To: MPSA members  
From: Sarah Binder, MPSA President  
Re: Updates from the August 2019 MPSA Council meeting  
September 12, 2019

I am writing to update you on recent steps taken by the MPSA Council (at its meeting during APSA) to strengthen the association’s commitment to promoting equality and transparency and enforcing the highest standards of ethical behavior within the discipline.  
First, the Council unanimously voted to adopt a proposal that creates the [MPSA Committee on Professional Ethics](https://www.mpasanet.org/ethics) (COPE) to enforce the association’s codes of conduct. COPE is charged with transparently and equitably addressing complaints of ethical problems, personal abuse, and/or retaliation allegedly caused by political scientists during their professional capacity at the MPSA. Activities include the investigation and adjudication of complaints and counter-complaints made by: 1) MPSA conference participants regarding the ethical conduct of other conference participants; and 2) members’ complaints about the volunteers or leaders in the MPSA (including *AJPS* editors, staff and editorial board members) who are operating in their professional capacities. COPE is informed by APSA’s [Ethics Guide](https://www.mpasanet.org/about/ethics) (2012) and responds to complaints relating to MPSA’s [Anti-Harassment Policy](https://www.mpasanet.org/about/policies), [Council Member’s Code of Conduct](https://www.mpasanet.org/about/policies), and [Policy on Editorial Conflicts of Interest](https://www.mpasanet.org/about/ethics).

I especially want to thank Council members Professor Gretchen Casper of Penn State University and Professor Michelle Dion of McMaster University for their hard work this past summer in researching and drafting the proposal for the Council’s consideration. Gretchen and Michelle consulted widely within and outside the discipline of political science, reviewing policies of several peer organizations and those recommended by members of the Midwest Women’s Caucus and others as best practices. COPE is also informed by the papers included in the special issue on “Me too political science” that appeared in the *Journal of Women, Politics & Policy* (Vol. 40, 2019). I encourage MPSA members to review the extensive procedures detailed in COPE that seek to balance the fulsome consideration of charges of misconduct and the deliberative speed of the process. COPE also details the process for selecting its nine members, including an open call for nominations from MPSA members and MPSA affiliated groups and committees. Suggestions, including self-nominations, for potential COPE members are welcome and can be emailed to [ExecutiveOffice@mpsanet.org](mailto:ExecutiveOffice@mpsanet.org).

Second, the Council unanimously last April voted to create two MPSA status committees to help ensure that MPSA’s programs and events are useful, relevant, and accessible to underrepresented groups in the profession at all levels, from graduate students to faculty. These are the Committee on the Status of Gender and Sexual Minorities in Political Science and the Committee on the Status of Ethnic and Racial minorities in Political Science. Status committee memberships are now set, and members are working to organize and set their agendas. I am very thankful for our colleagues’ enthusiasm about the mission of these committees and for their willingness to dedicate time and energy to these efforts. Supporting the professional development, as well as the fair and equal treatment, of under-represented groups within MPSA, is critical to improving MPSA and fostering a stronger sense of belonging for women, LGBT, and people of color within the association.
Third, the Council took steps in response to concerns about both the cost and organization of the MPSA’s annual meeting in Chicago. As a first step, the Council voted to double the number of fee waivers (from 50 to 100) that MPSA can offer to graduate students and scholars from the developing world. The second step addressed the recent problem of “no-shows” at the MPSA annual meeting. Although surveyed attendees reported that they found the feedback on papers to be valuable, the Council was concerned about the recent problem of individuals reneging on commitments to discuss papers and sometimes even to present their own research. To encourage more responsible, professional behavior, MPSA will adopt a procedure that aims to reduce the frequency of such occurrences and sanctions unexplained no-shows at the annual meeting. Finally, the Council adopted findings and recommendations of a task force charged with examining a complaint that was lodged against certain MPSA members concerning the termination of Professor William Jacoby’s editorship of AJPS in April 2018. The process adopted by the Council in February 2019 for handling the complaint provides for a 14-day period for named parties to the complaint to appeal the decision and/or recommendations. Once the appeals process has concluded, a final report and a related third-party review of the complaint will be made available to MPSA members.

Alongside my fellow members of the MPSA Council, I want to ensure MPSA members that MPSA leaders are fully committed to upholding the highest standards for respectful, professional norms and behavior and fostering an inclusive climate. MPSA takes sexual harassment-- and those who report it-- extremely seriously. Creating and sustaining an environment (including MPSA events, communications, and editorial processes) where victims of harassment, bias, and/or discrimination can voice their concerns without threat of reprimands or reprisals and where violations of professional misconduct will be sanctioned is central to our mission as a professional association.

Please feel free to reach out to me if you have any questions, concerns, or suggestions about these developments and the path forward for MPSA. I also encourage anyone interested in serving on the MPSA Council to get in touch. There will be a formal, open call for nominations before the MPSA nominations committee begins its work early next year to recommend a slate of new MPSA leaders.

Thank you for the opportunity to serve the association this year. Invigorating and institutionalizing MPSA’s commitment to diversity and inclusion and fostering a culture with the highest commitment to professional ethics remain my top priorities as president.

Best,

Sarah Binder
(MPSA President, 2019-20)
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