

The “Mark of Distinction” Recognition Program for NSPRA Chapters

Entry Form

(Please include this information with each individual entry)

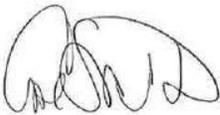
Chapter Name: _Illinois Chapter of the National School Public Relations Association
Chapter President: ___Carol L. Smith
President’s contact information

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Right to Use Materials Statement

On behalf of the Chapter, I agree that NSPRA has the right to use any materials, project/program examples, etc., submitted in this entry in Association print/online publications, on the website, and as “best practice” resources for NSPRA chapters.

Signature of Chapter President:



Application Process Checklist

- Each entry includes this cover form and the Entry Specifics form.
- A single PDF that includes links to related supplemental materials and examples is attached.** (If entering in more than one category, a single PDF for each category entry is attached or sent individually).
- Chapter president has signed the “right to use materials” statement on the entry form.
- Entry is delivered no later than May 15** and sent to awards@nspra.org, subject line “Mark of Distinction.”

Mark of Distinction Entry Specifics

Chapter: Illinois Chapter of the National School Public Relations Association _____

Please complete and include the information below for each individual entry

Section I: Membership Building

- Current number of chapter members _____
- NSPRA-provided membership baseline number as of June 1 _____ ▪
- Number of chapter members who belong to NSPRA as of April 30 _____

Section II: Special Focus Areas

Category A – chapter has less than 50% NSPRA membership

Category B – chapter has 50% or more NSPRA membership

1. Professional Development/PR Skill Building

2. Special PR/Communication Program, Project or Campaign

One-time project/program (completed within a single year)

Continuing annual project/program (repeats each year; demonstrate new/improved/revised components)

Multi-year project/program (one-time only with defined start and end dates)

Multi-year phased project/program (components implemented in clearly defined phases each year)

3. Coalition-Building/Collaborative Communication Effort



National School Public Relations Association Mark of Distinction Recognition Program

2021 Application

Illinois Chapter of the School Public Relations Association / inspra.org

Section II - Special Focus Areas Multi-year phased project/program

Overview

As school communications professionals from our the nation created messages of solidarity and unification in the wake of the murder of George Floyd, it became apparent to the INSPRA leadership that it was our duty to create a plan for Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion within our own chapter. We believe that in our role as school communicators, we need to be at the forefront of this conversation as a means to support the 2 million children who attend public school in Illinois.

Background

During our summer 2020 retreat, members of the INSPRA Board committed to being more inclusive, showing up, making a difference for all the members we serve, and becoming a stronger organization through the creation of an Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion Task Force. In the message to members in July, INSPRA president Carol Smith wrote, “As we looked around the Zoom room during our Board meeting, the lack of diversity hit us in the collective face. I am determined to engage a group of communicators who represent diversity in race, ethnicity, gender identity, sexual orientation and ability to be part of the important work we must do.”

That newsletter also included a survey (attached) we asked members to complete about their willingness to be part of the equity journey on which we were about to embark by serving on an Equity Task Force. During the 2020-2021 school year, the committee’s work would be to:

- Develop strategies to help INSPRA members use our influence to promote social justice and equity;
- Seek out speakers and other educational opportunities to inform INSPRA members;
- Create and aggregate resources that can be shared with INSPRA member districts;
- Rewrite the INSPRA bylaws to include a statement related to equity;
- Create a Diversity Engagement position on the INSPRA Board and a job description and;
- Make additional recommendations to the Board.

Twenty members applied to serve and 12 were chosen to be part of the task force. The members of the Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion Task Force met for seven months in an effort to promote and discuss equitable practices that are relevant to the role of a school communications professional.

In order for INSPRA members to prioritize equity in their work within their school district, INSPRA, as an organization, must prioritize diversifying the member base and prioritize equity.

NSPRA presenter Natalie Nash is a resident of Illinois. We asked her to co-chair the Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion Task Force and to also be a guest speaker for our Tips and Tactics session in January (marketing message attached).

"Say What?!" A Positive Framework for Conversations About Race & Equity, presentation by Natalie A. Nash, MSC, Crete-Monee School District 201-U Director of Communications and Trinette Marquis, Owner of SchoolPRPro."

We reached out to members of other state associations such as Illinois Association of School Business Officials (IASBO), Illinois Association of School Administrators (IASA), and Illinois Association of School Boards (IASB) and invited their members to join for the session.

Since the fall, Dr. Seth Chapman (past IASBO president) and Carol Smith (current INSPRA president) have collaborated on ideas about ways to engage members in this important work. Because they have also launched an Equity Task Force, Dr. Chapman joined us for the presentation. Members of two other organizations appreciated the offer and felt that it was a worthy session but they had prior commitments and were not able to attend.

Going Forward

In the spring when we held board elections, we were happy to welcome two new members who have not previously been in leadership positions. Their unique perspectives as not only dedicated school communications practitioners, but also women of color will assist our board in our equity journey.

The Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion Task Force made the following recommendations to ensure the work to systematically make changes to further promote equity within the INSPRA chapter continues:

Recommendations for consideration (in Italic)

1. Make a commitment to equity by voting to amend several goals in the strategic plan as follows:

Goal 1: Provide at least 10 meaningful professional development opportunities in school public relations/communication strategies each year.

Action: Add a strategy that says “Ensure at least one Tips & Tactics workshop each year focuses on equity.”

- *We need to ensure that this topic is one of the options in the survey to membership.*
- *Provide, at cost, a diversity training (ie SEED Project or Beyond Diversity) for INSPRA members that might be tailored to communications professionals*

Goal 2: Increase INSPRA’s membership base to at least 180 members by June 2021.

Action: Add a strategy that says “Prioritize diversifying the member base to reflect the diversity of our state.”

- *Tactic: Have the Equity Committee conduct research to determine barriers for participation for individual practitioners as well as school districts. Survey non-member districts.*
- *Tactic: Examine fee structure and geographic locations as possible issues.*
- *Tactic: Consider diversity of age by providing opportunities for student members and actively recruiting students to better reflect their voice.*

Goal 3: Expand and enhance partnerships with other organizations to support INSPRA’s mission and goals.

Action: Add a strategy that says “Contact organizations with a focus on equity, looking for partnership opportunities that benefit both organizations.”

Goal 5: Provide quality communications & communication resources, as demonstrated by 75% of respondents on the annual survey indicating that INSPRA's communications meet their needs.

Action: Update the first strategy as follows:

Annually share with members with at least 12 timely resources/best practice examples through multiple communication outlets to help them improve their practice in school communications or to recognize and draw public attention to best practices. *Ensure at least one of those examples each year relates to work that school districts are doing to promote equity in their schools.*

2. Make a commitment to equity by voting to amend the bylaws as follows.

Article 2: Objectives

Add an objective affirming INSPRA's commitment to equity in our association and in our schools.

Article 4: Membership

Change the student classification to be inclusive of students of any ages, including high school and college students, not just graduate-level students. The bylaws currently define students as "currently enrolled in a graduate course leading to licensure or degree in school leadership or public relations communication programs."

Article 6: Officers/Executive Committee

Add a Vice President of Equity position. In addition, the bylaws currently allow for the INSPRA President to appoint non-voting advisory members to the executive committee for one-year terms with the approval of the Board. We recommend that the Equity position be appointed, until such a time that the bylaw amendments can be approved.

Article 7: Board of Directors

Add Equity Committee to the list of standing committees with the VP of Equity serving as the chair of that committee.

The Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion Task Force has worked to create an Equity Toolkit to provide INSPRA members a baseline understanding of terminology and resources. However, we know that this is not enough. The INSPRA equity committee feels that it is critically important that equity be ingrained in the fabric of INSPRA rather than just forming a committee. The recommendations above are not exhaustive and will evolve as involvement and understanding in this work increases.

The Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion Task Force will be working with the leadership that takes over on July 1, 2021 to follow the process to get the bylaws changed, including taking the recommendations to the NSPRA Board and the INSPRA membership with a goal of implementation by April 2022. The following is the timeline for implementation.

1. Draft bylaws changes - March 2021
2. Get approval from the INSPRA board - June 2021
3. Send to Mellissa Braham, NSPRA Associate Director, at mbraham@snpra.org for review to be sure they don't violate national policy (provide a red-lined version and rationale for changes)
4. NSPRA staff will present the final proposed changes to the NSPRA Executive Board for approval at their meeting on July 8-9
5. Once the NSPRA Executive Board has approved the proposed changes, then the chapter proceeds with a vote for approval by its full chapter membership
6. The membership must have 30 days notice before the vote is to take place with the details of the bylaw change and the rationale. This can be emailed to the membership
7. When the vote is taken after the 30 day notice, a two-thirds majority of those present are required for approval. Record the vote count. Voting on bylaws may not be made electronically
8. Once approved, update the original, and record the change at the bottom of the bylaw document

Finally, the INSPRA board engaged in meaningful and deliberate conversations about our role in advancing equity work not only in our organization but in our districts, too. In the coming year, we believe that the professional development offered to our membership and creation of an Equity, Diversity and Inclusion board position will enable us to make a difference for public school students in Illinois.