

Welcome to the 2017 NAGC Communication School

Welcome to St. Louis and the 2017 NAGC Communication School. This year's school promises to be another great opportunity for NAGC members to receive training in a variety of communication-related topics and to spend time networking.

Each year the School Planning Committee looks at the post-school surveys to see if we exceeded expectations and to get ideas for the next year's school. I think this year hits a lot of points shared during last year's survey. Be sure to respond to the survey when we send it out, so we can know how we did and to let us know what you want to see in the future.

We also have some terrific plenary speakers this year. BJ Mendelson will be entertaining us at lunch, with his take on social media and its relevance (or lack thereof) in today's communication stream with our audiences. BTW, I've been told that BJ has been known to use a bit of profanity, so anyone offended by that kind of language can exit the meeting after lunch today before he speaks.

Tomorrow, Mark Basnight will share the lessons learned in Charlotte, NC, during a period of unrest in the wake of an officer-involved shooting. Also, tomorrow, we will hear Manley Feinberg II speak about leading with impact.

And in a few minutes we will hear from Ryan McClure, about how state, federal, local, and private organizations worked to communicate about the transformation of the Arch, which is just outside our door here. Speaking of that, there is a walk to the Arch this evening, the \$10 gets you to the top of the Arch, which must have spectacular views.

Members' surveys tell us you want more professional development opportunities. NAGC has partnered with the Universal Accreditation Board to develop an APR+G, which is about a three to five year process. Until the APR+G is available, NAGC members can take the APR test without having to join PRSA.

Over the past two years, our Director of Professional Development, Bethany Hornbeck, has spearheaded the Webinar Wednesday sessions and last year introduced the Encore Webinar series, which featured some of the highest-rated breakout sessions from the 2016 school. Both webinar series have been well-received and if you have not had the chance to check them out, they are archived on our website in the members-only section. Bethany is already hard at work on the rest of this year's Webinar Wednesday series and is planning another Encore Webinar series after this year's school. So be sure to fill out the surveys that indicate which sessions you enjoy the most.

Over the past year, NAGC has made some changes in direction.

You will have noticed that our new website launched last year. This was my own personal project that finally came to fruition and I am very proud of the work of so many people who made it happen.

We are still updating the website and are open to suggestions and any volunteers to help make the suggestions happen. For example, one member suggested an online map, so government communicators across the country can see members near their location. We are working on that as we speak. One upgrade I want to see launched in the next few months is an online networking platform. The tool we choose will also need to allow NAGC to hold online interactive meetings. I would like have quarterly chats with members to get a feel for what you want and need from NAGC. If ANY of you has experience with this, seek me out. I'd love to hear your suggestions.

When you checked in, you were told about the app for this year's school. If you have not already done so, I encourage you to download it. This is the first time we have used an app, and we are experimenting with a free version to see if members find it useful. The free version doesn't offer all the bells and whistles, but does provide an electronic agenda and provides the opportunity for each person to customize their schedule. Let me know if this is helpful or not for future events.

This year NAGC launched a marketing campaign for the first time, I think, since I've been on the Board. Wendy Wagner-Smith (our Marketing Director) and Beth Armstrong

(our Executive Director) worked closely to identify the right group of people to target and Wendy worked closely with the other board members to craft the marketing messages. We got great response to these messages and picked up new members and some member renewals as a result.

We took the unusual step of sending out a press release to advocate for professional government communicators and how we can help during times of transition. We are actively looking for ways to raise the profile of professional government communicators, and to stress the importance of the work we do. NAGC will be tooting your horn, so your managers understand the value of the profession, and that an ever-changing communication landscape requires on-going training in an effort to stay ahead of the curve.

We will be reaching out to you for lessons learned, and best practices so we can rebuild our resources available to members. Share your successes with your counterparts.

In order for NAGC to meet the needs of our members, we need to know what they are. I want to build a membership that is engaged and interactive. Only then can we, as an organization know that we are meeting the needs of YOU, our members. I encourage all of you attending today, to stay engaged. Once our website provides the ability to interact online-my hope is that member engagement will increase.

There are always opportunities to become more involved. When the board met on Monday, I asked each member to give me one project they would like to complete in the upcoming year. We put together a list of those projects, which is available at the registration desk. I urge you to check out the list and volunteer to help get these projects completed. If you get home and decide you want to sign up, the list will be on our website

NAGC consists of federal, state, local, city, tribal, and affiliate members. Over 60 percent of our membership are non-federal government communicators. We are spread across the globe and we are spread thin. But we are not alone. That is what NAGC is all about.

If you see something you like, or don't like, let one of the board members know. We all have a ribbon that identifies us as members of the board. More than anything else, I want each and every one of you to make the most of this year's school, and enjoy your time in St. Louis.