

APPAM: A Personal Vision and Agenda

*William H. Robinson
Presidential Address¹*

INTRODUCTION

In preparation for my presidential address, I read several of the messages of my predecessors. While each seemed to have its own focus and style, most shared a substantive perspective on a policy issue or addressed the status of the public policy profession more broadly. My message is a departure from that mold, in that it looks more systematically at APPAM itself—where we are as an institution, and more particularly what we might become. I entitle my comments “A Personal Vision and Agenda.” I hope these remarks serve as a stimulus to discussion about what we want APPAM to be, as well as what we do not want to happen to it.

Let me also make clear that my recommendations are directed at making some improvements in what is basically a very sound structure. APPAM is built on the effective concept of sharing research, and it constitutes an essential nexus between practitioners and academics active in the public policy profession. It stages the best research conference of any professional organization known to me or any of my associates. But we can and should do more with this powerful concept than we have to this point.

A presidential program flows from inner goals as well as issues and opportunities that may be presented from the outside. My inner goals are strongly represented in this vision—particularly the notions of more systematic and strategic approaches to management of this or any other organization, the striving for greater diversity and openness in the profession, and the hope that we might yet achieve greater integration of practitioners and academics for the good of the entire profession.

Yet much of the agenda has also been presented somewhat opportunistically by the times, and especially the development of large surpluses in the APPAM budget that prompted the inevitable question, “What should we do with them?” My insistent response as a member of the Policy Council was that we develop a more strategic sense of what we want as an organization

¹ This is the text of the Presidential Address given at the Fall 1993 meeting of the Association for Public Policy Analysis and Management (APPAM).

before we spend for even the smallest nifty new idea. Moreover, numerous feckless tries to develop new programs, with little apparent progress and no institutional learning taking place, produced the frustration necessary to induce a willingness to reexamine our highly unstructured and informal administrative processes (to put the kindest face on our early, rather humorous administrative strivings).

IMPETUS FOR ACTION

In a sense, the “pressure” of a surplus was used to launch a strategic planning process for APPAM that culminated in the now famous two-year GOM (Governance, Organization, and Membership) Committee under Beryl Radin, and the appointment of APPAM’s first full-time executive director in Dante Noto. APPAM needs such a strategic approach to its own planning and management. Granted, it is a very young organization, representing an equally youthful profession. The minutes of APPAM’s first official meeting as an organization are dated October 19, 1979—making the association just 14 years and a few days old.² Moreover, the introduction of the current graduate school curriculum for public policy, which constitutes the effective creation of the profession, dates back only to the 1967–1971 period—making the current incarnation of public policy analysis and management only two and one-half decades old [Fleishman, 1988, pp. 1–2].³ Yet we are old enough to behave

² The minutes of that meeting, submitted by Secretary Robert Z. Aliber and approved on 1/23/80, are in the APPAM archives. The stated purpose of the meeting was to “adopt the proposed Constitution.” Several constitutional amendments were considered: an amendment to elect the members of the Policy Council was defeated; and a motion to reduce the terms of the Policy Council to four years was adopted.

A committee to create a journal of record was created, chaired by Charles Wolf (including Ned Gramlich, among others).

A Committee on Constitutional Amendments was created by the Association’s first president, Joel Fleishman. The committee included Don Stokes and Bill Morrill.

The first slate of officers included President Joel Fleishman; President-elect Charles Wolf; Vice-Presidents John Brandl and Edward Gramlich; Secretary Robert Z. Aliber; Treasurer Jared Hazelton; and 12 members of the Policy Council: Graham Allison, Guthrie Birkhead, Demetrios Caraley, Otto Davis, William Gorham, Erwin Hargrove, Bruce MacLaury, Jack Nagel, William Morrill, Allen Sindler, Donald Stokes, Robert Weinberg, Harry Weiner, and Douglas T. Yates.

³ Fleishman notes:

It is startling to realize that it was only 20 short years ago that what has grown into the field of Public Policy and Management was first embodied in formal education programs. . . . Within a span of five years starting in 1967, scholars at nine different institutions spontaneously designed and gained approval for a radically different kind of educational program for students wishing to prepare themselves for public sector decisionmaking careers. Programs of graduate study—at either the master’s or doctoral level—were approved by the following institutions in the years indicated: Institute of Public Policy Studies, University of Michigan (1967); Kennedy School of Government, Harvard University (1968); Graduate School of Public Policy, University of California, Berkeley (1969); School of Urban and Public Affairs, Carnegie-Mellon University (1969); Rand Graduate Institute, now known as the Rand Graduate School (1969); The Fels Institute, University of Pennsylvania (1969), now known as the Department of Public Policy and Management; School of Public Affairs, University of Minnesota (1970); the Lyndon B. Johnson School of Public Affairs, University of Texas (1970); and the Institute of Policy Sciences and Public Affairs, Duke University (1971). . . . It is difficult to call to mind any analogous movement which managed to spring up simultaneously in nearly the exact form, in so many different institutional settings, and with such uniform success. [pp. 1–2]

with greater wisdom as a policy analysis and management association, particularly since we should be somewhat expert at this business of public management. And there are strategic opportunities for higher levels of effectiveness that should not be missed.

At the outset of its existence, APPAM launched two essential programs: an annual research conference and the publication of a journal of record, both of which remain first-class institutions [APPAM Policy Council, 1980, p. 3].⁴ Just three months after its founding, APPAM committed itself to running the Sloan program, an incredibly sound and innovative effort to increase opportunities for minority college students in public policy schools and eventually in the public policy and management profession [ibid., pp. 1–2]. In that same meeting of the Policy Council, APPAM agreed to play a role in the Kershaw awards for outstanding policy analysts under the age of 40 [p. 6].⁵ Thus, the essential outlines of APPAM as it currently exists were set very early on.

Dues, including a subscription to the newly launched *Journal*, were set initially at \$40 for 1981–1982, and \$20 for students [p. 8].⁶ At the current time, 14 years later, dues are \$50 for individuals and \$25 for students. The registration fee for the second conference (1980) was set at \$75; it is now \$85. Dues for institutional members started at \$1000 and were raised to \$1500 recently, accompanied by an *increase* in the number of institutions wishing to be associated with APPAM. This speaks well of the public-spiritedness of our institutional members, for they receive no noticeable services in return, not even a reduced rate for their individual members. With 50 institutional members, the total dues income from that small sector is roughly equal to the amount that comes in from the 1500 individual memberships.

If the registration fee and individual membership fee were indexed for inflation alone, they would now be about \$120 (instead of \$85) and \$65 (instead of \$50). The elasticity of individual dues and conference registration fees, which are both highly correlated with direct benefits received, could certainly be tested in financing any enriched set of services and functions for the organization. Moreover, services to institutional members is a topic long overlooked in APPAM discussions in light of their obvious importance to the continued intellectual and financial strength of the organization.

⁴ In the minutes of the Policy Council Meeting of January 23–24, 1980, several conclusions of the first Policy Council Meeting in Chicago (October 19, 1979), regarding the journal of record, were referenced: "(1) that the Association is pledged to have a journal of record; (2) that the title of the journal should include public policy analysis and public management; and (3) that the Berkeley-led *Policy Analysis* would be merged into the APPAM journal, and possibly also the Kennedy School's *Public Policy*."

⁵ The funds for the award were raised privately and are administered by a foundation. Princeton University administers the trust and is on the board. The other two trustees are Mathematica Policy Research (MPR) and the president of APPAM. The board reviews the nominations and makes the selection. The award is presented at the Friday business meeting of APPAM each year in which the award is given.

⁶ The other numbers in this section for that early period are also drawn from this treasurer's report in the Policy Council minutes.

STRATEGIC APPROACHES TO APPAM ROLES

There are at least two different dimensions along which one could assess possible strategic roles for APPAM:

- *Levels of activity or degrees of assertiveness* by the Association in pursuing its objectives with member institutions and individuals, and
- *Specific kinds of services and/or products* to be offered by APPAM.

This model constitutes a simple two-dimensional matrix.

Levels of Activity

Looking at the first dimension, the roles could range from an integral direct action role to that of gap-filler for important services at the margin.

Integral Direct Action

This represents the high end of the continuum for possible levels of action by APPAM. It would cast APPAM as the standard-setter for the teaching and practice of public policy. The services that could be offered would include curriculum studies and guidance, accrediting, standards of professional ethics and practice, in-service training courses for practitioners to keep skills fresh, a full array of topical seminars and meetings to serve as the principal nexus for major specialties of public policy practice, one or more professional journals, a general and/or several specialized newsletters, job placement services, and so forth. This polar model would have major implications for APPAM, its members, and related professional organizations like NASPAA.

Forum for New Ideas

The second step on the continuum would be that of a reasonably comprehensive forum for proposing and refining new ideas to be considered for voluntary adoption by institutional members and individual practitioners. The scope of activity could cover many or all of the efforts mentioned above, with the important qualitative difference that they would not be officially binding on members and would be undertaken at a more modest pace and scale.

Marginal Gap-Filler

The third stage of the continuum would be that of provider of supplementary services, or a marginal gap-filling role. Here, only a few activities would even be considered.

To avoid too much suspense, let me say that I see APPAM as a forum for new ideas, to be adapted and adopted on a voluntary basis, and to some extent as a gap-filler.

Specific Services or Products

I would like to move from the abstract notion of what could be done to a discussion of the specific kinds of products and services that I would like to see APPAM undertake.

Create the Grounds for Institutional Learning and Memory

The first step in this direction was taken in October 1991, when Marty Levin and I collaborated in the appointment of the GOM Committee so that it could serve for two years, rather than repeat the experience of earlier attempts to get along with one-shot efforts that had no continuity and that nearly always failed.

This was followed by the decision to hire the first full-time executive director in APPAM's young history. In a way, this step was also taken to ensure continuity of support, in that a special search committee was set up (consisting of myself as current President, Ellen Schall as President-Elect, Beryl Radin as Vice-President and Chairman of the GOM Committee, and Chuck Metcalf as outgoing Chair of the Institutional Representatives). After a nationwide search involving over 280 applicants, the search committee unanimously selected the best candidate for the position, Dante Noto. Dante represents continuity with the past, but great promise for the future as well—and with new legitimacy in a new role. He is full of ideas and new initiatives that will benefit the association and move it forward while preserving the best of the past. Like many of us, he wants to avoid too much structure that could stifle spontaneity and the informal processes that serve us so well. But trust me, we are still a long way from being overly structured.

The move of the Association from Duke University to Washington, DC will help in making more of Dante's assistance available to the annual research conferences (half of which are staged here in Washington). Moreover, it places APPAM in a situation where it can learn from its counterpart professional organizations like APSIA, APSA, AEA, and ASA, and where it can also tap into points of common interests. I have long felt that we should be reaching out more systematically to other professions with policy interests as a genuinely interdisciplinary public policy organization—at least to involve them in our research conference during appropriate sessions, if not to add to our own membership. Such an effort will help keep us more truly interdisciplinary and bring fresh new perspectives into the organization and perhaps into policy analysis and management practices.

While we are dealing with basics, it would also be a good idea to refine the budget process for the Association. Actually, we need to *create* a budget process. Believe it or not, APPAM has no budget. The only thing that has restrained reckless spending in the past is the assumption by each new incoming president that there is no money, therefore there is no point in asking for any. However, late in your tenure you recall that somebody once spent some money for something, and so you ask. At this point, you realize that you now have your hand in the till and there is no limit on what you can spend, except for having to answer to your colleagues for having made off with the treasury. Dante Noto deserves protection from rapacious presidents of the future by having an official budget process. I have already recommended that we hold an early meeting of the Executive Committee to launch

just such a budget process and to formulate a comprehensive approach to funding new diversity initiatives.

We also need to use the administrative margin provided by our full-time executive director to leverage other resources. This will involve taking some of our really good ideas and marketing them for grants—letting other people pay for our imagination. An example of this is the recent conference on diversity this past spring, which brought in a fairly sizable grant from the Ford Foundation, and which has the potential for launching additional diversity-promoting activities for APPAM as an institution and providing useful services and opportunities for our institutional members.

Provide New Services and Products for Members

We could also use this extra administrative margin to create the kinds of services provided by other more established associations, such as brochures describing APPAM, and advertising to promote APPAM membership among various groups, including our own current public policy students and other sister professions. We have made no systematic efforts up to the present, but they are sorely needed now—particularly since our current students are far more representative and diverse than the rest of the profession, and our current efforts to encourage diversity in the profession could very well start with more active recruitment of our own students. We could also produce brochures describing the public policy profession to encourage more young students to enter the study and eventual practice of public policy analysis and management, and we could provide descriptions of standard public policy programs on university campuses so that interested people could learn more about the profession that APPAM represents.

We should also undertake more systematic surveys of the state of the profession and its members, and disseminate the results. These could include studies of APPAM curricula and career paths of graduate students.

We might also explore a more substantive research component for APPAM, including some questions that interest me as a practitioner. For example, How does research translate into action? Is the research-broker notion of Jim Sundquist [1978] still a useful construct after almost 20 years? Or perhaps the more individually based “reflective practitioner” model of Donald Schon [1983]? Is there a way to teach either or both of these roles in the policy schools? How do we capture the impressions of these reflective practitioners more systematically for the long-term good of the profession? Could APPAM do more to facilitate such a self-conscious sharing?

Provide a Forum for Setting Voluntary Professional Standards for the Teaching and Practice of Public Policy

By far the most important role that APPAM could play in standard-setting would be to return to a more active role in two arenas that were present from its earliest days: promoting diversity in the profession, and more conscious attention to improvements in curriculum.

I have a strong personal commitment to the pursuit of greater racial and ethnic diversity in the public policy profession. I have promoted those goals in the Congressional Research Services (CRS) over the past two decades. Using top management commitment and some innovative programs for na-

tionwide recruiting, CRS doubled its representation of racial and ethnic minorities on its analytical staff over the past five years—moving from 6 percent to 13 percent. Even so, assuming that talent is normally distributed in the population, there is no reason for anyone to feel satisfied that they are even close to realizing the full benefits of diversity for their organization until they have reached the 25 percent level of representation—matching that of the population as a whole. At the same time that we have increased the diversity of our staff, we have substantially increased its quality. We insisted on that result at the outset, and we achieved it through aggressive nationwide recruitment.

It is important that diversity *be* a goal for the public policy profession, because this is the one generic access point that permits participation across an entire policy arena, rather than influencing activity and outcomes in only one community as a social worker, teacher, lawyer, or cleric—the more traditional professions for the minority community. It is also *important for public policy* that these voices be heard at all stages of the policy process—from problem definition, to generation of alternatives, to impact analysis, to testing administrative feasibility. Policy prescriptions and implementation will be improved when these authentic and genuinely distinctive world views are incorporated in public policy analysis and management. Let me encourage you to read the printed proceedings of APPAM's Spring Conference (April 1993), entitled "Increasing Diversity in the Public Policy Process," for a more complete exposition of these possibilities.

This attention to diversity is also an area that APPAM is approaching systematically. President-Elect Ellen Schall and I are both committed to promoting diversity, and we agreed to cosponsor the Spring Conference as a way to ensure at least two year's worth of continuity and attention to this important effort. We are grateful to the Ford Foundation—and especially to Mike Lipsky and Bill Diaz—for their generous support of this conference and to the prospect that worthy follow-on efforts would also be carefully considered for funding.

Our Spring Conference looked at the entire pipeline into the profession—from student recruiting, to faculty recruiting, to curriculum design in teaching diversity perspectives, to assimilation into the profession—for ways in which we could take specific action steps to promote greater diversity. We hope that future efforts will include greater participation in APPAM by our own minority students now in public policy schools, through the Woodrow Wilson Fellowship program, or by recent graduates, through COMPP (the Coalition of Minority Policy Professionals). One early link between us is the shared office space that APPAM has made available to COMPP; another is the role that COMPP and the Woodrow Wilson students have played in this conference organized by President-Elect Ellen Schall, and the one that I organized in the previous year. We hope to seek permanent financing for the Woodrow Wilson Fellowship program, to seek grant funds to finance increased participation of Fellowship recipients at next year's research conference, and to provide grant-supported membership in APPAM for recent Woodrow Wilson graduates. Additional new initiatives worth pursuing are curriculum reform (including better case materials on diversity issues, and teacher training on better ways to handle such issues in the classroom), as well as concrete programs to promote greater faculty and student diversity in schools of public policy.

The second area of activity in standard-setting was suggested in the discussion of diversity, namely, refinements and new approaches to curriculum reform. APPAM benefited from early grant support from the Ford and Sloan Foundations for the new form of graduate education and for curriculum reform during the crucial formative years of public policy education from 1969 to 1971 [Fleishman, 1988, pp. 13–14].⁷ The Sloan Foundation subsequently sponsored the seminal Amelia Island Conference in 1977 [Fleishman, 1980]. The Sea Pines curriculum conference at Hilton Head Island in 1978 was also sponsored by Sloan. It was at Sea Pines that the idea for APPAM itself was first raised [Fleishman, 1980, p. 4].⁸ Follow-up Sea Pines conferences on curriculum were held in 1981 and 1984 [Stokes, n.d.].

Nearly a decade later, the time is ripe once again for such a curriculum review. The substantive issues might include the diversity questions mentioned above—including not only pure curriculum items like diversity-directed cases, but also some hands-on technical assistance in methods for teaching such demanding material; greater use of practitioners in teaching—including sabbaticals so that the academic-practitioner nexus could be strengthened; increasing the international and comparative focus of the curriculum—one area in which we really need to press, because we are still too bound to domestic agendas; and greater attention to the growing new emphasis on public management ideas in ways that prevent us from sliding into the old public administration abyss.

Establish a More Effective Nexus between Academics and Practitioners

Of all professions, policy analysis and management is the most applied, and should enjoy the closest linkages between academics and practitioners. Yet the participation by practitioners in APPAM is marginal, and I fear that concern about that situation among my academic friends and colleagues is minimal. I am *not* talking about becoming another home for the International City Managers Association, with workshops on different techniques for solid waste disposal. I *am* talking about ways to improve the interaction between practitioners and academics, to the benefit of both. Several of my practitioner colleagues have felt much more marginalized than I. (Being elected President certainly helps one to feel wanted—but more widely shared and real involvement is needed.)

Symptomatic of this perception, I can remember my participation on one of Dick Elmore's panels a few years ago on the topic of whether public policy education should be more supply-driven or demand-driven. I clearly had

⁷ According to Fleishman [1988], "Within two years of the first university decision to create a significant departure from the prevailing models of academic training [that is, two years after 1967, or 1969], the Ford Foundation commissioned a major study of education for the public service, and began a series of grants, of at least several hundred thousand dollars in each case, to support the development and financing of the Public Policy graduate programs. Within two more years [1971], the Alfred P. Sloan Foundation commenced a series of grants for the development and support of both graduate and undergraduate Public Policy programs."

⁸ As Fleishman said, "It was at the Hilton Head workshop that Arnold Meltner turned the tide by convincing the rest of us that a new organization was indeed needed, and that Dick Zeckhauser persuaded us that its central focus should be on the exchange of ideas and findings about research. Hence both APPAM and our annual Research Conferences can be credited in part to the Alfred P. Sloan Foundation."

relevant experience through interviewing several hundred policy school graduates and hiring dozens, yet I confronted what I perceived to be indifference to my demand-based need for certain skills, and the clear resistance of many in the academic community to accord practitioner voices any legitimacy at all in these discussions. My wife overheard what I fear is a typically biased statement as I was about to make my presentation, that we should “get ready for an impressionistic analysis without data or other reliance on empirical methods.” Fortunately, I had taken the trouble to go beyond my not-altogether-irrelevant “impressionistic” evidence gathered in interviewing hundreds of policy students over the preceding ten years and had done a survey of the experience of policy school graduates in CRS—so I actually had some data!

It is my strong view that practitioners and academics in public policy are colleagues, and that each can support the needs of the other in making the profession more effective. Practitioners represent a legitimate counterpressure to the normal academic imperative to dive deeper into single disciplines for academic “respectability”; if public policy schools succumb to these unidisciplinary pressures, we will have to reinvent the schools all over again. A multidisciplinary approach is at the heart of public policy, and no one should forget that.

APPAM could do a few things that might decrease the marginalization now felt by practitioners. I am talking serious role and attitude changes. For example, even though academics are not naturally inclined to accord outsiders access to curriculum issues, more effective efforts should be made to incorporate practitioners into the teaching process. Ellen Schall had a workshop last year that came up with several useful ideas.

We also need to attend to communication within the profession. I think that *JPAM* is a superb instrument for communication within the academic sector of the profession. However, it really does not speak as effectively to most practitioners. Therefore, I think APPAM should introduce a newsletter and/or another publication, like *PS* for political scientists, that will draw a larger audience among practitioners. Nevertheless, since *JPAM* is the voice of the profession, I would also hope that some attention might be paid to whether or not new and creative ways could be found to reach out more effectively to practitioners. Let me emphasize, however, that I start from the premise that the primary mission of *JPAM* should be to continue to serve as an effective publishing outlet for the academic side of the house.

I will close with a very specific suggestion to more effectively incorporate the views of practitioners in the activities of APPAM—views that will surely be overlooked or undervalued unless protected. I recommend that APPAM change the bylaws to provide that the representation of practitioners in each new cohort of the Policy Council be expanded from *two* of eight to *three* of eight, and that the definition of *practitioner* be tightened to define practitioner status explicitly as working for the government or for a *for-profit* think tank.

APPAM is a wonderfully close-knit organization, made up of interesting, bright, and congenial people. I don’t want to change that except to be more inclusive—and to be a more effective voice for the profession and a goad to better teaching and practice. I do hope we can undertake to do all that more effectively in the future. Thank you for your attention and the honor you have bestowed on me by making me your president for a year.

I do not mean to claim sole authorship of all the ideas discussed in this address. I accumulated many thoughts and ideas over the course of my six years on the Policy Council as member or officer, particularly as I focused on desirable changes during my two-year period as president-elect and president. I can recall a particularly thoughtful discussion of possible future directions for APPAM with Ann Edwards in August 1992, and a series of similar discussions with Marty Levin, Ellen Schall, Beryl Radin, Chuck Metcalf, Dante Noto, Dave Mathieson, and several members of the Executive Committee in the winter of 1992–1993 (including Phil Cook, Kathy Swartz, Lee Friedman, and Mike O'Hare). Of course I am responsible for the selection of particular ideas for elevation to agenda status, and the particular formulation here.

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CHRONOLOGY

- 1967 Institute of Public Policy Studies (University of Michigan) launches new approach to teaching public policy, followed by Harvard in 1968, and by seven others by 1971.
- 1969 First students enrolled in new structures at Michigan and Harvard.
- 1969 Ford-funded study of education for the public service, and initiation of a series of grants to support several graduate public policy education programs [Fleishman, 1988, pp. 13–14].
- 1971 Sloan Foundation undertakes series of grants to support both graduate and undergraduate public policy education programs [Fleishman, 1988, pp. 13–14].
- 1977 Amelia Island Conference (Sloan).
- 1978 Hilton Head (Sea Pines) summer workshop for teachers of public policy (sponsored by Sloan), at which idea for APPAM is first raised [Fleishman, 1980, p. 3].
- 1979 Meeting in May, at Duke University, of representatives of 15 policy schools and policy research institutes to form APPAM [Stokes, n.d., pp. 1–2].
- 1979 *First Research Conference* (October 19–20) at Radisson Hotel in Chicago, sponsored by Ford grant on Public Policy Curricular Materials Development Program; *APPAM created*.
- 1980 Meeting of Policy Council (January 23–24) at South Seas Plantation, Captiva Island, Florida. Approval of Sloan grant to increase participation of minorities in public policy education.
- 1981 Sea Pines curricular conference.
- 1984 Sea Pines curricular conference.
- 1990 Elmore focus on supply- or demand-driven education for public policy.
- 1991 Campbell impetus for more international and/or comparative focus for APPAM.
- 1991 Discussion of large APPAM surplus and possible uses. Committee on Governance, Organization, and Membership (GOM) appointed jointly by President Marty Levin and President-Elect Bill Robinson (10/91).
- 1992 GOM Report and recommendations during Policy Council Meeting of 10/29/92; approval of search for first full-time executive director.
- 1993 First meeting of newly revitalized Executive Committee to approve criteria and appointment process for executive director, and decision

- to move APPAM headquarters to Washington, DC (1/30/93). Policy Council approves criteria and salary range of executive director, and location of Washington, DC (4/30/93).
- 1993 Dante Noto appointed first full-time executive director of APPAM. Takes office on 7/1/93, and opens Washington office at 2100 M Street NW (Urban Institute), on 8/2/93.

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