

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Year 2000 was a milestone for the ARS National Advisory Council for Office Support Professionals (NACOSP). Not only did the Council facilitate the first-ever National Conference for Office Support Staff, but members were highlighted in a video that aired agency-wide on National Secretaries Day. These two efforts served to personalize the members of the Council and the work we are doing for ARS OSPs. With a new level of interaction with OSPs throughout the agency, we feel that the National Council can better facilitate the mutual needs of ARS management and the OSPs with new perspectives, broader goals, and fresh opportunities for the future. The main focus remains--to maintain excellence in program development, career enhancement, and employee dedication to the mission of ARS.

NACOSP projects which extend year to year include: the Home Page, Newsletter, Updates to the Quick Reference Guide, Quarterly Teleconferences, and responses to specific requests of the Agency. The NACOSP HomePage (<http://www.ars.usda.gov/afm/nsac/>) details much of the work of the Council, as well as listing the bios of all members involved. The Home Page also provides a wealth of other information useful to ARS employees and other USDA agencies. The following report includes the activities, past accomplishments, and current and future goals of the National Council and of ARS Organizational Councils as well.

The National Advisory Council for Office Support Professionals delayed holding its annual meeting until fall in order to accommodate the first ever National Conference for Office Support Staff..."Odyssey 2000: Meeting the Challenge." On October 17-19, 2000, the group met in Peoria, IL, at the National Center for Agricultural Utilization Research, which houses the Midwest Area Office as well. While many housekeeping items topped our agenda, several new projects were planned, as well as follow-up on some previous projects.

This Council continues to move forward with energy and enthusiasm for the mission of ARS and the role all support staff play in the Agency. All members are open to new challenges and experiences to enhance their careers and personal development. We must work collectively in identifying, sharing, and implementing the very best ideas and approaches available to efficiently meet the challenge brought on by changes as we look to the next century.

NATIONAL ADVISORY COUNCIL FOR OFFICE SUPPORT PROFESSIONALS

Members of the 1999-2000 Council were:

PHYLLIS DAVIS, NAA
TAMMY DURFEE, PWA
CLARICE FLEMING, AFM
OLGA LEE, NPA
CATHY LONABERGER, OA
LINDA NEUNHAHN, NPS
JANNETTE SHUFORD-REEVES, NAL
KATHY TOWNSON, BA
RUTH TREAT, SPA
TONI WALLS, HRD
SANDRA WARREN, MSA
SABRINA WHITLEY-FERRELL, SAA
LORI WILSON-VOSS, MWA

Former members of the NSAC/NACOSP are:

MARIA ARCHER, NAL
KAY CARR, SAA
CARMELA CARRICK, NPS
JOYCE CRAIG, AFM
JANET FERST, OA
LIBBY FOUSE, PWA
NADINE HIERS, BA
MARCIA JENKINS, MWA
ANGIE MARCHETTI, AFM
ELAINE MCGUIRE, BA
MARY SILVA, NAL
FRANKEE SIMPSON, SAA
JOYCE SMITH, NAA
MICHELLE SNOWDEN, OA
QUEEN SPRIGGS, OA
ANNE STEELE, SPA
CECELIA STORTZUM, HRD
GENEVIEVE SWARTZBERG, MSA
SUE THORNBURG, NPA

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NATIONAL ADVISORY COUNCIL FOR OFFICE SUPPORT PROFESSIONALS

ANNUAL MEETING

Because of activities surrounding the NACOSP-sponsored National Conference for Office Support Staff, "Odyssey 2000: Meeting the Challenge," the annual meeting normally held in May had to be postponed until October 2000.

NACOSP met October 17-19, 2000, at the National Center for Agricultural Utilization Research, Peoria, IL. NCAUR also houses the Midwest Area Office, and we were pleased to meet with Dr. Adrianna Hewing, Director, Midwest Area and Dr. Nelson, Associate Director, Midwest Area. Dr. Hewing and Dr. Nelson gave the council an overview of the Midwest Area (MWA) and their programs.

The Council spent a large portion of the meeting revising the charter to address several issues that have arisen concerning length of terms, membership, and leadership duties. One major change is that the Secretary to the Administrator would serve as a permanent ex-officio to the NACOSP, with voting and attendance rights. This will maintain the vital link between the Council and the Office of the Administrator. At the same time, we received a suggestion from the respective organizational councils that the AFM, the NPS, and the personnel from the Administrators Headquarters Council located in Beltsville combine to form a new council with two representatives on the NACOSP. The charter was revised to accommodate this request, pending approval by the leadership of the affected organizational units.

Other discussion centered on the ARS Secretarial Videos Training, development of a NACOSP brochure, updating of the Quick Reference Guide, and a project for National Secretaries Day.

NACOSP meet briefly with the NCAUR secretaries for an informal discussion session, and we were provided with a tour of the NCAUR facilities.

The next annual meeting will be hosted by Sabrina Whitley-Ferrell and the SAA Council, in Athens, GA, in early May.

Outgoing members were presented with tokens of appreciation. Leaving us are Olga Lee, NPA, and Sandra Warren, MSA. Olga is being replaced by Kathleen Aragon, Laramie, WY; Sandra's replacement is Brenda Aysenne, Houma, LA.

The group met briefly following the Conference, and some interim goals were developed.

ACCOMPLISHMENTS

Priority Training Guide

The Priority Training Guide developed during the previous year is still undergoing review by the staff of HRD. Future efforts will focus on working with HRD to accomplish a portion of these identified training goals.

The NACOSP objective for this project was to establish standard secretarial training on some issues for use across the board in ARS. Such a program will enable ARS secretaries to increase their knowledge and make them more effective.

In developing this list of training issues, we took the perspective of a new secretary, i.e. what information is most important to quickly become familiar with routine functions and what tasks are likely to be encountered next? Where possible, we have utilized or made reference to existing training materials. We have specifically avoided systems software training that should be developed and provided by other persons or groups. The majority of these training issues have been recommended for video presentations – this will allow the information to be available at locations whenever needed.

Home Page

The Home Page is constantly being reinvented and reorganized. Updates and additional changes to be included for the future are:

- Directives to Policies & Procedures
- Linking throughout the Page
- Color Changes
- Bios for Members
- Quick Reference Manual

Newsletter

The NACOSP Newsletter is published on a nonrecurring basis as information is disseminated. Suggested articles for upcoming newsletters include:

Computer Tips

Annual Meeting Highlights

News from Organizational Councils

“Headquarters Secretary of the Year Award” winner

Teleconference Calls

Quarterly calls were held to discuss issues and plan methods and processes towards achieving the goals set.

Secretaries Day 2000 Video

“We’re Here for You” was the title and theme of the NACOSP video the aired Agency-wide on National Secretaries Day, April 26, 2000. ARS Administrator Dr. Floyd Horn introduced the segment, HRD Director Jim Bradley lent his support in a follow-up. The video used members of the Council to highlight four basic areas where NACOSP has worked to help the ARS Office Support Professionals: new employee orientation, career satisfaction, recognition, and networking. Thus the video served to recognize ARS secretaries and office support staff on their special day, as well as giving visibility to the individuals making up the Council and the work they are doing.

Year 2000 National Conference for ARS Office Support Staff

The first-ever National Conference for ARS Office Support Staff was held May 1-4, in Hunt Valley, MD. The Conference was entitled “Odyssey 2000: Meeting the Challenge,” and was charged with providing participants an opportunity to: 1) share information, including how to work together to support the ARS mission; 2) learn ARS’ vision for the next century and the role of the support staff in that vision; 3) network with peers, and 4) participate in appropriate training to ready ourselves in the changing technical environment.

The 150 attendees were selected from within the twelve organizational units through a quota system, thus all sectors of field, area, and headquarter offices were represented. The Conference format offered both general sessions and breakout sessions in which participants were allowed to select the topics that most interested

them. Handout materials from all sessions were provided to all participants. The opening reception and both the luncheon and banquet were designed to encourage the maximum opportunity for interactions with attendees from diverse backgrounds. In addition, several organizational councils sponsored booths highlighting their council activities; additional booths were sponsored by HRD, Information Division, and the National Agricultural Library. Immediately following the Conference, an optional tour of BARC, NAL, and GWCC was available, and about a third of the attendees participated.

Participants were asked to complete an evaluation of the individual sessions/events and the conference overall. This provided us with positive feedback for our presenters, for the Administrator, and for NACOSP to use in planning future conferences. In all, responses were enthusiastic and highly favorable. Participants felt the conference was timely, well-done, and provided valuable information that will help them perform their duties. They especially noted the quality and stature of the presenters, and were encouraged about their roles within ARS because these people were willing to take the time to both present information and be available for interactions with the group.

NACOSP will begin work on a second conference, to be held in about three years.

FY-01 GOALS

- Follow up on issues expressed during the National Conference.
- Update the NACOSP Home Page, Newsletter, and Quick Reference Guide.
- Monitor the Trademark Project and provide Dr. Horn feedback on its implementation.
- Continue with review and implementation of the Priority Training Guide, and expand on newly identified areas for training.

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SECRETARIAL RECOGNITION PROGRAM

Winners for 1999/2000 are:

Headquarters Secretary of the Year, Sherri Buxton, Office of the Area Director, Peoria, IL.

AFM Secretary of the Year, 1999, Kathleen M. Dowell, Secretary for the Branch Chief, Employee Relations Branch, HRD, AFM, Beltsville, MD.

Midwest Area Secretary of the Year, 2000, Georgetta Stonewall, Peoria, IL

Pacific West Area Secretary of the Year, 2000, Barbara "Barbie" Ballengee, Shafter Research Station, Shafter, CA.

South Atlantic Area Secretary of the Year, 2000 was Rhonda Harper, Office of Area Director, Athens, GA.

Southern Plains Area Secretary of the Year, 2000, was Lola Albright, Dale Bumpers Small Farms Research Center, Booneville, AR.

REE SECRETARIAL AND CLERICAL COORDINATING COUNCIL

The REE-SCCC continued efforts for sharing information and improving communication among the secretarial and clerical employees throughout the REE mission area.

ORGANIZATIONAL SECRETARIAL ADVISORY COUNCILS

ADMINISTRATIVE AND FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT

Members of the 1999-2000 Council included:

Melissa Goodloe – Chair
Ann Bykowski
Dorothy Marshall
Deadra Perry
Linda Simpson
Clarice Fleming - Technical Advisor

Accomplishments

- Participated in the National Secretarial Advisory Council Odyssey 2000 Conference in Hunt Valley, Maryland.
- Provided a display booth at the National Secretarial Advisory Council Conference.
- Hosted a reception and a tour of George Washington Carver Center for the Odyssey 2000 Conference participants.
- Participated in procuring the NACOSP conference site.
- Held a viewing of the National Secretarial Advisory Council video “We’re Here for you” on April 26, 2000.
- Made changes in officers due to staff changes.

Goals

- Currently have a team working on updating the AFM Correspondence Samples and Reference Manual “The Pink Book”.
- Currently working in conjunction with Mary Haley to design a sample congressional letter.
- Continue holding bi-monthly Brown Bag Lunches for AFM secretaries.
- Design a council Web-Site.
- Recruit for new members.
- Hold election of officers.
- Restructure the council format.
- Recommend that AFM Secretarial Council participate in the New Employees Orientation Program. This would allow the council to provide information to incoming secretaries.
- Obtain approval to be included in the rotation schedule on the AFM Deputy Administrator’s bulletin board to feature Council information.
- Recommend having a daily start-up running reminder notice to update your voice-mail message.
- Recommend designing a proto type such as “Ask Jeeves” web-link to help locate information faster.
- Recommend designing an AFM Division E-Mail suggestion box.

BELTSVILLE AREA

The Beltsville Area Secretarial Advisory Council (BASAC) was established by Dr. K. D. Murrell, Area Director, in March 1995. Presently, BASAC has six council members, six alternate members, and one representative to the National Advisory Council for Office Support Professionals. The Council holds two semi-annual seminar/workshops for the Beltsville Area Office Support personnel and meetings of the Council are held monthly. Current members of the Council are:

BASAC Voting Members:

Sheila Messineo, Beltsville Human Nutrition Research Center (BHNRC), Senior Co-Chair
Cindy Hanna, Livestock and Poultry Sciences Institute (LPSI), Junior Co-Chair
Carol Appelbaum, Facilities Management and Operations Division (FMOD)
Mary Dailey, Plant Science Institute (PSI)
Jenny Mothershead, Natural Resources Institute (NRI)
Sylvia Stephens, U.S. National Arboretum (USNA)
Lora Tanner, Beltsville Area Director's Office
Kathleen Townson, FMOD, Technical Advisor

Alternate Members:

Janice Bradsher, USNA
Sherry Cohen, Beltsville Area Director's Office
Helen Fleshman, BHNRC
Stephanie Lahocki, LPSI
Kristen Sorter, NRI
Vacant, PSI

Accomplishments

- The BASAC Council invited Mr. Dave Carter, Administrative Financial Management, to present a talk on "The Seven Habits of Highly Effective People." The presentation was held at the National Wildlife Center, November, 1999. A self-guided tour of the center was available.
- Revised BASAC Charter in February, 2000, to add alternate members.
- Coordinated, in May, with the Beltsville Area National Representative the travel of 24 Beltsville Area attendees for the first National Conference of ARS Office Support Professionals, "Odyssey 2000: Meeting the Challenge."

- A poster about BASAC was presented at the Annual BARC Field Day held in June.
- The BASAC Council invited Ms. Marva Nesbit, Assistant to the Associate Administrator, Agricultural Research Service to be our guest speaker at the fall BASAC Workshop. She presented a talk entitled “Mirror, Mirror.” The presentation was held at the U.S. National Arboretum, October, 2000. Attendees were invited at the conclusion of the talk to view the “Big Bug” sculpture exhibit.
- The Impact Line consisting of office support personnel with expertise, continues to assist office support peer and new employees in the areas of travel, RMIS, correspondence, and time and attendance preparation.
- The development of a Desk Reference Binder/Procedures Manual is in progress for use by the entire Beltsville Area. Several institute/center binders are being reviewed for ideas. Meetings with the Beltsville Area Management Team proved that full support for this project exists.
- The development of a web page for the Beltsville Area Office Support Staff is being designed and developed with the help of Sheryl Griffith, Beltsville Area Office, and with the assistance of a web page subcommittee.

Goals

- The Council will continue to assemble a procedures manual with up-to-date, comprehensive information to assist office support personnel in the Beltsville Area. A workshop will be held to present the manual when it is completed. The target date for completion of the manual is April 2001.
- The Council will continue to hold two seminars/workshops bi-annually.
- The Council will continue to coordinate special events with the Civil Rights Office and to pursue collaboration with other Beltsville Area organizations. By combining resources with others, BASAC can achieve even greater goals and accomplishments. Also, by collaborating with other established groups, BASAC will become more visible and we will gain increased interest and participation in the Council.

MID SOUTH AREA

Members of the Mid South Area Council for Office Professionals for 1999-2000 are:

Vivian Collins - Stoneville, MS, Chair
Myra Shaw - Oxford, MS, Vice Chair
Linda Althen - Mississippi State, MS
Brenda Aysenne - Houma, LA
Madeline Hall - Baton Rouge, LA
Janell Becker - New Orleans, LA
Pat Hodnett - Auburn, AL
Sandra Warren, Technical Advisor - Stoneville, MS

Accomplishments

- C A “Welcome Package” for new Mid South Area office support personnel was developed. Packages were prepared and distributed to new office support professionals in the Mid South Area.
- C Our mentoring program, “Mentoring for the Millenium,” was implemented with the designation and training of mentors for all Locations in the Mid South Area. Vivian Collins and Madeline Hall met with Research Leaders and office support staff at Mississippi State, MS, to introduce the mentoring program for the Mid South Area.
- C An organizational meeting was held in Stoneville, MS, in March 2000. The name of the Mid South Area Secretarial Council was changed to the Mid South Area Council for Office Support Professionals. The Council had a change in membership. Cynthia Poynor and Patricia Winston became Location Administrative Officers. Janell Becker replaced Pat Winston as the member from New Orleans, LA, and Myra Shaw, representing Oxford, MS, was elected as the new Vice Chair of the Council. Our Training Program Chair distributed to RMIS users copies of the manual *RMIS for Dummies* developed by the Northern Plains Area. Progress reports were presented by committee chairpersons. Special guest, Mr. Archie Tucker, Area Administrative Officer, participated in a round-table discussion. Plans were made for Odyssey 2000. The logo submitted by the Mid South Area was chosen as the logo for this national conference!
- C After months of planning, shopping, and sewing, twelve excited office support professionals represented the Mid South Area at Odyssey 2000. Our goal was to highlight the research of the Mid South Area and share Mardi Gras, cotton,

and Southern hospitality with other office support professionals across the nation. We attained our goal and had a great time in the process.

Goals

- C Develop an Internet home page.
- C Develop newsletter.
- C Complete and distribute MSA Office Procedures Manual.
- C Organize “share and learn” sessions at multi-locations during the year.
- C Continue mentoring program and welcome packages.

MIDWEST AREA

The MWA PASTG met three times in person, and held three conference calls during the past year. Members and the locations they represent for 2000 are:

Sherri Buxton, Co-Chair, Peoria, IL
Sandy Groneberg, Co-Chair, St. Paul & Morris, MN & Madison, WI
Diane Cronk, Ames, IA
Sedina Lowe, Columbus, Coshocton & Wooster, OH & East Lansing, MI
LonaJean Strickland, Urbana, IL & West Lafayette, IN
Jean Sparks, Columbia, MO
Shirley Runge, NCAUR, Peoria, IL
Lori Wilson-Voss, Technical Advisor, Ames, IA

New membership for 2000-2001 will be as follows:

Sherri Buxton, Co-Chair, Peoria, IL
Sandy Groneberg, Co-Chair, St. Paul & Morris, MN & Madison, WI
Diane Cronk, Ames, IA
Sedina Lowe, Columbus, Coshocton & Wooster, OH & East Lansing, MI
Heather Pace, Columbia, MO
Georgetta Stonewall, NCAUR, Peoria, IL
LonaJean Strickland, Urbana, IL & West Lafayette, IN
Lori Wilson-Voss, Technical Advisor, Ames, IA

Accomplishments

- Continue to update the MWA Standard Operating Procedures Manual which was developed and disseminated to all clerical employees. This manual serves as a desk reference for secretarial positions in the MWA. Updates are done during the PASTG meetings to keep the manual current. The SOP is now online and updated at least annually. No hard copies are distributed.
- 2000 marked the fourth year of the MWA Secretary of Year program. Seven highly qualified secretaries were submitted for consideration. A panel unanimously selected Georgetta Stonewall, Peoria, IL. She was honored on July 6, 2000, at National Center for Agricultural Utilization Research.
- The PASTG continued to utilize the mentoring program and all new secretaries are given a mentor for a minimum of one year. This program is having continual success with three mentees and mentors currently working together.
- We continue to disseminate newsletters to all the secretaries in MWA.
- We continue to receive Issues Sheets from MWA personnel. This issues sheet was designed a forum to relay to the Area Directors any concerns or issues that secretarial and support staff have. The issues sheets are available on the PASTG home page.
- The Midwest Area PASTG Home Page has been developed and is updated continuously.
- A training scholarship program has been implemented for use by all employees in the MWA with the exception of Cat I scientists. This program provides funding for training from the Area Office allowing employees to benefit from training that may not be possible due to financial constraints within their units. Twelve people benefitted from this program including a secretary, a computer specialist, 3 technicians, 2 support scientists and an administrative team of 5 people for a total of \$6484. The scholarship application and information is available on the PASTG homepage.

Goals

- Plan and host a meeting for all MWA program administrative support personnel at Peoria in the spring of 2001.
- Assist and mentor through the next year the new MWA Scientific Support Task Group which has been established by the MWA director. This group will consist of MWA Cat III scientist and technicians.
- C Continue to update the Midwest Area PASTG Home Page.
- C Continue to visit the MWA Research sites and interact with location secretaries.
- C Develop training sessions on various components of RMIS (425s, 416/417, 421s etc.)

NATIONAL AGRICULTURAL LIBRARY

The National Agricultural Library (NAL) Support Staff Advisory Council (NALSSAC) continues to work toward its goal of ensuring that NAL has highly skilled professionals working in partnership with management to meet its secretarial clerical and administrative needs.

Council members for 2000:

Penny Seaman, Public Services Division–Chair
Helen Maroulakis, Technical Services Division
Cruz Angelo, Information Systems Division–Recorder
Jannette Shuford-Reeves, Office of Director
Maria Archer, Office of Director, Technical Advisor, REE Council

Departing Members:

Nelsie Jameson, Public Services Division – Former Chair–Retired
Terry Brady, Information Systems Division - Former Recorder
Accepted a position at the National Institutes of Health

Accomplishments

- C Continued to update the NAL Secretarial Handbook with pertinent information.
- C A new travel request and planning worksheet was developed and approved by NAL Management for the purpose of expediting travel arrangements for official travel for NAL Staff.
- C The name change from National Agricultural Library Secretarial Advisory Council (NALSAC) to National Agricultural Library Support Staff Advisory Council (NALSSAC) was approved. This change will better reflect the members of the NAL support staff.
- C Continue our tradition of convening quarterly ‘working’ luncheons to share information with the NAL support staff.

- C The recommendation that departing members of NALSSAC receive award recognition for their work on the council was approved. This was in line with the National Council charter, among others.
- C The NALSSAC and the Professional Leadership Development Group (PLDG) co-sponsored an informative and interesting video presentation on “Humoring your Stress.”
- C Three office support professionals from NAL were chosen to attend the National Advisory Council for Office Support Professionals Year 2000 Conference held May 1-4, in Hunt Valley, MD. NALSSAC had an exhibit booth at the conference.
- C A NALSSAC logo and brochure were developed.

2001 Goals

- C Continue to update the NALSSAC Handbook, to include information developed for the building renovation, such as new floor plans and enhanced safety and security implementations.
- C Create a NALSSAC website linked to the NAL and ARS websites to encourage better communication between councils.
- C Establish a shadowing/mentoring program for new office support professionals at NAL to review in-depth activities at NAL, such as budget procedures, programs and services, etc.

NATIONAL PROGRAM STAFF/OFFICE OF THE ADMINISTRATOR

Accomplishments

- C The National Program Staff Support Personnel Handbook was developed and distributed to NPS support staff.

NORTH ATLANTIC AREA

The 1999-2000 Council of Office Professionals (formerly the Secretarial Advisory Council) for NAA is composed of the secretaries to the Area and Associate Area Directors, the Administrative Officer, the Center Directors at Plum Island Animal Disease Center and the Eastern Regional Research Center as permanent members and four rotating members selected from field locations. Current members are:

Diane Koch, Wyndmoor, Pennsylvania – Chair
Joyce Smith, Wyndmoor, Pennsylvania
Prunella Brashich, Plum Island, New York
Phyllis Davis, Wyndmoor, Pennsylvania – Technical Advisor
Denise Madden, Wyndmoor, Pennsylvania
Stephanie Lively, Beaver, West Virginia – Rotating Member
Patricia Coyle, Wyndmoor, Pennsylvania – Rotating Member
Martha Rose, Frederick, Maryland – Rotating Member
Linda Hopp, Wyndmoor, Pennsylvania – Rotating Member

Accomplishments

- The Secretarial Advisory Council has changed its name to the Council of Office Professionals (COP) to better reflect the nature of the jobs of secretarial/administrative community of NAA.
- Mentoring, shadowing and orientation was conducted twice this past year and continues to be an important part of the NAA Council of Office Professional's activities. Orientation has been expanded to include not only secretaries, but other office support staff at our various locations. The orientation includes a session with the Area and Associate Area Directors' secretaries to acquaint new secretaries with the NAA Secretarial Handbook and other available resource materials. This includes an in-depth review of formal and informal correspondence, foreign correspondence and RPES case writeups along with general information and Ethics Orientation for New Employees. Sessions are also scheduled with the Area Administrative Officer and each of the sections of the Area Administrative Office which gives the participants an overview of the different operations within the Area, i.e., Travel, ARMP, Contracts, etc. Training in RMIS is provided with hands-on experience followed by a day of "Shadowing" a secretary in the daily operations of an office. A session on Technology Transfer is also on the agenda to provide background on this important area of ARS Research.

- New secretaries in the North Atlantic Area receive a call from either the Area Director's or Associate Area Director's secretary welcoming them to ARS. This call is made as soon as the Area Office is advised of their reporting dates and serves to advise new secretaries that we have a Council of Office Professionals and that a Member of the Council will be contacting them to assist them in getting acquainted with their jobs. The appointed Member is advised of new secretaries arrival by the Area Director's office and contacts the secretaries to offer assistance in getting started.
- A "New Employee Welcoming Packet" containing a letter from the Area Director, a listing of the NAA Secretarial Advisory Council Members, a brief explanation of the North Atlantic Area along with a list of contact people to enable new secretaries and clerical employees to feel more comfortable in the early days on the job has been implemented and will be continuously looked at for updating and the addition of vital information. In addition, the information in the packet will be reviewed at orientation.
- Planning is underway for the NAA Leadership Meeting which will be held in March/April of 2001. The Council of Office Professionals will be involved in the preparation of a session directly aimed at the secretarial audience.
- Selected members of the Council of Office Professionals, along with secretaries from the various NAA locations, attended the National Secretarial Meeting, "Odyssey 2000 - Meeting the Challenge" in Hunt Valley, MD, May 3-5, 2000. NAA COP prepared a booth showcasing the Council members and the Office Staff Recognition Award from 1999, as posters. Handouts included the announcement of the 2000 Office Staff Recognition Award, brochures on the Council, Resource Personnel, bookmarks listing the Council members, copies of the NAA Orientation Materials and Secretarial Handbook and miscellaneous "goodies".
- The NAA COP is currently revising, for the Area Director's approval, a newsletter which will initially be put out in print, with future editions being put on the NAA COP Home Page (under construction). The newsletter is considered to be a good source of communicating new ideas and changes quickly to the secretarial community. With the ability to communicate electronically with all locations within NAA, the newsletter will now be considered a vital aspect for improved communication.

NATIONAL ADVISORY COUNCIL FOR OFFICE SUPPORT PROFESSIONALS

- The NAA COP made and distributed packets calling for nominations for the “Office Staff Recognition Program” (called Secretary of the Year in other Areas.) The packet contained the announcement of the award, the criteria and nominating procedures, along with colored flyers to be posted at each and every NAA location. Nominations were due to the Area Administrative Officer by June 1. A committee reviewed the nominations and a recommendation was made to the Area Director. Donita Gibboney of the Pasture Systems Watershed Management Research Unit in University Park, PA was selected as the 2000 award winner.
- A brochure describing the North Atlantic Area Council of Office Professionals was prepared and displayed at the May meeting. This brochure details the mission and goals of the NAA COP, along with its guidelines and membership; this brochure will be distributed to all secretarial and clerical employees and their supervisors. It will also be included in the “New Employee Welcoming Packet.”
- Minutes from conference calls/meetings held by the National Secretarial Advisory Council are distributed to all secretarial and clerical employees.
- Minutes from the North Atlantic Area Council of Office Professionals (NAA COP) are shared with all NAA secretaries, clerks, research leaders, and the National Secretarial Advisory Council.

Goals

- Continue to improve and expand the mentoring, shadowing and orientation for new secretarial and clerical employees.
- Set up a subcommittee to review a “draft” of a Home Page for the North Atlantic Area Council of Office Professionals. Initially this Home Page will be part of the NAA Home Page with the expectation that a separate site will be set up in the not too distant future. The Home Page will contain the mission, goals, guidelines, membership, Council Members bios, electronic communications, and valuable links to answer everyday questions.
- Meet and plan for the upcoming NAA Leadership Meeting to be held in March/April 2001. NAA COP will have a face-to-face meeting as well as a joint meeting with the Area’s secretarial staff during this meeting.
- Investigate availability of training opportunities via satellite downlink. There are many organizations that have presentations available which could greatly enhance the role of the secretary.
- An updated listing of Resource Personnel will be distribute to all secretarial/clerical employees in NAA. The brochure that was prepared and distributed at the National meeting in May 2000 needs to be updated to include additional topics and resource personnel.
- A subcommittee is working on a major revision of the NAA Secretarial Handbook. It is expected that this will be distributed some time in January 2001.
- The COP will be setting up a subcommittee to draft a generic position description, for Area Director action, which more accurately reflects the secretarial involvement in both the program and administrative functions of their location. Position descriptions on file now reflect the “secretarial duties” of the position and not the support provided to a Research Unit, etc.
- A Standard Operating Procedures (SOP) guidebook is planned for 2001. The Council will work on providing a guide to supplement the NAA Secretarial Handbook to address some critical, need-to-know information for not only new secretarial employees but to assist others filling in during the absence in these vital jobs.

- An idea previously presented -- to expand our “new” employee orientation -- will be further explored. The basis for the expansion is to assist “new employees” during the initial days on the job, in addition to the formal orientation program now in place.

NORTHERN PLAINS AREA

The Northern Plains Area Secretarial Council (NPASAC) consists of the following members:

Kathleen Aragon, Laramie, Wyoming
Louise Dalton, Fort Collins, Colorado - Chair
Sandy Mathewson, Manhattan, Kansas
Sharon Peterson, Grand Forks, North Dakota - Recorder
Jan Preston, Lincoln, Nebraska
Olga Lee, Fort Collins, Colorado - Technical Advisor

At the end of the fiscal year Kathy Aragon will become our Technical Advisor and new representative for the National Advisory Council for Support Professionals (NACOSP) in place of Olga Lee whose term is ending. Olga will remain on as an ex-officio member. Two other members whose terms are ending will be replaced. The chair and recording duties will be rotated at this time also. The charter was revised April 19. A meeting is planned for early November.

ACCOMPLISHMENTS

- Continued to provide mentoring, orientation, and basic in-house training for all newly hired secretaries and refreshers for those already on board. Through the Colorado-Wyoming Secretaries Meetings at the Ft. Collins location, other locations in the NPA have been encouraged to form similar type groups in order to disseminate information and share work related issues that would benefit all. Sharon Peterson, Grand Forks, has been working with the secretaries at the Fargo location to try and set up a North Dakota Secretarial Council with a goal of sponsoring two training sessions a year. They have already had one training session on Extramural Agreements that was received very well and subjects are being discussed for a future training session.
- Members of NPASAC and other secretaries (16 total) from the NPA attended and participated in activities at the National Conference for ARS Office Support Staff which was held May 1-4 at Hunt Valley, MD. The meeting was extremely well-organized and attendees came away with invaluable information. All speakers were excellent and addressed relevant subjects.

NATIONAL ADVISORY COUNCIL FOR OFFICE SUPPORT PROFESSIONALS

- Through our Technical Advisor and NACOSP member, Olga Lee, we continue to provide support to and receive support from them. Olga will be replaced by Kathy Aragon at the end of the FY.
- The NPASAC members are in the process of updating the NPA Quick Reference Guide. It will be completed by the end of the year and be ready to hand out to the secretaries at the NPA Leadership Meeting in January, 2001.
- The NPASAC members, 3 of whom are on the Committee for planning the NPA Leadership Meeting that will be held in January, 2001, have had direct input to planning the agenda for the secretaries portion of the Meeting.
- The Guidebook, "RMIS for Dummies," that was distributed to secretaries at the NPA Leadership Meeting in January, 1999, continues to be used throughout our Area (and other Areas). It has proven to be an excellent tool, in part because it was developed by users. Marcie Currie-Gross and Peggy Matti of the National Seed Storage Lab in Ft. Collins are still receiving raves for their efforts that have helped many secretaries make sense out of the sometimes puzzling RMIS system.

GOALS

- Continue to provide mentoring, orientation, and basic in-house training for all newly hired secretaries in addition to refresher sessions for those already on board. Refresher sessions will be organized and presented on specific subjects that come up once a year, i.e., ARMPS, or on the RMIS system which is ongoing.
- Continue to provide assistance to the National Advisory Council for Office Support Professionals (NACOSP).
- Promote programs in support of professionalism in the secretarial field.
- Identify and provide outside training courses of particular value to secretaries and continue to encourage networking with peers.
- Review the NPA Quick Reference Guide and issue additions and revisions on a periodic basis.
- Continue to set realistic goals agreed on by the members and rely on feedback for furthering the goals.

- Continue to encourage formation of local secretarial groups.
- Plan and prepare for the Secretarial Session of the NPA Leadership Meeting in January, 2001.

PACIFIC WEST AREA

The PWA Secretarial/Program Support Advisory Council continues to work toward their goal of ensuring that PWA has highly skilled professional office support staff working as part of the location leadership team to meet the program/administrative goals of the Agency. The PWA Council conducted its 2000 annual meeting at the ARS Riverside, California location March 8-9. Previous Council meetings have been held at the following ARS locations: Albany, California; Corvallis, Oregon; Phoenix, Arizona; and Pullman, Washington.

Council members and their positions for 1999-2000 are:

Marla Lawrence, Phoenix, AZ – Co-Chair

Judy Litster, Fresno, CA – Co-Chair

Kara Vander Linden, Kimberly, ID – Recorder

Veronica Cullum, Albany, CA – Area Office Representative

Judy Flynn, Corvallis, OR – Handbook Coordinator

Barbie Ballengee, Shafter, CA – Website/Information Coordinator

Tammy Durfee, Pullman, WA – Technical Advisor

Dr. Arthur Schipper, Associate Director

Area Office Advisor/Coordinator

USDA-ARS-PWA, Albany, CA

ACCOMPLISHMENTS

- PWA Secretarial Council Website created
- Improved PWA Directory (in draft)
- Motivated interest in mentoring program
- Developed survey for “Changing Roles of Secretaries/Program Support Staff” and distributed results electronically.
- Assisted in planning the 1999 Leadership Conference
- Continued to update handbook.

GOALS

- PWA Video Conferencing Project
- Finalize and distribute PWA directory
- Continue to update website (include handbook)
- Continue to motivate interest in the mentoring program
- Recommend implementation of PWA training program

SOUTH ATLANTIC AREA

The South Atlantic Area-Secretarial Advisory Council (SAA-SAC) strives to maintain an urgent Agency goal – To ensure that highly skilled, professional/secretarial support is provided for the Area. To that end, an Orientation/Mentoring Program is in place to provide professionals working in partnership with management to meet its secretarial and administrative needs.

Council members for 2000:

Rhonda Harper, Athens, GA - Chair (2000 Annual Meeting Hostess)
Ellen Whitesides, Florence, SC - Co-Chair
Dalma Dickens, Tifton, GA - Historian
Valeria Malcolm, Gainesville, FL - Information/Training Coordinator/Webpage
Debra Duckworth, Athens, GA - Recorder
Member - Vacant
Member - Vacant
Sabrina Whitley-Ferrell, Raleigh, NC – Technical Advisor

Accomplishments

- The annual Council meeting was held in Athens, GA. The meeting consisted of welcoming new member; updating history, position duties, contact list and Webpage (hot link to SOP); taking pictures and updating bios for SAC Webpage; preparing Accomplishments and Goals for NACOSP Annual Report; and signing charter. Our main thrust was to fill all slots for the Odyssey 2000 National Conference and to assist in manning SAA booth. We submitted recommendations to fill vacant positions on the SAA Council and enlisted guidance from new Area administration.
- SAA Secretary of the Year Award for 2000: Rhonda Harper, Athens, GA

Goals

- Recruit membership to SAA Council.
- Continue ongoing activities.

SOUTHERN PLAINS AREA

NATIONAL ADVISORY COUNCIL FOR OFFICE SUPPORT PROFESSIONALS

Our SPA Advisory Council for Office Support Professionals (ACOSP) met in San Antonio, TX, July 10-11, 2000, for a planning session for this next year. Attending were:

Rayma Cox, Bushland, Texas
Justine Flowers, Little Rock, Arkansas
Rhea Fryar, Lubbock, Texas
Phyllis Hoffman, Temple, Texas
Olivia Pedraza, Weslaco, Texas
Sharon Sheffield, Lane, Oklahoma
Karen Wilcox, College Station, Texas
Ruth Treat, Stillwater, Oklahoma - Technical Advisor

Accomplishments

- Council web page completion and placement on the Area Office's server;
- Completion of a directory of SPA locations (on-line);
- Implementation of an orientation packet for new support staff;
- Implementation of the shadowing program for all support staff;
- Display representing our Council at the Odyssey 2000 National Conference in May;
- Continuation of the ACOSP newsletter; and
- Creating a handbook for secretaries and office support professionals within our area.

Goals

- During the next year, we will continue to fine-tune the above accomplishments, updating information as needed so that support staff throughout the Area are informed of all the latest and greatest changes affecting their job responsibilities.
- While the handbook is still in the draft stage, it is anticipated that this will be forwarded to the Area Office by November for review prior to distribution to all locations.

- During the planned SPA Leadership Conference in Spring 2001, host an evening social or break-out session whereby support staff could mingle with one another.
- Sponsor an SPA-wide contest for design of a SPA ACOSP logo to make us easily identifiable throughout ARS. Winner to be announced at the SPA Leadership Conference and presented with a spot award.
- Develop and implement a scholarship fund for instances where the location may not be able to afford support staff participation in meeting and training opportunities. This program would be similar to the one established by the Midwest Area.
- Recognize the continued Area Office support of SPA ACOSP efforts and activities.

**NATIONAL ADVISORY COUNCIL
FOR OFFICE SUPPORT
PROFESSIONALS**

AND

**ORGANIZATIONAL SECRETARIAL
ADVISORY COUNCILS**

ANNUAL REPORT — 2000

Prepared By

**NATIONAL ADVISORY COUNCIL FOR
OFFICE SUPPORT PROFESSIONALS
AGRICULTURAL RESEARCH SERVICE
U.S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE**

December 2000

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