Addressing Career Needs of Future Ph.D's

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APSA co-sponsored the "National Convocation in Science and Engineering Doctoral Education" hosted by the National Academy of Sciences, the National Academy of Engineering and the Institute of Medicine on June 15, 1996. APSA joined with the national associations for the natural and physical sciences, mathematics, other social sciences, and higher education to support this event entitled "From Discussion to Action: Meeting the Needs of Future Generations of Graduate Scientists and Engineers." This convocation was designed to follow up on a 1995 report from the Committee on Science, Engineering and Public Policy (COSEPUP) entitled, "Reshaping the Graduate Education of Scientists and Engineers" and published by the National Academy Press. The report is a response to decreasing grant support for scientific research and the decline of jobs in academic research institutions.

The convocation featured an array of roundtables, panels and poster sessions. Charles Johnson, chair of the political science department at Texas A&M, presented a poster on his department's initiative for preparing graduate students to teach undergraduates. His work was also cited in a roundtable on "New Strategies Being Undertaken in the Science and Doctoral Education System."

Presenters encouraged faculty to inform graduate students about alternatives to careers in research and urged faculty to prepare students for professional responsibilities other than research. Faculty and graduate students both urged students to become informed about a wide range of jobs, non-academic as well as academic, teaching and administrative as well as research related. Students expressed concerns about the future of the profession and argued that they lack adequate reference materials and preparation to explore alternative careers. Alternative careers that were discussed include pre-college teaching, public/governmental agencies, professional associations, interest group/advocacy associations, scientific writing/journalism.

References

"Careers '95: The Future of the Ph.D." 1995. *Science*. 270 (October 6): 121–149.
"Reshaping the Graduate Education of Scientists and Engineers," 1995. COSEPUP. Washington. National Academy Press.

The National Convocation on Science and Engineering Doctoral Education: A Participant's View

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The National Convocation on Science and Engineering Doctoral Education offered me an opportunity to see a variety of scientific disciplines coping with the prospect of reducing federal funding and increased attention to teaching activities. The Convocation brought together representatives from the natural, biological, medical, and the social sciences to discuss innovations in graduate education in the light of these changes at the national level.

I presented a poster at the session entitled "Department Commitments to Graduate Education" which discussed several initiatives undertaken by our department to strengthen graduate education at the doctoral level. The poster highlighted three features of our PhD program aimed at producing competitive graduates—(1) intensive mentoring experiences, (2) professional experiences, and (3) exposure to the discipline. Each of these initiatives represented important choices by the department—choices that we support with resources consistent with their priority.

Mentoring Experiences. The PhD program at Texas A&M is sufficiently small and the faculty sufficiently large that students work on scholarly projects from the very outset of their graduate study. Key to this approach, which emphasizes individualized mentoring of students, is our graduate assistant assignment process that matches student interests to faculty research projects. Graduate assistants receive assignments to faculty in their subfield for experiences in research and teaching. Faculty assume a full range of mentoring responsibilities, including the pursuit of jointly authored professional papers and publications, as well as the provision of teaching experiences in the faculty members courses. Significantly, none of the assistants have teaching assistant responsibilities for discussion sessions or individual courses, and they do not assume responsibility for individual classes until they are well advanced in their dissertation research.

Professional Experiences. The graduate program's substantive and methodological seminars are supplemented by experiences intended to broaden professional experiences by the students. Central to these experiences is a formal seminar taught by the Director of Graduate Studies on professional activities. This mandatory one hour seminar taken in the first year of graduate work covers such topics as teaching responsibilities (e.g., approaches to teaching and designing a course), journal publishing, professional meetings and conferences, grant opportunities, and professional ethics. This seminar is supplemented with professional activities pursued as graduate assistants or in collaboration with faculty on scholarly projects.

Exposure to the Discipline. The graduate program makes a special effort to introduce graduate students to scholars and scholarly interests beyond an already large department. Additionally, graduate students receive funding to attend conferences at which they present papers that result from mentoring and professional experiences in the department. We also underwrite a speakers program to bring major scholars to campus for virtually every graduate seminar. These activities underscore commitments to scholarship and broaden the field of view for doctoral students as they prepare to join the discipline.

The *departmental* thrust of these commitments contrasted sharply with many of the doctoral programs represented at the Convocation. Participants at the meeting often described doctoral programs centered around individual laboratories or small

groups of faculty in highly specialized areas. Not surprisingly, these programs tended to produce narrowly focused scientists with strong orientations to research and little knowledge about teaching or other professional activities. To the extent that participants at the Convocation agreed on the future of graduate education, there seemed to be a feeling the future required greater departmental responsibility for graduate education and a broader range of professional experiences to prepare students for a full range of opportunities.

Civic Education for the Next Century: A Task Force to Initiate Professional Activity

Editor's Note: The APSA Council approved a proposal submitted by President Elinor Ostrom to create a Task Force of the American Political Science Association on Civic Education for the Next Century. This is the statement from President Ostrom about the need for political science involvement in civic education.

Serious and shocking questions about the present and future status of American democracy have recently been posed by several reflective political scientists (Putnam 1994, 1995; V. Ostrom 1991, forthcoming; Sandel 1995; Crozier 1984; Elshtain 1995). Robert Putnam identifies one of "the urgent problems of contemporary American public life" (1995: 664) as "America's stock of social capital has been shrinking for more than a quarter century" (1995: 666). Vincent Ostrom diagnoses one source of the problems as the emergence of a new "Newspeak and Doublethink" and concludes that "we in the United States and peoples in other areas of the world confront serious intellectual and cultural crises that place the future of human civilization at risk" (forthcoming, 4).

These deep concerns about the viability of democracy in America are in marked contrast to the perceptions of Alexis de Tocqueville when he visited the United States in the early 1830s. Tocqueville described democracy in America at that time as "the great experiment of

the attempt to construct society upon a new basis. . . ." (Tocqueville [1835] 1945, I: 25). He attributed the maintenance of democracy over the first half decade of our existence to three factors, the first of which was "the manners and customs of the people" (I: 288).[1] The customs of local self-organization and civic engagement, and of developing a rich pattern of local civic associations, made the system work without the kind of tutelary power found at that time in most European political systems.

Civic engagement and association can be thought of as at the core of what it means to be a democracy:

> How people conduct themselves as they directly relate to one another in the ordinary exigencies of life is much more fundamental to a democratic way of life than the principle of one person, one vote, majority rule. Person-to-person, citizen-to-citizen relationships are what life in democratic societies is all about. Democratic ways of life turn on self-organizing and self-governing capabilities rather than presuming that something called "the Government governs" (V. Ostrom, forthcoming, 4).

This capacity for civic engagement and for the knowledge and use of what Tocqueville called the "science of association," has been shown in a wide diversity of recent empirical research to be closely associated with improved education, lower crime rates, higher employment and economic performance, and better performing governments (Putnam 1994).

Recent research has also shown, participation in many forms has declined dramatically and there is a substantial difference in the level and kind of participation among younger versus older citizens (McManus 1996). Civic engagement and association has steadily fallen in the United States over the past several decades.

> Beyond the familiar falloff in electoral turnout, many other forms of political participation have also declined significantly over the last two decades, at the same time that political alienation and distrust in public institutions has climbed. Moreover, participation has fallen (often sharply) in many types of civic associations, from religious groups to labor unions, from women's

clubs to fraternal clubs, and from neighborhood gatherings to bowling leagues. Virtually all segments of society have been afflicted by this lessening in social connectedness, and this trend, in turn is strongly correlated with declining social trust. (Putnam 1994: 1).

These disturbing patterns have many putative causes. Putnam examines a large number of potential reasons and discards many as being unrelated or spurious. He cannot, however, discard the impact of television on the privatization of American life. The advent of wide-spread ownership of television during the decades of the 1950's corresponds to the beginning of the decline of civic engagement. Increased daily viewing of television is negatively associated with group memberships across all levels of education (Putnam 1995). Not only do Americans watch an ever increasing number of hours of television in their own homes as each decade passes, but the locus of TV coverage is disconnected from the communities in which Americans live. A visitor from Mars who did no more than watch the nightly news might never gain an understanding that the United States was a strong federal system and that local communities have substantial autonomy and capabilities to cope with local problems.

Vincent Ostrom (forthcoming) points to the way that the language of authority relations has evolved in the media, in our professional publications, and in our textbooks as a complementary factor leading to a decline in citizen efficacy and involvement. Reified abstractions including the State, the Society, the Nation or even the Unemployed, the Homeless, and the Elite pepper the language of both professional political scientists and in the nightly TV news. Oversimplified abstractions and explanations do not provide citizens with the kind of knowledge and tools they need to continue the process of reconstituting a democratic way of life in the everyday life they face. A recent story on public radio described the actions of a school teacher in a community suffering industrial pollution who had all members of her grade school class write to the President of the United