

From the President: The Process of Planning for NALP's Future

by Terry Galligan

In December, just before the holidays, 14 NALP members and three NALP staffers spent three days holed up in a hotel conference room in Old Town, Alexandria, Virginia, to plot NALP's future course. We emerged with a strong (though, as of this writing, still rough) draft that is in the editing and revising phase. We will be presenting a more polished work product to NALP's Board of Directors at their meeting later this month for their review and comment. Once we have incorporated their input, we will circulate a finalized version to all of you — hopefully well before the Annual Education Conference.

In the meantime, I thought I would share with you the process we undertook to create the 2015-2020 plan.

The Long Range Strategic Planning Committee represents a cross-section of NALP's membership. It includes career services, recruiting, professional development, and diversity professionals from across the country. Some have only a few years of experience; others have been in the industry a long time. A few were even involved in drafting the 2010-2015 strategic plan. Their employers — whether firms or schools — are both large and small. Each member of the committee brought a unique perspective to the planning table. You can see the full list of Long Range Strategic Planning Committee members at www.nalp.org/sections.

They helped draft the member survey that was sent to you last fall. Thank you to each of the 460 or so of you (evenly divided between employer and school members) who responded! We were pleased to learn that our members are, for the most part, quite satisfied with, and engaged in, NALP's

activities. Over 90% of respondents believe that membership provides a good return on their investment.

Of the responses to the survey question about current and future challenges, by far the most common was “having to do more with less” at the office. On the employer side, several respondents listed the trend of firms becoming more “corporate” and “operating more like businesses” as a significant challenge. On the law school side, many members mentioned being challenged by declining enrollments and the need to provide career services to non-JD degree students.

In addition to the member survey results, LRSP members relied on memoranda prepared by each of NALP's sections and volunteer work groups, which provided strategic input specific to their areas of interest (or subject matter expertise). These memoranda, which collected feedback solicited specifically from section members, included descriptions of the most significant changes anticipated by the sections as well as suggestions about how NALP should best focus its leadership, resources, and services over the next five years with respect to their areas of expertise. In order to ensure that regional perspectives were given due consideration, members of the Regional Resource Council prepared similar memoranda based on feedback they had solicited from their regions' members.

As extensive as all of this member feedback was, it constituted only a part of the written record reviewed and evaluated by LRSP members in advance of the December planning session. Also included in their briefing books were several indus-

try reports, as well as NALP's governing documents, its current financial reports, member demographic data, and strategic reports and recommendations from NALP's staff. Key among the NALP materials was the marketing and branding report commissioned a few years ago. It identified NALP's core values — expertise, fairness, collaboration, inclusivity, and service — which served as a framework for our thinking about the future of the organization.

In addition to these written materials, LRSP members heard two live expert presentations — one from Jim Jones, who heads the Center for the Study of the Legal Profession at Georgetown University Law Center, and the second from Glenn Tecker, a widely sought-after consultant with decades of experience advising associations (and other organizations) on issues of governance, operations, and organizational culture.

Armed with all of this information, LRSP members engaged in a wide-ranging discussion about how the legal industry and the academy are changing (and are likely to change in the future), what our members' needs will likely be (and how we can meet them), and how NALP can continue to

be of service to the profession and the industry in the next five years. We then identified the main areas of strategic initiative that NALP should dedicate its resources to over the next five years.

Within each of these areas we formulated goals, and for each goal we developed one or more tactics for attaining it. We are excited about our draft and look forward to sharing a finalized strategic plan following the Board's review and suggestions.

I want to thank each member of the LRSP for their diligence, dedication, creativity, generosity, and high level of engagement. I also want to thank NALP staff members Jim Leipold and Fred Thrasher, who provided valuable input before and during our three-day planning meeting. Finally, I want to give a special shout-out to Mary Beal, NALP's Director of Member Professional Development, who facilitated our discussions and kept us organized and on task throughout the entire process.