

Summary of August 5 & 6, 2020 Council Meeting

APA's Council of Representatives met virtually Aug. 5-6, during which it adopted a policy/position regarding the COVID-19 pandemic and agreed to proposed bylaws changes that would offer voting privileges to members of the ethnic minority psychology associations and to certain psychology graduate students.

The COVID-19 policy/position statement recognizes the multi-pronged calamities of a global pandemic, widespread anti-racism protests and a mental health crisis with a disproportionate impact on marginalized populations – and affirmed psychology's role in addressing their myriad harms. It passed by an overwhelming 98.8% of the vote (164 to 1, with 1 abstention).

Calling for a population health approach to address the pandemic, the resolution highlights the role of psychology, as the science of behavior, in efforts to help increase adherence to physical distancing, mask wearing and handwashing. Noting the devastating number of hospitalizations and deaths from the coronavirus, the resolution points to the contributions of psychologists in addressing widespread stress, anxiety, depression and hopelessness.

In introducing the business item calling for a bylaws change that would seat the five current ethnic minority psychological associations, or EMPAs, it was noted this was the fourth time since 2007 that the council has wrestled with this question. He cited the confluence of COVID, racial unrest and deep-rooted health disparities affecting people of color in the United States in urging its passage. "We think the time is right – maybe even more than right," he said. The measure passed by a wide margin – 160 to 1, with 2 abstentions. The measure also offers voting privileges to EMPA representatives to the council, as long as they are APA members.

The five EMPAs covered by the proposed bylaws amendment are the American Arab, Middle Eastern and North African Psychological Association; the Asian American Psychological Association; Association of Black Psychologists; National Latinx Psychological Association; and the Society of Indian Psychologists.

Because of the almost universal support for the proposed EMPA bylaws amendment, the council voted not to include pro and con statements when it goes to the membership. Rather, there will be only an explanatory statement.

During its second day of meeting, the council voted unanimously to receive the Report of the Work Group on Enhancing Council's Effectiveness as a Policymaking Body which is currently out for a 45-day comment period. The report outlines recommendations on how the council can more effectively carry out its role to direct and inform policy, and advance APA's strategic priorities, through an inclusive and collaborative approach reflecting a wide range of perspectives.

The council also revisited the issue of changing the bylaws to allow graduate students in psychology to vote in APA elections. (A similar measure passed council in 2019 but fell 58 votes short of passing the full membership.) After much debate surrounding whether to place certain guardrails around which psychology master's students would be covered, the council passed the measure by 115 to 38, with 5 abstentions. It would create a new membership category for master's and doctoral students who, after a year as graduate student members, would have the right to vote in the APA president-elect and board member-at-large elections and the bylaw amendment and apportionment ballots

In the case of this proposed bylaw amendment, council agreed to include pro and con statements, along with an explanatory statement, when it is sent to the full membership around Nov. 1.

An item calling for changing the name of Div. 42, Psychologists in Independent Practice, was withdrawn by its sponsors, who asked to postpone the motion until the February 2021 meeting so that the division can collaborate with all stakeholders.