, special guests with fun and good times and rock and roll for all.