

2021 Executive Director's Report

STEVEN RATHGEB SMITH | AMERICAN POLITICAL SCIENCE ASSOCIATION

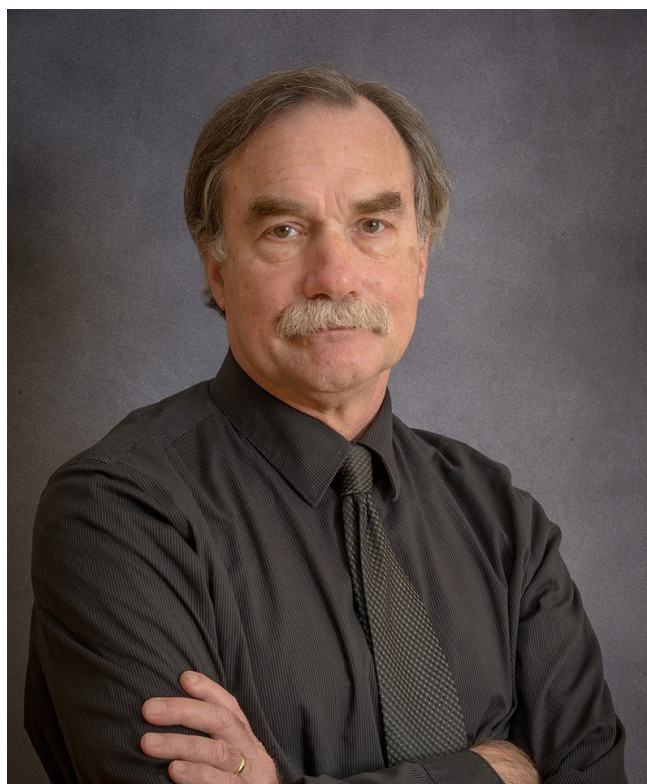
It is once again a distinct privilege to submit my executive director's report in 2021. This report provides an opportunity to share information about APSA programming and operations and to invite feedback and accountability from our members. The past year has been unprecedented in many ways, as we have all faced the effects of a worldwide pandemic, seen protest and upheaval in response to police violence and systemic racism, and experienced an unusual and significant US presidential election. This year has created many challenges for people across the world, and APSA has been especially concerned with the effects of this upheaval and uncertainty on our members and on higher education. This year has also required changes to APSA work and programming. APSA staff have been working remotely since March 2020 and many APSA programs, from symposia and workshops to the APSA Annual Meeting have shifted to a virtual format. While these shifts have posed challenges for APSA and our staff, it has been a great privilege to work to support our members and political science more generally through this unprecedented year.

ANNUAL MEETING

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the APSA Annual Meeting & Exhibition was held virtually for the first time ever, bringing together political science professors, scholars, in-field practitioners, and students from Tuesday, September 8 through Sunday, September 13, 2020. During this challenging time, the event provided a much-needed opportunity for presenting and discussing research, as well as collaborating and networking with colleagues. The 2020 APSA Annual Meeting had nearly 5,700 attendees and featured almost 1,500 panels and events.

While the circumstances surrounding the meeting were unusual, we were very glad to provide a forum for timely engagement of important topics. The meeting kicked off with a presidential address by APSA President Paula D. McClain on "Crises, Race, Acknowledgment: The Centrality of Race, Ethnicity and Politics to the Future of Political Science." Many subsequent

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panels centered on the program theme, "Democracy, Difference, and Destabilization." Program co-chairs Andra Gillespie (Emory University) and Efrén Pérez (UCLA) issued two special calls to address current events: "Black Lives, Black Deaths, and Black Protest: Political Scientists Respond (Anew) to a Persistent Challenge" and "Relevance, Quality, and Expedience: Political Science Responds to COVID-19." We very much appreciate the many members, volunteers, and staff who helped make the 2020 APSA Annual Meeting a success. While we know that the upcoming 2021 APSA Annual Meeting, held both virtually and in-person in Seattle, WA, will continue to look different than in previous years, we are looking forward to bringing together political scientists from across the world to share research and connect with colleagues.

MEMBER SUPPORT INITIATIVES

In recognition of the health, social, and economic changes taking place in response to the COVID-19 pandemic, APSA pursued several initiatives to support members with their general

financial needs as well as their research and attendance at the APSA Annual Meeting.

The APSA Member Relief Grant Program was launched in 2020 to provide urgent financial support to members with pressing needs, including coronavirus-related expenses. With additional donor contributions from APSA members, including past presidents and individuals on the APSA Council, the grant program has already assisted more than 70 scholars from 23 states and 12 countries abroad.

In addition, APSA increased the flexibility of the Centennial Center research grants for the 2020 and 2021 funding cycles, recognizing that research needs have changed during the current crisis. This change included the availability of per diems for research regardless of travel or location and allowing for direct salary support. These adjustments have allowed APSA to continue to provide assistance for member research even as the opportunities and challenges for conducting research changed. APSA also adjusted the usual travel grants to the annual meeting to acknowledge the particular difficulties of participating in the 2020 APSA Annual Meeting. These accessibility grants were intended to defray the costs of participation in the meeting, including food, childcare or elder care, Wi-Fi or internet connection fees, hardware/software, and auxiliary aids and services for individuals with hearing or vision disability. As the COVID-19 pandemic continues into 2021, APSA continues to explore new ways to support members through ongoing challenges.

DIVERSITY & INCLUSION PROGRAMS

APSA values diversity, equity, and inclusion. The APSA strategic plan states that one of APSA's overarching goals is to promote and encourage diversity and inclusion in the profession, and the events of 2020 have highlighted the importance of organizations engaging consistently and deliberately in efforts to support diversity, equity, and inclusion. The APSA Diversity and Inclusion Programs include longstanding programs to increase diversity, inclusion, and access within the discipline of political science across all levels and at APSA meetings and events. Further, APSA continues to promote and encourage diversity and inclusion in the profession and to highlight the notable and important work by political scientists to examine the linkages between race, power, governance, social injustice, and oppression.

One of the most prominent of APSA's diversity and recruitment programs is the Ralph Bunche Summer Institute (RBSI), established in 1986 to increase diversity within the political science discipline. In 2020, the RBSI accepted 20 students to attend the program at Duke University. However, due to COVID-19, the in-person program at Duke University was cancelled. Instead, APSA developed an alternative program called the 2020 APSA Virtual Bunche Program. The 2020 APSA Virtual Bunche Program was a great success, hosting 16 students over four weeks. The virtual sessions included talks by faculty and RBSI alumni, research writing sessions, professional development sessions, GRE prep courses, and a virtual graduate school fair.

A key component of APSA's efforts to create a diverse, inclusive, and respectful environment at APSA meetings and events is the [RESPECT Campaign](#)¹, which encourages "professional respect" by and towards all APSA Annual Meeting attendees and participants at all times. The RESPECT Campaign began in 2018 and this year was featured on the 2020 virtual meeting platform. RESPECT stands for Respectful, Equitable, Safe, Profes-

sional, and Ethical Conduct Towards All. The presence of APSA resources like the new 2020 short course on Mitigating Implicit Bias, the APSA meetings ombuds, and the onsite bystander intervention training, which were all available during the 2020 virtual meeting, also embody this message of RESPECT.

In October 2020, APSA awarded the inaugural APSA Diversity and Inclusion Advancing Research Grants to research projects focused on supporting early career scholars and research projects in Indigenous politics. A total of seven awards were made. In 2021, the Research Advancement for Early Career Scholars Grant will support one research project in the amount of \$5,000 and the Research Advancement for Indigenous Politics Grant will support six research projects for a combined total award amount of \$10,500. The new APSA Diversity and Inclusion Advancing Research Grants provide support for the advancement of scholars from underrepresented groups and for research that examines political science phenomena affecting underserved communities and underrepresented groups. These grants will complement APSA's existing diversity and inclusion fellowships and grants—namely the APSA Diversity Fellowship Program (DFP) (formerly known as the Minority Fellowship Program, MFP), the Lee Ann Fujii APSA Diversity Fellowship Travel Grant, and the Fund for Latino Scholarship—providing additional research funding opportunities for scholars at multiple points in their professional careers.

In addition, in the spring and summer of 2020, the APSA Diversity and Inclusion team led the staff in the creation of a [new resource](#) for addressing systemic racism and social justice issues.² This project arose as a means to acknowledge the issues and debates that have resurfaced into the public discourse as a result of the murders of George Floyd, Breonna Taylor, and others at the hands of police, and the resulting protests and civil debates about social justice, race, systemic racism and public policy. These important social, political, and economic themes predate the events and protests in Minneapolis and the subsequent protests around globe. However, the project highlights the extensive range of scholarly expertise and contributions of political scientists whose research and public engagement addresses these immensely significant topics. Further, these new resources underscore key themes pertaining to social justice and race at the core of the study of political science. By identifying a diverse array of political science resources, this project also provides guidance and assistance to students and faculty in the classroom and to broader dialogue and public engagement. APSA looks forward to continuing to support and expand efforts toward diversity and inclusion throughout 2021 and beyond.

APSA EDUCATE

APSA is committed to supporting teaching and learning in political science, and to assisting all APSA members in their work in the classroom. This year has been a particularly difficult time for teaching, as instructors have navigated changing classroom protocols, hybrid environments, and sometimes sudden shifts to remote teaching. As a result, APSA was especially pleased to launch [APSA Educate](#)—a dedicated online library for political science teaching resources—in 2020.³ The website is a centralized hub for high-quality political science teaching and learning resources and provides space for conversations about teaching innovations and challenges facing political science faculty today. It hosts teaching materials for undergraduate and grad-

uate courses, across all sub-fields, and ranging from syllabi to simulations. It is free to access and allows users to easily search, upload, and “favorite” materials. We regard APSA Educate as a vital and valuable resource for political science teaching and learning as higher education continues to evolve in the coming months and years.

PUBLICATIONS

APSA’s academic publishing efforts have completed another busy year, as APSA journals have continued to publish cutting-edge, top-notch political science research while completing leadership transitions and continuing program innovation. In June 2020, the association’s flagship journal, the *American Political Science Review* (APSR), welcomed a new editorial team. The publications team worked closely with the new editors to ensure the journal continued processing manuscripts in a timely manner. The new editorial team, announced in 2019 following a rigorous search process, includes 12 highly accomplished scholars. Their selection was widely celebrated for their combined experience, dedication to diversity broadly defined, and attentiveness to emergent research trends in political science. We have very much appreciated their efforts to ensure a smooth transition and look forward to the continuing evolution of the APSR through the remainder of their term.

In 2020, the APSA publications team was also busy planning a new association magazine, *Political Science Today*, which published its first issue in February 2021. The magazine includes news about the discipline, member spotlights, association updates, and other content and replaces “The Association” section of *PS: Political Science & Politics*. The magazine provides a new venue to share news about the discipline and APSA events and to connect with APSA members. *Political Science Today* is released quarterly in February, May, August, and November in print and online.

Throughout the past year, APSA has continued to support and expand [APSA Preprints](#), a new platform launched in August 2019 dedicated to early research outputs in political science.⁴ On the server—a collaboration with Cambridge University Press—authors can upload unpublished content to stake an early claim to research topics, obtain a DOI, and solicit feedback on their work from peers. APSA Preprints continues to expand its reach and is a valuable resource for the political science community to share early research. As of March 2021, the site had more than 360 papers and presentations with a combined 90,000 downloads and 165,000 views.

THE 2020 ELECTION

The 2020 Election was unprecedented in its challenges, candidates, and levels of voter participation, and political scientists had an invaluable role to play in providing context, facts, and a rich analysis and understanding throughout the campaign and election season often characterized by uncertainty. In preparation for the 2020 election, APSA launched two projects designed to highlight varied and notable expertise, scholarship, and initiatives that political scientists undertook to strengthen civic engagement and civic education in advance of the election.

In November 2019, APSA embarked upon a new civic engagement campaign called RAISE the Vote, where RAISE stands for “Resources to Amplify and Increase Student Engagement.”

The campaign features and compiles blog posts and accessible journal articles from political science faculty and students on research, teaching practices, and campus engagement related to student voting and political participation. The goal of the campaign is to provide a compendium of resources that political science faculty can utilize to encourage student civic engagement. Since launching the campaign, RAISE the Vote has featured over 110 blog posts on relevant research and teaching and engagement practices from political science faculty and students, culminating with tips for promoting continued post-election engagement.

Importantly, the [APSA Democracy 2020 Project](#) provided a more general platform to compile and share election events, scholarship, teaching resources, and engagement opportunities with the discipline as a whole and with the general public.⁵ Political science advances our understanding of issues at the core of the election process, including democratic institutions and norms, voting behavior, public opinion, civic engagement, and political campaigns. The Democracy 2020 Project brought together the broad spectrum of APSA’s related work and visibly profiled the work of political scientists pertaining to elections, democratic institutions, and campaigns.

In addition, on September 8, 2020, the APSA Council approved the creation of an Election Assistance Task Force to leverage the expertise and experience of political scientists to support free, fair, and open elections in the United States on November 3, 2020 and thereafter. Consistent with the APSA bylaws, the Task Force on Election Assistance was non-partisan with a multi-pronged purpose to foster broader knowledge of the election process, including: voter mobilization organizations, poll worker recruitment, technical aid to election officials implementing new systems, voter registration, the prevention of voter intimidation and disenfranchisement, and the empirical measurement and identification of voter fraud. Overall, the task force offered valuable resources and information to the public in the run-up to the November 2020 election.

APSA DOCTORAL DISSERTATION RESEARCH IMPROVEMENT GRANTS

In 2020, APSA was also very pleased to receive a grant from the National Science Foundation to administer the Political Science Doctoral Dissertation Research Improvement Grant (DDRIG) program. The total amount of the grant is \$1,410,000 for a three-year period, and the first grant cycle was completed in the summer of 2020. The [APSA Doctoral Dissertation Research Improvement Grant](#) project provides support to enhance and improve the conduct of doctoral dissertation research in political science awarding approximately 20 grants yearly of between \$10,000 and \$15,000 to support doctoral dissertation research that advances knowledge and understanding of citizenship, government, and politics.⁶

For the 2020 grant cycle, APSA was thrilled to provide support for 23 highly promising dissertation projects representing a diverse set of questions, issues, and methods in political science. We look forward to continuing to support exciting and impactful dissertation research through the coming grant cycles. The 2021 grant cycle will open in spring 2021 with an application deadline of June 15.

SPOTLIGHTS

CONCLUSION

APSA, as an association, is very fortunate to have many, many members who devote time and resources in support of our extensive programming including the annual meeting and its publications. This past year has been extraordinarily challenging for everyone, and it is impossible to overstate how grateful we are for the tremendous service work of our members under these trying circumstances. Our volunteer leadership and our staff have also provided terrific support to APSA's programming and APSA members and we very much appreciate their work. I look forward to working with our members and the APSA staff in 2021, as we address the continued challenges facing the discipline and higher education as a whole, and as we continue to develop programs to support the research and pedagogical interests of our members and their professional development and engagement in the public sphere. ■

NOTES

1. <https://connect.apsanet.org/respect/>
2. <https://www.apsanet.org/RESOURCES/APSA-Resources-for-Addressing-Systemic-Racism-Social-Justice>
3. <https://educate.apsanet.org/>
4. <https://preprints.apsanet.org/engage/apsa/public-dashboard>
5. <https://apsanet.org/democracy2020>
6. <https://www.apsanet.org/PROGRAMS/Doctoral-Dissertation-Research-Improvement-Grants/Application-Materials-and-Format>