

# Graduate Student Voting Item on APA Ballot this Nov. 2019: VOTE YES

## What's happening?

- ✓ The APAGS Committee has been advocating for a new "Graduate Student" membership category for masters and doctoral students for the past several years. This new member category is the functionally least disruptive way to specify who graduate students are in the Association, and what privileges they have. After one year, these members would get to vote on the same matters that others presently do: Elections for APA President-Elect and Board Members-at-Large; Bylaw Amendments; and determining how Council seats will be apportioned between specific Divisions and state, provincial, and territorial associations.
- ✓ Additionally, in an amendment presented on the floor of Council, members voted to adjust the waiting period required for associate members to attain voting privileges from five years to one year in order to align voting privileges across the two membership categories.
- ✓ The APA Council of Representatives voted to approve this item in August 2019. Specifically, 73.4% of COR members voted in-favor, 26.0% voted against, and .6% voted to abstain.
- ✓ The Bylaw amendment will be sent to the voting Membership in November 2019 (Nov. 1 to Dec. 15<sup>th</sup>) and will need a two-thirds majority to pass. It will include both pro and con statements with regards to these voting changes.

## Who supports this?

- ✓ **APA Boards and Committees**—Endorsement comes from the APA Board of Directors, Board for the Advancement of Psychology in the Public Interest, Board of Scientific Affairs, and Council Leadership Team. It also comes from APAGS, Cmte. on Associate and Baccalaureate Education, Cmte. on Aging, Ad Hoc Cmte. on Psychology and AIDS, Cmte. on Sexual Orientation and Gender Diversity, Cmte. of Teachers of Psychology in Secondary Schools, and Cmte. on Women in Psychology.
- ✓ **Graduate students**—An APAGS survey of graduate students found that 76% of respondents supported the idea of voting in one or more APA matter. The top three reasons were: Wanting student needs to be represented in APA governance (68%); having a vested interest in the outcomes of APA elections (50%); and wanting APA to serve students better (45%).
- ✓ **Psychology organizations**—APA Divisions 1, 2, 3, 9, and 41 allow students to vote, as do the NM, PA, and PR Psychological Associations. Partial voting rights are provided in a handful of other associations and divisions.
- ✓ **Sister associations**—American Medical Association, American Educational Research Association (AERA), Institute of Electrical and Electronics Engineers, American Counseling Association (ACA), American Chemical Society (ACS), American Occupational Therapy Association (AOTA), American Physical Society (APS), American Public Health Association, American Society of Plant Biologists (ASPB), and the Association of Fundraising Professionals allow students to vote.
- ✓ **AERA** named multiple benefits: Increased student recruitment and engagement; students are more aware of the importance of the organization and are more active in it; and it is a point of organizational pride to be forward-thinking and value future leaders.
- ✓ **ACS** has higher voter turnout in elections and found that it encourages students to reach out to other students to get and stay involved.

- ✓ **ACA** reported that a more active voting body (including students) led more leaders to step forward.
- ✓ **ASPB's** students are more interested in participating in the society, helps the society determine what up and coming scientists need, helps make sure there is more diversity in the leadership of the association, and gives more vitality and longevity to the society.
- ✓ **AOTA** said that student voting allows it to get student input and include them as a part of the association.

## Why is APAGS asking for this change?

- ✓ The time is now. An objective of the new APA Strategic Plan is to "Prepare the discipline and profession of psychology for the future" with the goal to "attract, diversify, develop, and support the next generation of psychology professionals." APAGS believes this item reflects the values of unity, diversity, and inclusion; and takes steps to actualize those values through policy that attracts, engages, and supports emerging psychologists.
- ✓ APAGS wants to mobilize students who desire an APA that actively represents their needs across their academic and professional lives. APAGS wants to socialize members to vote beginning in grad school so that they transition into full doctoral members or associate members who remain actively engaged with the APA and continue to vote. This can deepen students' investment and affinity towards APA's new mission, retain members more successfully across career stages, and even shape aspirations for future professional service and leadership within the Association.
- ✓ APAGS is concerned that APA's message to its graduate student members, at present, is that their voice matters in only limited ways. Voting privileges tell 21,000 graduate students that their APA is heavily invested in supporting and hearing from the them—and demonstrates that they are a real priority.

## What concerns has APAGS heard about this issue?

- ✓ Enfranchisement should be restricted to doctoral students; however, APAGS was charged by Council to represent all graduate students without discriminating between master's and doctoral students. We return to APA voting members with a request that advocates for all graduate students in route toward lifelong membership in APA.
- ✓ A large student voting bloc might alter the status quo. But students do not vote monolithically. In an APAGS survey of potential student voters, the majority would have chosen the 2018 APA president-elect but there was significant spread for other candidates. On recent Bylaws changes, students supported four of seven matters that passed the voting Membership, supported one outcome that did not pass voting Membership, and had a majority 'no opinion' on two others.

## How can I support this change or learn more?

- ✓ Share your support with APA voting members and groups via email, in-person, and social media. Feel free to use the following hashtags: #letgradstudentsvote #apags #apa #apa2019 #psych #psychology.
- ✓ Write to the APAGS Chair Roseann Fish Getchell at [rfish13@georgefox.edu](mailto:rfish13@georgefox.edu).
- ✓ Read the full text of the Council item at <https://www.apa.org/about/governance/council/> (under Council Meeting Minutes, Aug. 7 & 9, 2019, pgs. 1-9.)