

SPAЕ



American Society for
Public Administration

Strategic Plan for the
ASPA Section on Public Administration Education

December 2022

Introduction

Strategic plans must be more than a list of tasks or sets of priorities. Strategic planning organizes decision-making on hard-to-answer questions. The result should feel a bit risky, challenging, and not made lightly. Strategic plans confront tradeoffs and are not usually based on consensus; if everyone agrees, the plan probably hasn't made the right tradeoffs. When organizations resist making these decisions, they keep the peace, but they don't achieve their goals.

The ASPA Section on Public Administration Education (SPAЕ) has made these decisions. This document lays out the guiding heuristics for SPAЕ board decisions on where to allocate effort and funds. When adhered to, this will maximize the impact and success for years to come.

SPAЕ is a member-run and supported specialized area of interest chartered by the American Society for Public Administration. There are no professional staff nor paid employees. Educators from across the globe serve SPAЕ, because they desire to make global, national, and local administration better. The limited resources require discipline on the allocation of time and funds. This plan situates SPAЕ in a space that only it can fill, while relying on partner organizations to fill gaps that require more resources. The plan pushes SPAЕ to accomplish more but is careful not to reach beyond its capacity. When executed with leadership and clarity, SPAЕ will prosper and public administration education across the world will benefit.

About SPAЕ

The Section on Public Administration Education (SPAЕ), founded in 1979, contributes to the professional development of educators by: increasing awareness of public administration educational issues; providing a forum for information exchange among members in regard to innovative curricula and pedagogical approaches across a wide range of topics; fostering a relationship between American Society for Public Administration (ASPA), the Journal of Public Affairs Education, and the Journal of Teaching Public Administration; and sponsoring the annual Teaching Public Administration Conference (TPAC). The first TPAC conference was held in 1978 and has since been offered continuously to all public administration educators.

How to Use this Strategic Plan

This plan is designed to be short and direct. SPAЕ membership and the board itself should reference the strategy statement before making substantive decisions or allocation of resources. If the decision or resource allocation does not align with the strategy statement, it should be declined and referred to other partner organizations. The plan should be reviewed at the start of board meetings and be instructive on the agendas and topics discussed. The board must optimize its time to further the strategic direction for it to be successful.

The plan consists of three components: vision, mission, and a strategy statement. Taken together, these three components form the heuristics to guide SPAЕ decision making. The vision describes why SPAЕ exists. The mission is the critical objective SPAЕ will achieve. The strategy statement describes how SPAЕ will achieve its mission with a clearly articulated goal, means for achieving that goal, and its target audience. The plan will be updated on a schedule established by the SPAЕ board.

SPAE Vision

Inspire and equip public administration and public affairs educators with the resources and tools to support the development of just and equitable communities.

SPAE Mission

To enhance the quality of teaching and learning in public administration and public affairs higher education.

This mission statement directly aims SPAE at teaching and learning. SPAE is designed to be the peer-to-peer PA educator network to identify common challenges and share solutions. When we connect with each other in meaningful and regular ways, we will devise the best solutions to enhance and elevate our programs and improve student outcomes.

Strategy Statement

SPAE aims to achieve membership engagement of 66% by 2028 through offering a formative teaching peer network to educators of current and future public administrators in accredited colleges and universities.

What is a “Formative Teaching Peer Network”?

SPAE is the peer network by and for PA educators. We host semi-formal events with topics, panels, and discussions pertinent to the membership, but the point would be to get the members talking to each other to solve common challenges and support each other. SPAE does not develop specific content but does disseminate the content and materials that members have developed. SPAE does not pay for people to present or prepare presentations but is the platform where excellent content can be delivered and discussed. SPAE’s value comes from facilitated membership interaction, not one-way information delivery.

The key here is not the content but the discussions that the content can generate. The value is in the relationships and ideas they get in a short amount of time. The production value should feel homegrown and authentic. It should be professional but informal; guided and not meandering.

Adherence to the strategy statement results in the following items that SPAE will or won’t do. It also means that SPAE has left certain tasks to other partners to deliver.

What SPAE Will Do:

- Facilitate and/or highlight discussions on current and emerging topics and challenges related to public administration education.
- Raise awareness for the various existing and developing resources from SPAE partners.
- Lead the Teaching Public Administration Conference annually.

- Engage the SPAE network through social media.
- Advocate for limited range of important topics in matters of importance to ASPA and/or NASPAA or other official bodies.
- Recognize exemplary scholarship of teaching and learning through awards.

What SPAE Will Not Do:

- Host standalone conferences (all conferences must be partnered with a paid/professional organization that can provide staff and resources).
- Host resource databases or repositories. SPAE will refer people to NASPAA or other such resources ([pasyllabi](#) or [Publicases](#)).
- Directly sponsor research or research articles for publication. However, it may host an informal network event where research would be presented and discussed.
- Directly solicit content development through the use of SPAE funds.

What SPAE Partners Do:

- Host conferences
- Build repositories
- Publish research

Audience

SPAE is targeted towards educators within recognized, accredited colleges and universities or public service organizations that provide professional development for public administrators. The target audience includes all educators regardless of tenure or status, including educators such as doctoral students or professionals seeking adjunct roles, and professional development educators.

This is a wide target audience that provides for a full range of topics and the potential to maximize reach. SPAE highlights the common challenges among this group. SPAE also finds ways to leverage the experience of long-time educators while channeling the energy of new ways of thinking from younger professionals. SPAE gathers the members of different backgrounds, experiences, and philosophy to interact, to effectively crosspollinate the thinking, and create valuable interactions.

Metrics

Primary Measure: Membership engagement

Membership engagement provides a qualitative measure of the value of SPAE activities. While SPAE engages in various activities, the primary measure is participation in SPAE events. The target is to achieve 66% of SPAE members to attend one SPAE event per year. This would equate to approximately 165 people attending one SPAE event annually. This will be measured through taking attendance at events and cross referencing that against membership lists.

Secondary Measure: Membership Counts

Membership counts provides an indirect measure of SPAE's value. Growth or steady membership is suggestive of success; declining membership portends potential problems with the strategy. While not an ideal metric, total membership is the only existing metric available to the board until additional engagement metrics can be developed and tracked.

Not Measured

SPAE's purpose is to enhance the quality of education. This is too abstract to be measured reliably by SPAE's limited resources, but continued efforts to identify its impact on education, even anecdotally, should be gathered and shared with the board.

Background and Methodology

This strategic plan was developed under the charge from the SPAE board in 2022. The board created a strategic planning committee that met for several months through 2021 discussing the tradeoffs and possible strategic positions. The committee solicited wide feedback from all SPAE members, including a randomized qualitative review and individual interviews with selected SPAE members and past chairs. Given the nature of such plans, not all members agreed with every component of the proposed plan. Membership on the committee should not be inferred as universal consensus with each component of the plan.

SPAE allocated membership resources to retain the services of a consultant to facilitate and draft this strategic plan. All committee documentation has been saved in a strategic plan archive and is available upon request.

Strategic Planning Committee Members

Dr. Stephanie Dolamore

Assistant Professor of Public Administration
Gallaudet University

Dr. Gregg Buckingham

Associate Lecturer
University of Central Florida

Dr. Jennifer Morrison

Assistant Professor of Public Administration
Murray State University

Dr. Wendy Bolyard

Clinical Assistant Professor
University of Colorado Denver

Dr. Roseanne M. Mirabella

Professor of Political Science and Public Affairs
Seton Hall University

Dr. Reynold Galope

Associate Professor of Public and Nonprofit Leadership
Metropolitan State University

Consultant:

Jeff Aird

Vice President for Institutional Effectiveness
Salt Lake Community College