

Future Steps - Implementing the Code of Ethics

The ASPA National Council approved a new Code of Ethics at the annual conference that refines the standards and values for ASPA members and provides guidance to all persons who serve the public. The code has new content and a changed format, but it builds on ASPA's long-held values and its forty years of activities related to ethics starting with the creation of the Professional Standards and Ethics Committee in 1974. After the publication of two ethics workbooks, the first code of ethics was approved in 1984 and revised in 1994.

For the past two years, a Working Group initiated by former ASPA President Eric Bergrud reviewed the code approved in 1994. Past-President Tom Liou guided the process to its culmination with the approval of the new code on March 16 in New Orleans.

Strengthening Implementation of the Code

The Working Group was unanimous in its belief that the Code of Ethics is of limited lasting value if there is no commitment to its implementation and regular review. Clear responsibility must be assigned for activities to increase awareness and commitment to ethical principles and practices in ASPA and to promote the importance of ethics in public service generally. As a result, the Working Group has proposed the re-establishing the Professional Standards and Ethics Committee in ASPA. Its key functions would include ongoing activities to raise awareness of the Code of Ethics and to promote its use, collaborating with the ASPA Section on Ethics which will continue to take the lead role in ethics research and teaching and with all other Sections to identify ethical issues relevant to their area, developing complementary approaches to promoting ethics using the ASPA code in combination with other specialized professional codes, and recommending procedures and processes to address alleged ethical breaches by ASPA members.

Future Steps

An interim Implementation Committee appointed by ASPA officers will begin the implementation process. It will prepare recommendations to be presented to the ASPA National Council at the mid-year meeting in September, 2013, to create a standing Committee on Professional Standards and Ethics in ASPA, it will plan programs for the 75th annual conference in 2014, and it will start other outreach activities.

As in the review process, suggestions are invited from ASPA members about ways to expand awareness of the code and to strengthen its implementation. Committee chair, Jim Svava, can be reached at james.svava@asu.edu. The other members are J. Paul Blake, Patria Julnes, Jim Nordin, Jonathan West, and Suzanne Piotrowski who is chairperson of the ASPA Ethics Section.