

“S.A.V.E.” Time to Become Engaged with NALP

by Karen Britton

Do you remember when the word “engagement” was usually followed by the words “ring” or “party”? Now the word “engagement” pops up all the time and the context is very different. How can we keep our law students engaged in the life and programs of our law schools? How did the CSO fare in the LSSSE survey of law student engagement? Alumni groups from our alma maters and from social and professional organizations are busy defining and quantifying “engagement,” and consultants help us determine what engagement means, how we measure it, and how we will recognize an “engaged” member. With busy schedules and multiple priorities, “engagement” decisions are carefully evaluated as we seek to balance our professional and personal lives.

For the past two years, NALP’s Leadership Development Task Force considered issues surrounding engagement of members in the leadership structure of the association. The task force was asked to identify and examine pathways to leadership, examine and remove barriers to engagement, and make leadership opportunities more apparent, more appealing, and more accessible to NALP members. Through outreach and environmental scanning, task force members learned why many NALP members choose (or choose not) to allocate their considerable talents to NALP leadership roles.

Implementation of some of the task force’s recommendations has been noticeable — for example, the reconfiguration of the Vice-President roles — and some has been “behind the scenes,” such as providing more resources and support to officers of the association and making it easier to “say yes” to a nomination. Several refinements were made

to NALP’s already successful nomination and voting process. During this two-year endeavor, we learned that many members don’t focus on NALP involvement until the nomination process begins each November — perhaps not the best time to consider taking on additional time commitments.

So, watch for more light to be cast on the importance of volunteerism at other times of the year. If you have a few minutes this month, think about the benefits you can accrue, as well as the value that you can add, from engagement with our professional association. Watch for articles about leaders and leadership in the *NALP Bulletin*. Keep your eyes open for interesting video clips featuring NALP leaders talking about how and why they serve. Talk to current or former NALP volunteers about their experiences. As you listen and participate in section conference calls, imagine yourself in that leadership role, and consider how involvement could help you develop the speaking or organizational skills you need to advance in your “real” job.

S.A.V.E. (Slated/Appointed/Volunteer/Elected) is an appropriate acronym to represent the multiple pathways to leadership and engagement in NALP. At this time, well over 200 volunteers are helping NALP fulfill the 2013-2014 business plan developed by President Stacey Kielbasa.

Slated. Officers and directors of the association are “slated” by the Nominating Committee, which consists of elected members and appointed leaders.

Appointed. NALP’s President-Elect appoints leaders and members to staff certain groups or to perform key roles in the association’s next busi-

ness plan, based on the appointee's experience or expertise or because s/he would help make the group "representative" as an issue is considered and work is accomplished.

Volunteer. The President-Elect relies on members who volunteer to lead or serve on approximately 30 committees, task forces, and work groups. Each January, the President-Elect extends a "Call for Volunteers" in which members can rank their volunteer interests. Whether you volunteer in an area in which you provide expertise, or an area in which you want or need to learn more, there are more volunteer roles available each year than there are volunteers to fill them. NALP sections also have open membership throughout the year; just click the "Member Portal" link on NALP's homepage, then go to NALPconnect, view the sections, and join those that are of interest to you.

Elected. Members in each NALP region elect Regional Representatives, Nominating Committee members, and Conference Planning Coordinators.

So "S.A.V.E." some time to get engaged with NALP next year! Explore, think ahead, and prepare to nominate colleagues or yourself, to vote during the elections, or to volunteer or step up to the idea of an appointment. I can assure you that the relationships you develop through your engagement will be satisfying.

Karen Britton is Director of Admissions, Financial Aid, and Career Services of the University of Tennessee College Of Law. She is a former NALP President and member of the 2011-2013 Leadership Development Task Force. This article was submitted on behalf of the Experienced Professionals Section, Pathways to Leadership Task Force.