

The 2006 President's Report to the Alabama Political Science Association April 29, 2006

The Alabama Political Science Association is moving forward as we reacquire the wherewithal to make a positive difference for our home state. Some signs of good progress include the securing of a host institution and program chair for next year's annual meeting and clear headway in obtaining leadership and host sites for 2008 and 2009. This is possibly the first time in the last twenty years that we are working far enough in advance to reduce uncertainty and smooth processes of transition between leadership teams.

Our 1973 AlaPSA constitution has been rediscovered recently after being unavailable to most members for many years, allowing us to move forward on amending the document to make it current with best practices of other state organizations. Furthermore, our meeting this year at the University of Alabama is a sign of recovery, returning the AlaPSA conference to Tuscaloosa after a decade and a half hiatus. Finally, our increased registration in 2006, enlarged roster of panels, and progress toward formalizing organizational processes through refurbished bylaws are all signs that we are flourishing again with the promise of even better things in coming years.

The headway we have made in the last twelve months has been made possible by the abilities and gracious contributions of a good number of AlaPSA members including our current vice president and program chair, Stephen Borrelli, members of the Executive Council, former officers of the organization, and newer members of the AlaPSA. To all who are helping make possible a stronger Association I say a hearty "*thank you.*"

Approximately half of U.S. states do not have state political science organizations listed with the American Political Science Association, yet Alabama has maintained a functioning organization since 1973 — thirty three years. Our accomplishments to this point would not have been made possible without the vision and hard work of the organization's founders and those who supported them in the early years. Indeed, our original constitution is a well devised and succinct document, a testimony to the contributions of our founding generation. It is for these reasons I dedicate this president's report to our organization's pioneers as well as future political science students of Alabama for whom we hope to provide a healthy environment of dialogue, discussion, and debate in our chosen discipline.

Association Historical Highlights

The Alabama Political Science Association (AlaPSA by acronym) was formed in 1973 by Robert Highsaw, Bill Stewart, and Coleman Ransone from UA Tuscaloosa along with Gerald Johnson from Auburn University. Others from Auburn who contributed in the early years

included Lewis Cannon and David Martin. The organization's first meeting was held at the University of Alabama (UA) in April of 1973, the first president being University of Alabama professor Robert Highsaw.¹ Significantly, the University of Alabama served as the host institution for the AlaPSA three more times over the next eight years, supplying presidents Jim Thomas (1977) Coleman Ransone (1979) and Phil Coulter (1981). This was an important time in the organization's history as political science organizations were beginning to flourish in some states.²

After two more University of Alabama political scientists served in the capacity of AlaPSA president (Joe Pilegge in 1987 and Harvey Kline in 1990), the University of Alabama's leadership role in our organization diminished. The reasons for this change are unknown to me but perhaps relate to the increasing emphasis during this era upon formal research at flagship institutions. Regardless, it is no accident that one of my early initiatives as an AlaPSA officer was a trip to Tuscaloosa in the hope of that the University of Alabama's political science department could help us rebuild our organization. My visit was welcomed by political science department chair David Lanoue who consequently introduced me to professor Stephen Borrelli. I am appreciative of Stephen Borrelli's leadership in putting together this year's conference and David Lanoue's support of the conference. I have found Stephen to be an excellent colleague and one willing to carry the load of program organization without complaint. Special thanks is due to the good people at the University of Alabama who are spearheading this year's conference and who we trust will help us strengthen the AlaPSA in coming years.

As our program chair will note in his brief report, we have increased organizational membership substantially this year building on our solid headway in 2005. Along with membership increases, the number of panels at this year's meeting is significantly above last year's number when we held our meeting in Jacksonville. Organizational finances remain very modest but seem headed in the right direction, building again upon last year's progress as our treasurer reports. We have secured a location, host institution, and program chair for our meeting in 2007. Special thanks is due Tom Vocino, University of Alabama at Montgomery, for his offer to host our 2007 conference in conjunction with our incoming program chair, Jim Seroka, from Auburn University. Additionally, I expect the Executive Committee will soon complete its work on two upcoming program chair nominations, the announcement of which will likely be made at this year's business meeting for affirmation by members assembled.

¹See Exhibit One for a list of previous organization presidents. I thank David Martin, Professor Emeritus at Auburn University, for supplying most of the information about the terms of service by AlaPSA officers. The balance of information in this report has been pieced together from conversations with former AlaPSA presidents Steven Taylor, Carl Grafton, Jerry Gilbert, Jim Allen, Jr., Jess Brown, Steven Taylor, Gerald Johnson and Robert Schaefer. Errors or omissions are mine; corrections are solicited.

²See Exhibit Two for a list of previous program chairs and host institutions arranged by institutional frequency of support in the host role. I have developed the list of host institutions upon the assumption that they coincide with the program chair's school. This list is subject to correction and feedback is solicited.

Rebuilding Organizational Operations

One of the goals we set at last year's business meeting was to bring the AlaPSA back to formal organizational status and function. Our organization has operated on an ad hoc basis for a number of years, suffering at times from a lack of critical mass, fractured institutional memory, and difficulty dealing with the transition between the organization's new caretakers each year. Part of the problem is that our ad hoc Executive Council has consisted of three individuals with inferred duties each serving one year terms, combined with two officers without significant formal duties ("Counselors" in our 1973 constitution) serving staggered two year terms. In the absence of any undergirding support institution, the archiving of administrative information in the AlaPSA has been inadequate during much of the last twenty years, detracting from the ability to produce robust processes on behalf of the organization's mission. Thus, we find ourselves in a place like that of the delegates called to our nation's first constitutional convention: The Executive Council knows that our AlaPSA 'confederacy' needs an overhaul — a new founding of sorts. We need coherency of administration, the clarification of officer duties, and the development of organizational instruments and techniques that allow us to achieve our mission efficiently.

Evidence of the organization's struggles during the last ten years abound and are apparent in my own experience. I was recruited as the AlaPSA program chair in early December 2004, just five months before the traditional time for the annual meeting. I had no experience in the organization and few scholarly connections in Alabama as a recent transplant from Kansas. It is hard to avoid the conclusion that my nomination reflected the desperation of the organization to find someone to do the footwork of organizing a rapidly approaching annual meeting season. Luckily, I found ready support from Lawson Veasey, the head of political science and public administration at Jacksonville State University where I teach. With JSU's support, the mentoring of the AlaPSA immediate past president, Steven Taylor (Troy University), and the gracious assistance of several longtime AlaPSA members, an annual meeting was stitched together.

The 2005 AlaPSA conference worked out nicely (I am told by members), but it could have been a disaster. We had no AlaPSA president, no organization constitution or bylaws in ready circulation or in the hands of the Executive Council, no formalized processes for dealing with leadership contingencies, and little availability of archived information to help a novice program chair get oriented. The environment for the organization in 2005 was one of high hazards. This situation gives a clear signal that prudent action is needed to ensure the future of our state organization. The happy fact is that in spite of difficulties, members of our organization rallied to help us double our registered membership at the 2005 conference, present eight panels that were well attended, and have a good time! The Jacksonville conference produced thoughtful papers, collegial interaction, nice meals, a fun reception backed by a student jazz band, and an enjoyable and provocative keynote presentation on Alabama politics by longtime AlaPSA members Glen Browder and Gerald Johnson. While good may come of difficulties, a well established

administrative capacity is much to be preferred.

Now that we have rediscovered our original constitution (dated April 14, 1973), our Executive Council is positioned to instigate actions to refresh our institutional heritage while capitalizing upon the opportunity to strengthen our organizational affairs. To assist in this endeavor, the 1973 constitution is being provided to all AlaPSA members in attendance at this year's meeting along with a draft of the 2006 AlaPSA constitution as it will look after amendment at this year's meeting, such changes pending approval by two-thirds of the Executive Council and an affirmation vote by a majority of Association members present at the business meeting. While we are not trying to recapture the past, the interests of institutional memory will be served if members holding bona fide copies of AlaPSA documents generated over the last thirty-three years take time to e-mail our incoming Secretary (or me, alternatively) to inquire whether copies of certain materials would help in our efforts to construct an archive of the Association's activities.

It is apparent from circumstances that changes have been made to AlaPSA operations by earlier administrations. For example, the vice president has become president in every year but one — 1999 when Carl Grafton served as president twice. This pattern suggests a process of filling the presidency through the norm of treating the vice president as president-elect. While there is much to recommend this tradition, it is not apparent from Bylaw No. 1, a bylaw that explains the election process briefly through the vehicle of a nominating committee. The explanation for the departure may be pragmatic leadership considerations or the general unavailability of the constitution. The point is that the organization has for years followed its norms or responded to expediencies rather than attending to founding documents or preserved resolutions. To the degree that this worked suitably in some years, there is no complaint.

Further evidence of ad hoc operations are apparent in the elimination of offices of "counselor" in 1990 coupled with their replacement at some point with the office of representative to the *Politics and Policy* journal and the office of the at-large member. Additionally, in recent years (and perhaps longer) the immediate past president of the AlaPSA has served as a quasi-officer in the valuable consultative role of advisor and facilitator on the executive committee. This innovation, now standard in many state political science organizations, has helped the AlaPSA make the transition between short administrations.

Nowhere does the organizational challenge manifest itself more significantly than in the lack of an institutional archive, the absence of institutional sponsors, the want of a "home base" for the Association, and no persistently viable means of securing annual meeting host institutions and program chairs in a low resource environment. During my seventeen months of service I have concluded that it is difficult to "elect" nominees to shoulder the burdens that the program chair position requires. The acquisition of adequate program chairs requires the cultivation of individuals with access to institutional resources. Most potential program chair nominees cannot be expected to commit to a statewide event until they have garnered the support of their respective department heads and institutions. Thus, it is not practical for the rank and file of the

organization to nominate in annual business meetings individuals for the program chair track. With this in mind, the Executive Council is examining an amendment to the 1973 constitution to allow the membership to make nomination recommendations to the Executive Council in advance of the annual meetings while retaining to the Council the initial vote on nominees. After completing its work in executive session, the Council will set forth qualified nominees for simple majority affirmation in the general business meeting — with another process in place to deal with the contingency of non-affirmation.

In the interest of our organization's prosperity we need to establish new standards and regularity in our processes. I call upon voting members of our Association to consider carefully the recommendations of the Executive Council regarding constitutional amendments and bylaws, affirming the Council's decision if the evidence warrants this support (and I believe it does). By taking reasonable action without further delay we will enhance our prospects for growth and success and speed the day that our organization can secure grants from funding sources.

The power of the Executive Council to take action on these matters at this year's annual meeting is drawn from a clause in Article V. of our 1973 constitution which states that constitutional "provisions may be waived on the recommendation of the Executive Council by a two-thirds vote of those members present and voting at any business meeting of the association." Based upon my recent communications with Executive Council members, and in view of the fact that our 1973 constitution was not "rediscovered" until late April of this year, I expect the Council to enact the two-thirds provision of the constitution and to use a conservative interpretation that the provision. A conservative interpretation is one that empowers the Executive Council to propose amendments to the 1973 AlaPSA constitution and bylaws when two-thirds of the Council present at an annual meeting supports the proposed modifications, such amendments and revisions to be ratified by a three-fourths affirmation of the voting membership in the general business meeting.

In preparation for these recommendations I have reviewed the constitutions of four successful state political science associations recognized by the American Political Science Association; namely, Pennsylvania, North Carolina, Minnesota, and Arkansas. There are worthwhile things to be learned from each of these successful organizations and constitutions, in some cases involving imperatives that we must pay heed to if the AlaPSA is to secure formal government recognition as a not-for-profit organization. While we could adopt any of these four constitutions in lieu of our own, I like the idea of preserving legacy and traditions that make our organization distinct and retain witness of the efforts of those who have preceded us. Thus, my recommendations are in line with the philosophy of holding constitutional amendments to a minimum and fleshing out various processes through our bylaws. The items to be voted upon by your Executive Council are summarized in a document entitled "Proposed Amendments to the 1973 AlaPSA Constitution." The document is available at the registration table.

In Closing

I recommend to the Executive Council and the Association membership actions that will refresh and invigorate our important organization. Our constitution lacks provisions that the IRS requires for formal recognition as a 501c3 organization and does not fully address the challenges of Association leadership in today's educational climate. The four original bylaws (1973) are outdated and contain provisions such as a three dollar annual membership due and a requirement for a semi-annual newsletter than is now handled more economically through e-mail updates. With no credible record available of additional bylaws or resolutions across thirty-three year of ad hoc operations, we are well advised to begin anew, saving what is sound and relevant and building anew where conditions warrant.

I encourage the organization to continue refining and improving its constitution and bylaws in coming years. I see the current work as an indication of progress, not an ultimate outcome. The provisions we have for amendment are not so high to impede altering anything that is defective in our new efforts. So let us move with confidence that our efforts will make a favorable difference in the energy of executive leadership and the coherency of administrative activity.

In departing from the office of AlaPSA president at the close of this year's business meeting I wish to thank everyone in the AlaPSA who has helped the organization during my brief period of service and before. I wish all of you much success our mutual efforts to educate students and enrich our society's understanding of government and politics.

God bless you and God bless Alabama.

Tim Barnett

AlaPSA president, April 2006-April 2006

Exhibits 1 and 2 follow.

Exhibit 2
Alabama Political Science Association
Association Presidents Displayed by their Schools
Reported affiliations; corrections requested

1973	Robert Highsaw	University of Alabama
1977	Jim Thomas	University of Alabama
1979	Coleman Ransone	University of Alabama
1981	Phil Coulter	University of Alabama
1987	Joe Pilegge	University of Alabama
1990	Harvey Kline	University of Alabama
2006	Stephen Borrelli	University of Alabama
1978	Jake Boyne	Auburn University at Montgomery
1982	Tom Vocino	Auburn University at Montgomery
1986	Anne Permaloff	Auburn University at Montgomery
1992	Brad Moody	Auburn University at Montgomery
1996	D'Linell Finley	Auburn University at Montgomery
1998	Carl Grafton	Auburn University at Montgomery
1999	Carl Grafton	Auburn University at Montgomery
2007	Jim Seroka (<i>Auburn U.</i>)	Auburn University at Montgomery (<i>Tom Vocino host</i>)
1974	Gerald Johnson	Auburn University
1984	Keith Ward	Auburn University
1989	Robert Montjoy	Auburn University
1994	Cal Clark	Auburn University
2004	Christa Slaton	Auburn University
1976	David Horton	University of South Alabama
1980	Miles Hodges	University of South Alabama
1985	Louise Dengler	University of South Alabama
1993	Konrad Kressley	University of South Alabama
1991	Jerry Gilbert	Jacksonville State University
1997	Jim Allen, Jr.	Jacksonville State University
2005	Tim Barnett	Jacksonville State University
1982	Tommy Williams	University of Alabama at Huntsville
1988	Jess Brown	University of Alabama at Huntsville
1975	Grady Wunn	University of Alabama at Birmingham
1995	Dagambar Mishra	Miles College
2000	Robert Schaefer	University of Mobile
2001	Bernard Bray	Talladega College
2002	Byrdie Larkin	Alabama State University
2003	Steven Taylor	Troy State University

Exhibit 1
**Alabama Political Science Association
Presidents of the AlaPSA**

Start of Term, April

1973	Robert Highsaw	University of Alabama
1974	Gerald Johnson	Auburn University
1975	Grady Wunn	University of Alabama at Birmingham
1976	David Horton	University of South Alabama
1977	Jim Thomas	University of Alabama
1978	Jake Boyne	Auburn University at Montgomery
1979	Coleman Ransone	University of Alabama
1980	Miles Hodges	University of South Alabama
1981	Phil Coulter	University of Alabama
1982	Tom Vocino	Auburn University at Montgomery
1982	Tommy Williams	University of Alabama at Huntsville
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1990	Harvey Kline	University of Alabama
1991	Jerry Gilbert	Jacksonville State University
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1994	Cal Clark	Auburn University
1995	Dagambar Mishra	Miles College
1996	D'Linell Finley	Auburn University at Montgomery
1997	Jim Allen, Jr.	Jacksonville State University
1998	Carl Grafton	Auburn University at Montgomery
1999	Carl Grafton	Auburn University at Montgomery
2000	Robert Schaefer	University of Mobile
2001	Bernard Bray	Talladega College
2002	Byrdie Larkin	Alabama State University
2003	Steven Taylor	Troy State University
2004	Christa Slaton	Auburn University
2005	Tim Barnett	Jacksonville State University
2006	Stephen Borrelli	University of Alabama
2007	Jim Seroka (<i>elect</i>)	Auburn University (<i>conference to be held at AUM</i>)