

ARNOVA News

ASSOCIATION FOR RESEARCH ON NONPROFIT ORGANIZATIONS AND VOLUNTARY ACTION

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ARNOVA's Annual Conference Sees Record Numbers & Great Presentations

The most recent Annual Research Conference of the Association for Research on Nonprofit Organizations and Voluntary Action was a great success by almost every measure. A record number of participants (680) were involved this year in Philadelphia, our largest Conference ever. More than 300 presentations were offered in regular sessions, along with three major plenary addresses and panels. With the generous support of the University of Pennsylvania School of Social Policy and Practice, which acted as the host institution, a variety of special events completed the Conference experience.

The evaluation forms of participants indicate they generally found the quality of papers and presentations this year to be very good, and expressed great appreciation for the welcoming environment created by volunteers and staff. Many noted the exceptional value of

this Conference as a unique opportunity to connect with other scholars and practice leaders in the field, to develop new relationships and strengthen existing ones, and to explore (or create) potential collaborations around shared research interests. (Many sessions included presentations of research born at previous Conferences.) Great appreciation was also voiced for the way the plenary sessions, and some papers and panels, developed a public conversation around the Conference theme of "Building Civil Society: Nonprofit Privileges and Obligations."

Of course no conference unfolds without a few problems. We were deeply disappointed when our keynote speaker, Lynn Huntley, President of the Southern Education Foundation, could not come because of a last minute health emergency in her family. She did send us the text for the remarks she would have

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Opinions expressed in this newsletter are those of the authors and do not necessarily represent the views of the editor or the association.

A Note of Apology
In preparations for the
Conference this year
ARNOVA was using
new systems for the
submission, review
and scheduling of
papers; as well as for
the construction of the
printed program. In this
process we experienced
some serious and
persistent problems that
resulted in multiple errors
and some omissions in
printed program.

We want here again
to apologize to all
who were affected by
these problems. We
are sincerely sorry
for any confusion or
inconvenience we caused
you. We hope you will still
welcome an opportunity
to submit papers for
and participate in next
year's Conference. We are
confident we've learned
from our errors this year,
and promise a much
better process next year.

Thom Jeavons
Executive Director

made, which we think all ARNOVA'ns might want to see. They are both inspiring and challenging. We have posted the text at our website.

Still, participants were stimulated and enriched by the remarkable panel put together at the last minute to address the Conference theme in the opening Plenary. Jon Van Til, Margaret Harris, and Ruth McCambridge—all senior scholars and respected commentators—spoke to the ways in which the nonprofit



sector and its institutions might respond to the remarkable and very difficult times in which we now find ourselves. In light of the global economic crisis, the recent election in the U.S., and other signal events in the world, what are the obligations of nonprofits, and how can they be met? In different ways each noted that we should not underestimate the depth and seriousness of the difficulties civil societies across the world face now; but observed as well that times like these, that force a radical reconsideration of the ways institutions operate, can bring opportunities for profound and creative innovation. There is no doubt the problems we face will cause real and deep suffering. But they can also allow us to fundamentally reshape and renew communities and relationships, so that the work of service and the quest for progress and justice can be more fruitful in the long run. (We are deeply grateful to the three presenters for this opening Plenary, who provided us with

thoughtful and challenging reflections despite being given less than a day to develop their presentations.)

Similar themes and questions were picked up by Michael Edwards in his remarks to the closing Plenary and luncheon on Saturday. He offered an insightful analysis and critique of the claims being made regarding the growing phenomena of social enterprise, and the widespread push to make nonprofits more



“business-like.” While acknowledging the value of lessons that can be learned from some business operations, Dr. Edwards raised critical questions about how the pursuit of such models for nonprofits may lead to the loss of their important roles in building social capital and grassroots community assets, and strengthening democracy. He observed there is a paucity of evidence (systematic data) to show that social enterprise models for nonprofits actually lead better service provision or long term sustainability among those nonprofits. He closed by noting the potential value of multiple approaches to developing and carrying out nonprofit service and advocacy work; and argued for a deeper analysis of relative strengths and weaknesses of different models that recognize varying goals—e.g., building community or improving service efficiency—may need to take priority in different contexts.

ARNOVA Doctoral Seminar Revived

One of the less visible but most exciting events to occur in Philadelphia was the revival of ARNOVA's Doctoral Fellows Seminar. This pre-Conference event is a day long seminar for Ph.D. students working in the fields of philanthropic, nonprofit or civil society studies who are at the early dissertation stage. This event is part of ARNOVA's commitment to build the field and improve the preparation of future faculty.

Such a seminar had been held for many years prior to 2007, when we (unfortunately) ran out of funding for it. This year, however, with support from our grant from the Lilly Endowment, that seminar was revived, and the results were truly encouraging.

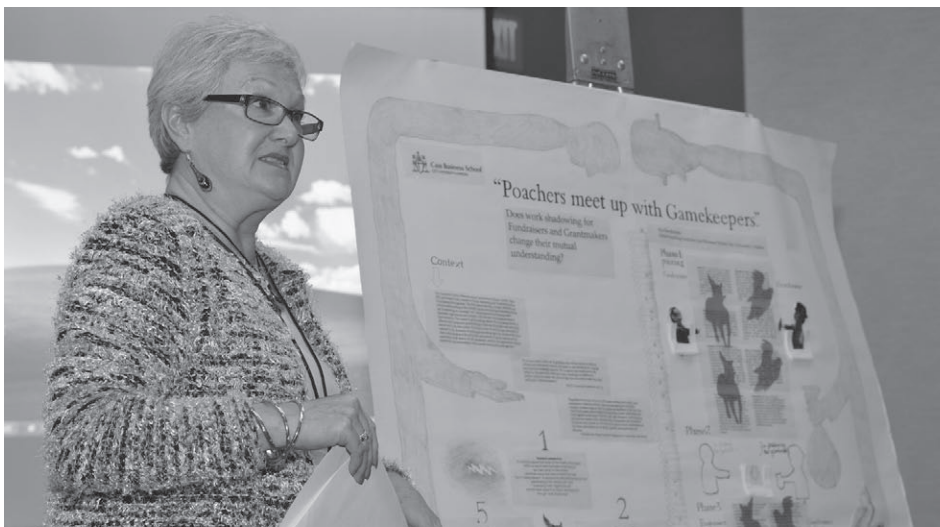
The focus of this seminar is giving upcoming scholars in our field(s) support for their research, a chance to connect with the network of researchers and leaders in nonprofits and voluntary action studies, and the opportunity to learn more about teaching and discourse in this interdisciplinary realm. By this effort we hope to prepare and keep some of the best and brightest new Ph.D.'s in the work of teaching and research in our programs on philanthropy and nonprofits.

More than 25 applications were received, and nine students were chosen to participate. They represented a wide range of disciplines, from engineering to public administration to anthropology; and they were a diverse and international

group, another goal for this effort. They spent a full day with three senior scholars from the field – David Hammack, Rich Steinberg, and Judith Saidel – who also bring rich interdisciplinary perspectives to the seminar. (We thank these three faculty for giving generously of their time to this project.) Each student presented on his or her research and was critiqued and given suggestions for new resources and approaches by the other students as well as the faculty. There was also time for discussion about how one develops a career as an academic.

The faculty reported on thoughtful and creative presentations from the students, lively and challenging discussions of the work presented, and the visible development of networks of mutual support that will endure to assist these students in finishing their degrees. That last outcome was also noticeable as the students then attended many of the sessions at the Conference as a group, and continued their conversations with one another.

It is ARNOVA's intention to continue this seminar for at least the next two years. So, if you are a student entering the process of writing your dissertation, or a faculty member working with such students, keep your eyes on the ARNOVA website for information about applications for next year's seminar. That notice will appear next summer as plans are further refined for the Conference in Cleveland in 2009.



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Major Awards Honor Best Work of 2008

The presentation of awards honoring some of the best and most innovative work in our field is always a highlight of the Annual Conference. This year the following recipients of major awards decided by ARNOVA were honored.

Distinguished Achievement and Leadership in Nonprofit and Voluntary Action Research

Peter Dobkin Hall

ARNOVA Best Book Award
Faith in the Halls of Power
by **D. Michael Lindsey**

Virginia Hodgkinson Research Prize
Affirmative Advocacy: Race, Class, and Gender in Interest Group Politics
by **Dara Strolovitch**

Gabriel Rudney Award for the Best Dissertation
"Social and Environmental Accounting: The Expanded Value Added Statement"
by **Laurie Mook**

Best Article in NVSQ 2008
"Social Capital and Philanthropy: An Analysis of the Impact of Social Capital on Individual Giving and Volunteering"
by **Eleanor Brown and James M. Ferris**

ARNOVA is grateful for the gifts of time of the many members who serve on our committees that review and decide these awards each year.



ARNOVA Talks Diversity and Strategy with NAACP's New Leadership

By Jon Kitto

On the occasion of its 100th anniversary (2009) the nation's venerable civil rights organization, the NAACP, has been reaching out to other organizations. Its contact with ARNOVA led to a conversation between the organization's new President, Benjamin Jealous, and ARNOVA's Associate Director, Jon Kitto. They explored some common interests around the challenges facing nonprofits, and around issues of diversity.

Benjamin Jealous, the NAACP's new President, has spent the last six years in leadership positions with advocacy roles, including three years as director of Amnesty International USA's Domestic Human Rights Program and most recently as president of the San Francisco-based Rosenberg Foundation, which supports social justice organizations. Before that, he spent three years as executive director of the National Newspaper Publishers Assn., an organization of 200 black-owned community newspapers.

Jealous expressed an admiration for the NAACP, an organization he said his family has supported for five generations. "I've spent my entire life in this movement," he said. "I was raised to believe that there is no greater calling than to serve your people in the cause of justice. That is how I have spent my life. I have no higher ambitions."

Jealous spent summers at his grandparents' home in Baltimore's Ashburton neighborhood, where his family was active in the Baltimore NAACP. Jealous' mother, who is black, was among the first students to desegregate Western High School here in 1955, he said. His father, who is white, took part in sit-ins to

desegregate Baltimore lunch counters, Jealous said.

Jealous said that he is aware of ARNOVA, and spoke about its efforts to diversify its membership. "Attracting and retaining people of color in organizations such as ARNOVA, especially as it relates to having more tenured faculty in our nations colleges and universities, that importance cannot be overstated." Continuing he said, "If our country is truly to enter into a 'post racial' period then every citizen must be represented and feel represented in all aspects of their lives, and this certainly includes the fields such as ARNOVA represents."

Jealous takes the helm at the NAACP during a crucial time: The organization faces some of the same challenges that ARNOVA faces: how to increase membership, raise money. In addition they must battle critics who question whether the civil rights group can remain relevant.

Noting the difficult economic times, Jealous said that all nonprofits, ARNOVA and NAACP alike, must find ways to be relevant in the lives of its membership and donors.

(continued on page 6)

THE PRESIDENT'S PERSPECTIVE

ARNOVA's Strategy—Where We've Been & Where We're Going

By Steven Rathgeb Smith

ARNOVA like many academic associations and infrastructure organizations is facing a much more competitive environment for funding and members. Partly in response to this changed environment, the ARNOVA board of directors began a review in 2006 of the ARNOVA by-laws; this process eventually led to a revised set of by-laws which were approved by the ARNOVA membership at the annual membership meeting in Atlanta in 2007. At this time, the board also initiated a strategic planning process for the association. As part of this planning process, the board under the leadership of board member Pat Bradshaw conducted a survey of the membership to obtain their input on the future direction of the association. This survey included dialogue with members at the 2007 membership meeting and a web-based, member survey conducted in early 2008. The results of this survey substantially informed the strategic planning process of the board of directors.

At the annual board retreat in June 2008 and its November 2008 board meeting, the ARNOVA board discussed and refined its strategic plan and agreed upon 4 key goals for the association:

- *Build, improve, disseminate, and promote recognition of knowledge on nonprofit organizations, philanthropy, civil society, and voluntary action;*
- *Create an integrated set of programs and activities that support effective education in nonprofit organizations, philanthropy, civil society and voluntary action;*
- *Manage ARNOVA's operations so that they are exemplary with respect to strong governance, financial stability, and responsiveness to members;*
- *Attract and retain individuals from under-represented groups into all aspects of ARNOVA's governance, programming, and membership in order to insure that ARNOVA is and continues to be a diverse organization. Diversity refers to inclusiveness of discipline, national origin, region, race and ethnicity, and theoretical and ideological perspective, with special attention to groups under-represented due to historical patterns of exclusion, discrimination, and lack of resources.*

Through work groups and subcommittees, the board also articulated several objectives and tactics to achieve these overall goals. In addition, this new strategic plan includes a new mission statement for the association which is posted on the ARNOVA website. The board will continue to refine the strategic plan during the next several months including at the annual June board retreat. However, this current plan is already guiding the board in terms of moving the association ahead.

This strategic plan also informs the board's assessment of the strengths of the association and the current environment. Thus,

we regard ARNOVA's central mission as supporting research, teaching, and curricular development on nonprofit organizations, philanthropy, civil society and voluntarism.

Further, a key priority for the board is collaboration and partnership with other associations and organizations to advance this mission. ARNOVA and many other associations benefited greatly from extensive philanthropic support in the 1990s and early 2000s. This funding is largely gone except for specific project-related grants. Thus, we need to work more closely with other associations in support of the research and educational infrastructure of the field and to help our members access cutting edge

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research and curriculum. This partnership strategy was vividly evident at the November annual conference where many panels and presentations represented collaborations with organizations such as American Humanics, the Council on Foundations, the Independent Sector, ISTR, the Forbes Fund, and NACC. This partnership strategy is central to the ability of ARNOVA to successfully implement other key priorities including: supporting doctoral students and doctoral education; nurturing younger scholars; enhancing the diversity of the association on important dimensions such as race and ethnicity, disciplinary affiliation, and geographic region.

Finally, implicit in the strategic plan is the recognition that the board, staff, and members of ARNOVA have an obligation to engage the contemporary policy debates and issues pertaining to nonprofit organizations and philanthropy. The financial crisis, plunging endowments, rising demand for the services of nonprofit organizations, and high profile scandals have put the spotlight on the impact of public policy on nonprofit and philanthropic organizations. ARNOVA and its members are well-positioned to offer timely research on important public policy issues related to nonprofits and philanthropy, support the development of effective training programs for nonprofit managers who routinely face complex public policy issues, and encourage broad-based civic education on community service, voluntarism, and civil society organizations.

It has been a tremendous honor and privilege to serve the association as its president for the past two years, especially since it has been an opportunity to work with the many talented and dedicated members of the association. I look forward with enthusiasm to participating in the activities and programs of the association and working with members to advance the association's programmatic agenda.

NAACP's New Leadership (continued from page 4)

“Even when times are hard,” he said “if we are demonstrating that our work adds value to their lives (membership) and to the future lives of their children, neighbors and friends, then we will face less of a challenge in attracting members and funds than those organizations continue to struggle with identity.

Jealous said he would make financial stability a priority for the Baltimore-based organization and planned to use his personal relationships with top foundations in the nation to raise funds. He also said he would focus on supporting the NAACP's nearly 2,000 local units and on using technology more effectively to “pull people into this movement.”

“The formation of task forces, ad hoc committees and advisory boards, as you've told me ARNOVA hopes to do to draw in and retain people of color, is one of the best ways to assure that there is future leadership available to draw upon. We intend to use similar models.” He noted, “We can't forget, in all the discussion about color, [there is also] the issue of an aging population in organizations such as the NAACP and ARNOVA.” There are challenges in meeting the needs of all demographics, especially in communication initiatives and direction of governing boards. In his own case, he pointed to his youth as an asset in recruiting new members and said he thought he could work to create consensus among the board's various factions.

When asked why he thought people of color might benefit from membership in ARNOVA he stated “every opportunity to be associated with the prestige that ARNOVA exemplifies helps give credibility to work, and affiliations of its members. People of color need to take some responsibility for their own success and the success of their own groups, being active in a group such as ARNOVA is an excellent way to accomplish that.”

As we ended our discussion Mr. Jealous wished us success in all of our efforts at ARNOVA. On behalf of ARNOVA, the NAACP and Mr. Jealous was congratulated and wished every success in the future.

ARNOVA Council on Foundations and Foundation Center Continue Work on Diversity & Philanthropy

The joint project of ARNOVA, the Council on Foundations and the Foundation Center continued this fall with a gathering of thirty people in Chicago. Roughly equal numbers of academics and foundation staff and consultants participated in this Forum for Researchers and Practitioners. The project began as an effort to develop a model for researcher-practitioner dialogue that would enable researchers to learn more about the questions most important to practice leaders in different fields of philanthropy, and then allow practitioners to partner with researchers in developing research projects that can better serve the field. The two Forums held so far have explored questions about the character, role and significance of diversity in institutional philanthropy.

This fall's Forum focused specifically on exploring what we know, and what is now most important to learn, about the relationships between demographic diversity in the operation of and inputs to foundations and the effectiveness of foundations in fulfilling their missions—especially as that involves benefiting diverse communities. In two days of presentations and interaction, participants struggled with the ambiguity of the definitions for both effectiveness and diversity used by foundations (and others). All participants recognized that there were multiple ways to understand both concepts.

The stage was set for these conversations by an opening presentation on the noteworthy research that has been done looking at the relationship between diversity and organizational performance in the business world. That research indicates that while there are strong signs of some relationship between increased diversity and fuller achievement of goals in those settings, it also makes clear that: (1) This is not always the case; and (2) the context in which organizations operate, and their internal processes and cultures, play critical roles in determining whether diversity will enhance organizational performance or not.

Foundation participants present at this

Forum spoke of the desires of their organizations hold to better serve the wide variety of people and needs that are found in their communities; and of the need to learn more about what factors in and approaches to recognizing and incorporating diverse people in their organizations and work would enable that. The group turned its attention to probing what we need to know more about to make such progress, and what research would help us learn that. Working in small groups and as a whole, nine discrete research projects were identified that people thought could be very useful. The group as a whole finally prioritized three of those nine as work where we thought we might yield the most immediate and valuable return on resources invested. Very brief descriptions of those projects are as follows:

Where Do Grants Go and Who is Served?

We know some, but not nearly enough, about the characteristics of the people and communities who finally benefit from the many and various grants made now. Nor do we often know much about who is making decisions in and for the organizations receiving those grants. Finally many grants from smaller foundations are not reported and tracked at all in these terms.

There was general agreement that knowing more about these matters is essential both for improving foundations' abilities to serve more diverse communities and for answering the critics who claim (on the basis of incomplete or questionable data) foundations are failing in this regard. Determining how foundations might want to redirect grants for strategic or equity purposes seems an impossible task if one cannot determine with reasonable accuracy how the allocation and disbursement of funding works now.

How Do Effective Foundations Operate, and Are They Diverse?

We know that there are foundations that are setting clear goals for engaging and serving their communities or fields, and are meeting those goals. If this is a profile

to which other foundations aspire, then it seems a crucial tool for helping them move in that direction is good information—stories as well as data—about how those ‘effective’ organizations operate. With such information, one could begin to test a hypothesis about whether “more effective” foundations are more diverse in terms of personnel and more inclusive in terms of how they operate. Full and rich case studies about the characteristics of effective foundations and their commitment to diversity and inclusiveness could be sources of both useful knowledge and inspiration for others.

How Does Field of Interest Relate to Foundation Diversity?

One factor affecting the internal diversity of a foundation (staff and board) may be the field in which it operates. Foundations with narrower foci (e.g., wildlife conservation) may see questions of board or staff diversity as less relevant to their work; while others whose interests strongly relate to specific or diverse demographic communities might be expected to seek out more diverse participants.

Participants saw great potential value in research—probably case studies—to analyze how foundations that are more diverse become

so across fields of interest. Does the field of interest precede diversity or vice versa? What are the links? What other factors might be important?

The conclusions of and notes on the proceedings this Forum have been shared with a collaborative effort of a number of major foundations, called the Diversity in Philanthropy Project, that has been operating for some time. The goal of that project is to initiate and support work that will lead to greater understanding of the value diversity and equity in institutional philanthropy. The full “Proceedings” of this Forum will be published later this winter on the Council on Foundation website with links from ARNOVA’s website. (We also did this with last year’s Forum.) Printed copies may also be available then.

Meanwhile, ARNOVA is in conversation with our two partner organizations about how this kind of collaboration—building knowledge for the field and developing resources for the research that makes that possible—can continue. We are also interested, in line with the goals of our new strategic plan, in pursuing such shared efforts with other nonprofit infrastructure organizations in the future.

Check Your Directory Listing

Please be sure to logon to the “members area” on the ARNOVA website (www.arnova.org) to check and verify your directory listing. The update is real-time so any changes you make will be instantly updated. The directory is also the source that ARNOVA uses to keep in touch, so having current information assure that you always receive the latest news!

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