

As a first generation undergraduate student at Radford University, I began my work with children as a youth counselor in a residential home for at-risk adolescents in foster care. While working with at-risk kids, I came to see the school-house as the primary place in which children could find their strengths and learn to cope with personal challenges. For some, I saw that education could also serve as a ladder upon which students could climb above their circumstances, particularly when barriers were thoughtfully removed and meaningful relationships, prioritized. Thus began my interest in school psychology. After attending graduate school at Radford University and earning my Masters of Science in Psychology and Education Specialist degree in School Psychology, I set out to build ladders, make connections, and serve children.

Following the rewarding experience of serving Frederick County as an intern, I was awarded my first position in Carroll County Public Schools, a mixed rural and suburban district with over 25,000 students and a strong school psychology department. School psychologists at the time were typically assigned to two to four schools; I began my career serving three. Advocacy for the profession and systems-level change were running themes in our work, and quickly became my passion. With eyes toward the future of our department and the children of Carroll County Schools, I sought to illustrate to stakeholders the work that could be accomplished with an appropriate school psychologist to student ratio. After proposing a one-school model of service delivery and securing buy-in at the building and the district levels, myself and my colleague were given the opportunity to show the NASP practice model in action. Each of us serve our respective schools, comprised of approximately 400 students, in a full-time capacity. The building-level successes and outcomes have been incredible and the resulting data has impacted hearts and minds in our district; we have even garnered attention for the profession from the local newspaper. This year, a budget request for additional school psychologist positions was made. When meaningful relationships are coupled with visionary leadership, opportunities arise and change is possible.

Concurrently, as I have grown in my role as a school psychologist, I have had the pleasure of growing into a leadership role within MSPA. I began as a graduate student on the Diversity Committee before chairing the Newsletter Committee, where I focused on putting a paper Protocol back into the hands of members and building a graduate student mentorship process. These goals were driven by my desire to ensure that the MSPA board adequately serves and connects to our membership. This year, my role on MSPA focuses strictly on relationship-building. As the co-chair of the Membership Committee, I work on membership engagement; my goals are to engage the board, the membership, and graduate students.

I could not ask for a better time to put my passion for advocacy and my interest in the future of MSPA and this rewarding profession to use as I ask for your vote to serve as your next President-Elect. In a time where we are facing state-wide shortages and a critical lack of diversity within our work-force, as well as seeking to engage students, trainers, and practitioners, I see connection as our antidote. Together, we will build meaningful relationships in order to work toward solutions, foster visionary leadership within our organization, and empower each other to enact MSPA's vision, mission, and strategic plan. I look forward to an opportunity to continue to build relationships around this great state, and to hear your ideas and share some of my own. I am truly grateful for all of your hard work, as well as for your consideration of my request to further serve this association. Thank you.

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