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Department: From Where I Sit



Paula Olszewski-Kubilius, NAGC President, Northwestern University, Evanston, IL Moving Forward

My term as president of NAGC is coming to a close. As of September 1st Tracy Cross, College of William & Mary, will assume this honor and responsibility. It has been my sincere pleasure to serve NAGC as president. I thank all of you for this tremendous opportunity.

During my presidency, I often felt like the gifted student placed into a new, advanced and accelerated class. I was initially struggling to adjust to a faster pace, trying to fill gaps in my knowledge, increasing my effort in response to increased challenge, and coping with anxiety and self-doubt while simultaneously growing and learning at an incredible rate. Thankfully, I received support and encouragement from my “teachers,” executive director Nancy Green and the staff of the national office, and from my peers -- the board of directors and the many volunteers and stakeholders of NAGC.

I want to share what I am most proud of. When I started as president, NAGC was facing, like all organizations, significant economic challenges. But, through the efforts of the NAGC staff and decisions of the board of directors, NAGC has come through the economic crisis mostly intact. In fact, we have made considerable progress in diversifying our revenue sources to better protect the organization against future fluctuations in the economy. We now have income streams from our Common Core books, the Expert Speakers Program, and a newly launched annual giving and development campaign. And, we maintained a vibrant conference with one of the highest attendances in our history this past year!

I am also proud of our efforts to serve parents. We augmented our services by hiring a new parent specialist and doubling the number of issues of PHP. One of the most significant areas of growth for me

personally was in learning to write for parents. As president I wrote 16 columns for [Parenting for High Potential](#), and with the guidance of Jennifer Jolly and the editorial staff of *PHP*, they are some of my best work!!! This responsibility made me think hard about what parents need to know and how to help them raise their gifted child. It was an opportunity to share some of my own journey as a parent of two amazing, talented daughters. More importantly, it gave me insight into the important role NAGC needs to play with parents of gifted children, providing information and assistance at pivotal points in a gifted child's journey towards adulthood.

I am also thrilled that during the course of my presidency, we added Disney, the National Association of Secondary School Principals, the Belin-Blank Center, the National Association for the Education of Young Children, and the National Consortium of Specialized Secondary Schools of Math, Science and Technology (NCSSSMST) to our list of partners and collaborators, joining the Council for Exceptional Children, the Council of State Directors of Programs for the Gifted, the College Board, the Jack Kent Cooke Foundation, Scholastic Testing Service, and our state affiliate organizations. It is clear that we can significantly extend our reach and influence on education by building relationships with other education advocacy organizations. This was also an area of significant growth for me and I learned how much effort goes into forming effective, productive relationships with other groups—and how rewarding and advantageous they can be. I thank Nancy Green for her expert guidance and tutelage here.

Throughout my 30+ years in the field of gifted education, the heart and passion of my work has been in identifying and serving children who typically have been left out of gifted programs. So, I was especially pleased to help NAGC continue its commitment to and focus on under-identified and under-served gifted students. Our summit on low-income, high-ability learners in 2012 brought together scholars, practitioners, policy-makers, and state leaders to share knowledge about best practices for these and all under-represented gifted students. It resulted in the [Unlocking Emergent Talent report](#), which was distributed widely and has attracted the attention of other national education organizations. I have had the pleasure of sharing the contents of this report with many groups, including preparing an article for the National Association of Secondary School Principals. I am most grateful to Jane Clarenbach who has been my writing partner during my presidency.

Finally, I have acquired a stronger voice for supporting gifted students and gifted education. My belief in the importance of engaging in discussions about fundamental issues in the field was reinforced through the many email and face-to-face conversations I had with other gifted educators. Not surprisingly, the presumption of opposing views was typically shattered as these discussions yielded significant areas of agreement and common ground. I look forward to continuing to have these kinds of interactions and hope many others will engage in them also. I think it is vital that we avoid dissolving into “camps” in our field — but rather work to understand different perspectives and recognize shared beliefs and commitment.

Despite the sluggish economy and the discouraging political discourse in our country, NAGC did not stand still. We moved forward, responding to current challenges, making progress where we could, and preparing for a brighter future. We continue to look inward by asking ourselves if our current definitions and models serve all gifted students well. We also looked outward, identifying partners who share our

commitment to the talent development of all high-potential learners. We must continue our external and internal reviews, as they are vital to the growth and impact of our field — a field that is even more important to the economic health and security of our nation. Though my term as president is over, I will continue to work with NAGC to make sure that gifted education has a louder voice in shaping educational policy and practice in our nation.

I have been invigorated by the commitment and energy of the NAGC staff, our volunteers, and my fellow board members. My own commitment has been renewed, and my enthusiasm and resolve strengthened. Thank you all so much!!