

National Association of Fellowships Advisors

SUMMARY REPORT OF THE 2008 STRATEGIC PLANNING COMMITTEE

October 20, 2008  
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The strategic planning committee in connection with the Executive Board began by establishing the following goals for the organization:

I. Membership Recommendations:

1. **Develop strategies for manageable growth of the organization both in terms of advisors and of foundations.**

a. *Assess current situation:*

- i. Ten years after its creation NAFA has roughly 300 institutional members and 15 foundation members. For colleges and universities, membership provides access to important information about ethical standards and best practices in the field of scholarship advising. Participation in NAFA also helps to ensure the dissemination of information about scholarship opportunities to the maximum number of talented students across the country. Finally, involvement maximizes and simplifies foundation representatives' efforts to share essential information about scholarship programs, and to clarify advisors' questions about the mission, ethos, and selection criteria of the awards they represent.
- ii. When NAFA was created its first president, Robert Graalman, made a strong initial effort to publicize the organization and to promote an initial wave of membership. Since that time, biennial conferences, summer workshops and study tours, and word-of-mouth have been our key means of raising our profile and attracting new members.

b. *Make suggestions for enhancement:*

- i. The Executive Board will create a membership committee. The new committee will:
  1. Assess which relevant constituencies are unrepresented or underrepresented within NAFA;
  2. Develop marketing materials that would introduce NAFA;
  3. Evaluate incentives to encourage the growth of foundation memberships;
  4. Develop guidelines for foundation memberships; and
  5. Develop a plan for conducting outreach to other, relevant professional organizations (NAFSA, NCHC, etc.).

**2. To evaluate existing committee structures and procedures for recruiting volunteers.**

- a. *Assess the current situation:* NAFA currently has the following committees:
- i. The Constitution and By-Laws Committee: Regularly reviews the Constitution, Bylaws and other documents pursuant to the governance of NAFA, and recommends changes to the Board and to the general membership;
  - ii. The Conference Planning Committee: Chaired by the Vice President, plans and organizes the biennial national conference and other special programs and meetings; recommends a conference budget to the Board;
  - iii. The Ethics Committee: Responsible for drafting Code of Ethics for NAFA;
  - iv. The International Travel Committee: Develops and plans study abroad trips and disseminates information;
  - v. The Nominations and Elections Committee: Develops lists of candidates for offices of Vice President-President Elect, Secretary, Treasurer, and seats on the Board. Supervises balloting and certifies election results; and
  - vi. The Summer Workshop Committee: Develops and plans workshops outside of the biennial national conference.
- b. *Make suggestions for enhancement:*
- i. Examine current requirements for how committees are constituted and how they conduct their business and make changes if needed.
  - ii. Develop criteria to evaluate which and how many standing committees an organization of our size needs and can staff effectively.
  - iii. Decide whether the President should oversee all committees as currently required, or adopt another model. Possible alternative models:
    1. Reduce the number of committees by combining related functions under one standing committee whose chair reports to the President;  
or
    2. Assign oversight of some committees to Board members.
  - iv. Adopt a system that will encourage to members who are not on the Board to participate in committees, and also encourage diversity of membership.
  - v. Develop a mechanism for managing volunteers – including a way to help volunteers to find a way to contribute while their motivation is high.

**3. To maintain, continue to develop, and enhance advisor relationships with foundations.**

- a. *Assess current situation:*
1. Currently, foundations fit within three basic categories: very involved and interested in the work of NAFA, interested, but uninvolved, and uninterested and uninvolved.
  2. There are three basic strategies for interacting with foundations when issues arise: First, have NAFA take a more proactive approach to foundations; second, have advisors approach

foundations individually, assisted by NAFA; and third, do not approach foundations, even with NAFA's assistance.

- b. *Make suggestions for enhancement:* Foundations that are currently uninterested and involved are unlikely to be reached by NAFA initiatives. Those advisors who are reluctant to approach foundations with their concerns are unlikely to be reached by the initiatives discussed in this section.
    - i. Develop materials that introduce foundations to the work of NAFA. Provide contact information of current foundation members who are willing to act as mentors to other foundation representatives.
    - ii. Hold foundation meetings at conventions.
    - iii. The Executive Council should consider:
      - 1. Reducing fees for members; and/or
      - 2. Creating an Ombuds Committee comprised of both advisors and foundation members to hear issues raised by NAFA members. This committee would not adjudicate matters; rather, it would provide advisors with advice on how to approach foundations. In some cases where there is sufficient feedback to suggest a resolution to a problem, this committee could act as an arbiter of sorts. This committee would help to defuse difficult situations and could help to reassure foundations that participating in NAFA might open them for a lot of inquiries and complaints.
- 4. To provide guidelines for an ethical approach to scholarship advising.**
- a. *Assess current situation:* President Paula Warrick constituted an ethics task force with the specific goal of drafting a set of guidelines. This committee conducted several phone meetings in the spring of 2008 and met the following summer in Fayetteville, Arkansas, to complete a draft of these guidelines.
    - i. The committee agreed that NAFA members share a set of core values:
      - 1. Integrity;
      - 2. Collaboration;
      - 3. Respect; and
      - 4. Fairness.
    - ii. The draft included three sections, addressing issues relevant to:
      - 1. Advisors;
      - 2. Foundations; and
      - 3. Institutions.
    - iii. The principles and guidelines stated in this draft “are aspirational, providing a framework for participating in and administering competitive scholarship and fellowship programs.”
    - iv. The draft was presented to the Executive Board in December of 2008 and the draft was edited and approved for distribution to the membership.
  - b. *Make suggestions for further action:*
    - i. The draft is to be distributed to the membership via e-mail in June, 2009.
    - ii. Suggestions will be collected and reviewed by the ethics task force.
    - iii. A final document will be approved by the Board and then submitted for a membership vote at the Seattle NAFA conference in July 2009.

## II. Programming Recommendations:

### 5. **To assess and address the needs of the two main advisor constituents of NAFA, new advisors and experienced advisors**

- a. *Assess current situation:* As we approach our 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary, there is now a dichotomy among our membership: new advisers and those who have been advising and working in NAFA for several years.
  - i. New Advisors: New advisors bring to the organization a fresh perspective and energy, and they are anxious to derive the benefit of NAFA's information sharing. As the group grows, there is the likelihood of entrenchment among the leadership of NAFA unless there is a concerted effort to reach out to new advisors. Current resources for this group include:
    1. The listserv;
    2. Summer workshops for new advisors;
    3. "New Advisor Boot camp" at biennial conferences; and
    4. Mentorship program.
  - ii. Experienced Advisors: Experienced advisors offer the benefit of years of advising. These advisors may have moved on to new phases of their careers and risk burn-out, necessitating that they develop new sets of skills. Current resources for this group may be insufficient:
    1. The listserv, which often reflects the needs of new advisors;
    2. The NAFA Journal and other publications; and
    3. In-depth content at conferences.
- b. *Make suggestions for enhancement:*
  - i. Reach out to new advisors to serve on NAFA committees;
  - ii. Re-evaluate the Mentorship program; and
  - iii. Create more professional development opportunities for experienced advisors:
    1. Ensure the Pre-conference Workshop for Professional Development is not scheduled at the same time as the New Advisor Workshop; and
    2. Develop a method for advertising employment opportunities and promoting best practices through the website.

iv.

### 6. **To support professional development programs**

- a. *Assess current situation:*
  - i. NAFA members also face pressures from internal and external sources to produce "winners" in national and international scholarship competitions. This pressure may prove burdensome or even untenable without the support of peers around the country.
  - ii. The unorthodox nature of the profession attracts many kinds of people, but this poses a special problem in career development.
  - iii. NAFA now offers a biennial conference, summer workshops, international study tours, and published conference proceedings.

- b. *Make suggestions for enhancement:*
    - i. Current levels of programming in professional development are insufficient. We recommend the following:
      - 1. Permanent appointment of a board committee on professional development to:
        - a. Explore a mentoring program for new advisors; and
        - b. Create a certificate for recognizing professional development;
      - 2. Creation of a professional development “boot camp,” slated for the 2009 Seattle meeting; and
      - 3. Development of a schedule of annual surveys of the profession.
7. **To assess NAFA programs and to determine the best ways to make biennial conferences, summer workshops, and overseas study tours a value to all members of NAFA.**
- a. *Assess current situation:*
    - i. No way presently exists to collect accumulated wisdom from the event planning process. Conference and workshop planners often must start from scratch and lack support.
    - ii. National meetings are currently the primary means of disseminating information to members, but not all members can attend.
    - iii. Given the current financial situation at many universities and colleges, attending regional workshops or study abroad tours may not be feasible.
  - b. *Make suggestions for improvement*
    - i. Assess current committee structures;
    - ii. Create unified survey for events;
    - iii. Develop manuals for event planning;
    - iv. Create mechanism for disseminating event materials/learning outcomes:
      - 1. Presentations and documents on the website;
      - 2. Podcasts; and
      - 3. Collaborate with the editor of the Conference Proceedings to submit materials for this publication.
    - v. Explore insurance needs.

### III. Resource Recommendations:

- 8. **To assess our financial situation and determine what is most responsible approach to resources for the long-term health of the organization.**
  - a. *Assess current situation:*
    - i. Historically, executive actions with respect to finances have been very conservative. As the organization has grown in size a surplus has been realized and placed in a reserve fund. This reserve fund is a safety net for major, unexpected expenses such as a failure to meet hotel contractual obligations at biennial national conferences.

- ii. As the membership and income have grown NAFA has implemented policies to financially supplement major NAFA events such as the biennial conference and regional workshops. Expenses for Board meetings, committee meetings, and some staff support for the treasurer and conference organizers have also been approved by the Board.
      - iii. There was some discussion of hiring an Executive Director as a full-time employee. This discussion was tabled due to cost, lack of facilities, and a concern that this change would alter the small organization culture of NAFA.
    - b. *Make suggestions for enhancement*
      - i. Form a Finance Committee to explore:
        - 1. Options for the reserve fund;
        - 2. Alternative sources of revenue;
        - 3. Support for biennial conferences;
        - 4. Hiring additional part-time employees;
        - 5. Investment in a new Website; and
        - 6. Consider additional programs and expenses.
      - ii. Contract with Cvent for a two year trial to provide a web presence and central registration for conferences and workshops.
      - iii. Adhere to the following policies:
        - 1. Continue to provide staff support for treasurer.
        - 2. Continue to use a university financial office to ensure best practices and open records.
        - 3. Continue to fund Board members' travel to Board and essential committee meetings.
- 9. To develop technological tools to assist advisors in providing sound, accurate advice, including an up-to-date, dynamic web page.**
- a. *Assess current situation:*
    - i. NAFA's website (www.nafadvisors.org) exists as a mostly stagnant and outdated resource.
    - ii. NAFA's listserv is active, but it is rarely used as a medium for conversations about best practices. The listserv is more often used for inquiries that are better directed to foundations, or for research regarding scholarship opportunities.
    - iii. Overall, NAFA has good resources, but we can make much more of available technology to assist our members and more efficiently disseminate these collective resources.
  - b. *Make suggestions for improvement:*
    - i. Form technology committee.
    - ii. Conduct technology survey.
    - iii. Develop on-line peer advising system.
    - iv. Revamp existing website to include:
      - 1. Basic information about NAFA;
      - 2. A password-protected section of the site that includes:
        - a. A searchable database of scholarships;

