

MEMBER SPOTLIGHT

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How did you learn about APSA? When did you become a member of APSA, and what prompted you to join?

I realized the importance of APSA when one of my graduate school advisors attributed their successful academic career to regularly participating in APSA's annual meetings. I began attending with others in my program and, like so many doctoral students before and after me, I learned how to leverage everything APSA had to offer through trial and error. Few in my immediate and extended family have earned a bachelor's degree, let alone an MA or PhD. As such, the "hidden curriculum" of graduate school—all of the unwritten rules of academia and the extensive learning that takes place beyond the classroom—represented a steep learning curve for me. But I was determined to follow my advisor's example, and I gradually built my professional network by learning to do more than show up at my own panels at the annual meeting. I joined several APSA sections, faithfully attended business meetings, and volunteered for disciplinary service. The result has been a rich professional network that has sustained me throughout every stage of my career. I found colleagues with similar interests who were willing to provide feedback on my research, an array of mentors who gave advice on everything from tenure and promotion to motherhood, work-life balance, and career transitions. I found co-authors and friends who now motivate me to undertake new projects and junior colleagues who inspire me to see my work from fresh perspectives. The desire to share these insights and to make the "hidden curriculum" more transparent to all graduate students, inspired me to co-edit the APSA-published resource *Strategies for Navigating Graduate School and Beyond* (2022), along with Julia Marin Hellwege, Daniel J. Malinson, Kevin G. Lorentz II, and Davin Phoenix. We collectively wanted to share more details about what we learned through trial and error about how to establish a rewarding academic career—especially with first generation and minoritized graduate students who might experience a steep learning curve similar to our own. My co-editors all agree that if our project helps to diversify the discipline of political science by providing advice that bolsters women and minoritized graduate students' persistence, it will be one of our most important contributions to the field. Yet the first and most important piece of advice I would share with anyone is the



one shared with me in my doctoral program: do not underestimate the sheer importance of showing up.

How have APSA membership and services been valuable to you at different stages of your career?

I think one of the most important things APSA does is to support conferences, programming, and publication outlets that provide opportunities to share research and to network with like-minded colleagues. APSA conferences, sections, caucuses, publications, and journals presented important opportunities to cultivate a professional network early in my career—and are still integral to my current professional life in different ways. I particularly appreciate that APSA has been willing to evolve to meet my own and other members' changing professional needs. For example, as my applied research and administrative positions increased my involvement in higher education's civic engagement movement, I found my way to the Political Science Education Section to network with those who established what was at the time a fairly new section journal, the *Journal of Political Science Education*. As pedagogy and civic engagement initiatives became more integral to our discipline's work, APSA expanded professional development opportunities by publishing the Teaching Civic Engagement series of edited collections, establishing the APSA Educate website, and supporting the launch of a new Civic Engagement Section. I see my current role as helping to build on these endeavors, not only to expand the visibility of this important work, but to increase opportunities for others. For example, I served on the editorial team that helped JPSE transition to an APSA-wide journal, and I currently serve on the executive committees of both the Political Science Education and Civic Engagement sections. I also co-chair the Civic Learning Working Group, which coordinates areas of overlapping interests between these two sections. Of course, I should also note that I have used APSA's job posting service to find and apply for every single one of my professional positions, from my first job as an assistant professor to my current role as Director of the Ray C. Bliss Institute of Applied Politics at the University of Akron—and I plan to use the service when the Bliss Institute posts a position for a post-doc who can help me launch new initiatives dedicated to promoting civic and political participation through experiential learning.

Can you tell us about your professional background and your research?

I am an alum of the Institute I currently direct, where I earned my master of applied politics—perhaps the only such degree currently offered at an affordable Midwestern regional public—as I decided whether to work in politics or academia. While I was one of a handful of Bliss students who went on to pursue a doctorate rather than a political career, my first role models at the University of Akron still fundamentally shaped my career. Unlike many political scientists, I saw no need to eschew a normative, applied interest in the health of American democracy in favor of more traditional, objective scholarly work. Given the Bliss Institute's imprint on my approach to our discipline, I always found ways to incorporate both traditional and applied activities into my teaching and research. My recent scholarly work in a more traditional vein, for example, explores the #MeToo movement and women's political ambition, as well as the effects of partisan polarization, rudeness, and civility on political engagement. At the same time, I have been committed to assessment of pedagogy and programming focused on promoting public-spirited citizenship and increasing both students' and community members' civic and political participation. My recent civic engagement and pedagogy research focuses on the effects of student-led deliberative discussions sessions on the cultivation of intrinsic civic identity and on enhancing the political socialization that occurs within campus student organizations. When I interviewed for my current position, I explained how I would use this expertise to supplement the Bliss Institute's legacy programming focused on political careers with an additional layer of civic engagement initiatives. Several of these initiatives are underway, including a new undergraduate degree in applied civics and politics—where learning objectives will prioritize not only understanding of political science literature, but cultivation of the civic knowledge, skills, and dispositions required to sustain public spirited participation in democracy.

Which APSA programs or events would you recommend to people who are not members of the association, and why?

If I had to recommend a single event, I would encourage people to attend the stand-alone Teaching & Learning Conference—or TLC. I am loyal to APSA-TLC because it regularly attracts the very best of our discipline. Those in search of generous colleagues who care deeply about teaching—from every type of institution and from every subfield—will find them there. The stand-alone TLC, which is held in February of alternating years, features a workshop model with themed tracks that typically cover topics such as research methods, diverse classrooms, simulations, and games, and civic engagement. Teacher-scholars in the same track meet to discuss their ongoing pedagogy initiatives and Scholarship of Teaching and Learning across the entire weekend. It is one of the best opportunities our discipline offers for in-depth network-

ing that cuts across—rather than reinforces—our disciplinary silos and subfields. As a scholar of US politics, I rarely have the chance to collaborate so closely with those whose work is focused on other regions of the world. Attending TLC helped me to build a supportive professional network that has enhanced my career over the years. Now, I can count those who work in comparative politics and international relations among my closest colleagues and co-authors, and they have enhanced my work in ways that I could never have predicted. Currently, for example, I am committed to helping colleagues such as Allison Millet Rios McCartney and John Ishiyama in their efforts to expand civic engagement pedagogy to higher education institutions beyond the US. I would not be able to undertake this work, which I think may be the most immediate action political scientists can take in response to democratic backsliding and rising authoritarianism at home and abroad, without a wide professional network. For me, APSA-TLC has made all the difference.

Is there anything else you'd like people to know about you or the work that you do?

The work that is most important to me now is an extension of my now decades-long participation in higher education's civic engagement movement. This reform movement seeks to hold higher education institutions accountable for their civic mission. As a member of the working group that preceded APSA's presidential task force on rethinking political science education, for example, I argued for including the cultivation of civic knowledge, skills, and dispositions among the learning outcomes that should be expected of our undergraduate majors. Yet, as noted in my 2020 APSA-TLC keynote—titled "Democracy is More Important than a P-Value, Embracing Political Science's Civic Mission through Intersectional Engaged Learning" and presented with my co-author Lori Poloni Staudinger—there is no single approach or best practice that will yield these outcomes. Rather, we must take the demographic identities and lived experiences of our increasingly diverse student bodies into account and develop intersectional civic engagement pedagogy designed to meet their needs. We provide a concrete example of how to approach this task in our co-authored textbook, *Why Don't Women Rule the World?* (CQ Press 2020) written with Shannon Jenkins and Candice Orbals, which features activities specifically designed to compensate for women college students' low levels of political ambition. I hope that more political scientists will endeavor to be stewards of place, with civic engagement pedagogy and programming tailored to our students' and community members' lived experiences. To encourage such work, I plan to relaunch an updated version of a consortium that Elizabeth Bennion and I developed years ago, designed to facilitate multi-campus data collection for civic engagement and political science pedagogy research. Those interested in participating should look for updates about the Bliss Institute's consortium for Applied Civic Engagement Studies (ACES) soon. My hope is that my own initiatives, combined with the work of many others involved in the Political Science Education and Civic Engagement sections, will continue to provide resources, professional development, and publication outlets for all those dedicated to this important work. ■

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