

The PENNSYLVANIA ASSOCIATION OF STUDENT COUNCILS History
By H. James Finnemeyer

The Pennsylvania Association of Student Councils was created in 1932 under the leadership of Altoona Area High School advisor, Harold Pegg. Begun with a handful of schools in central Pennsylvania, York HS and Coatesville High School in suburban Philadelphia, PASC held its first state conference at Altoona HS in 1934. Additional state conferences were held at Ebensburg HS (Central Cambria today) in 1935, at Kane HS in 1936, at State College HS in 1937, York High in 1938, and Coatesville in 1939, in 1940, in 1941, World War II took its toll on PASC as many advisors and high school seniors enlisted in the armed services. Thus no conferences were held in 1942- 1944. With the end of the war came the renewal of state conferences in 1945 and 1946. New leadership of the association led to a reorganization, creation of an Executive Board of advisors from thirteen geographical districts in the state, and the selection of Paul Landis of Greensburg-Salem High School as the first official Executive Secretary in 1947 at the Greensburg HS state conference. Under Paul Landis' leadership, PASC became affiliated with and supported by the Pennsylvania Association of Secondary School Principals who continues to this day to place two voting members on the PASC Executive Board. The role of PASC grew as state officers were chosen through the elections of schools at state conferences. Officers included a President, First Vice President, Second Vice President, Secretary, and Treasurer. PASC programs expanded in 1952 as a summer leadership workshop was created and held on the campus of Penn State University~. Throughout the 1950's PASC expanded its leadership programs with larger state conferences, the addition of a second workshop with one being held at West Chester University and the other at Grove City College. PASC also became a leading supporter of programs sponsored by the National Association of Student Councils including bus trips by PASC delegations to NASC conferences across the nation, the hosting of the NASC conference at Lower Merion High School in suburban Philadelphia in 1955, and in 1957 at Schenley High School in Pittsburgh, and active participation by the PASC president and Executive Secretary at the annual Williamsburg Student House of Delegates gatherings in Virginia. The 1960's saw a continuation of PASC's active programming including its growing summer workshop programs with the inclusion of a new workshop at Shippensburg University for junior high and middle level students, state conferences in varied locations across the Commonwealth, and the hosting of the 1967 NASC Conference at Abington High School in suburban Philadelphia. The early 1970's saw student unrest and a search for relevance in leadership programs throughout Pennsylvania schools. The

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issues that were raised lead to constitutional changes that in 1973 realigned student representation of the PASC Executive Board eliminating the officer positions except for the presidency and replacing them with seven regional representatives with responsibilities for representation and communications with specific members school based on geographical alignments. This system remains in affect to the present day. 1973 also saw the retirement of Paul Landis as Executive Secretary after 26 years of distinguished service to the student council movement in this state. 1973 saw the selection of Ken Marks, student council advisor at Upper Saint Clair High School in suburban Pittsburgh to be the new Executive Director of PASC. Under the leadership of Ken and our state president, Tom Griffin, PASC became incorporated in Pennsylvania as a non-profit corporation. Through these years of the 1960's and 1970's PASC also became involved with the selection process for the US Senate Youth Scholarship Program created in 1961 by the William Randolph Hearst Foundation. PASC remains actively involved with the Pennsylvania Department of Education in the selection of scholarship recipients.

In May 1977, Ken Marks resigned and moved to a new position in North Carolina. Jim Finnemeyer, student government advisor at North Penn High School in suburban Philadelphia was selected to complete his term. Jim has subsequently been elected by the PASC Executive Board to serve eight three-year terms recently completing his 25th year of service to PASC in that capacity. The late-1970's and early 1980's saw several changes come to PASC programs. Grove City College continued to be the site of the western PASC Summer Leadership Workshop as the eastern site moved to several sites including Bloomsburg University, Eastern College, Lebanon Valley College, and Kutztown University. The workshop program expanded in 1983 with the opening of a central site at Shippensburg University far high school students and the creation in 1984 of an Advanced High School program; the first of its kind in the nation which was located at the Scotland School in the south central part of the state. The 1980's marked two landmark state conferences including the celebration of the 50th Anniversary of PASC at Somerset in 1982 and the 1986 50th PASC state conference hosted by Altoona High School, location of the founding of the association. Attendance at PASC state conferences soared to annual totals of 800 to 1400 delegates. The 1970's and 1980's also saw increased PASC participation with NASC programs including seats on the national executive board by students, advisors, and principals. PASC also organized the selection process for a new national scholarship program known as the Century III Leaders program that operated between 1975 and

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1990. In 1989 Philadelphia was the site of the annual mid-winter meeting of State Executive Directors and National Association of Workshop Directors Conference. However, PASC's greatest involvement on the national scene came in 1985 when Bethel Park High School in suburban Pittsburgh hosted the NASC Conference under the leadership of advisor George Meyer and student co-chairs Kelly Clark and Lisa Schramm. PASC member schools became directly involved as they contributed funds to adopt a NASC member school advisor for the conference opening night advisor dinner held at The Top of the Triangle in downtown Pittsburgh.

The 1990's saw the creation of standing committees of the Executive Board co-chaired by student regional representatives and adult district directors. PASC also created a mission statement and set goals that are reviewed and updated every three years coinciding with the beginning of the Executive Directors term. Other structural changes in the early-1990's included the formalizing of an Assistant Executive Director position, creation of a Publications Coordinator position, and Trip Coordinator position. In the late 1990's the organization recognized the growing importance of programs and resources for middle level students and advisors. The outgrowth of this realization was seen in the creation first of an adult Middle Level Coordinator position and then the selection of two middle level students as voting members of the Executive Board. The summer workshop programs became known as the Blue Workshops for students in grades 7-9 and Gold Workshops for students in grades 10-12. During a three-year period from 1990-1993 the Gold Workshop program was expanded to include a fourth site at Seton Hill College. The 1990's also saw greater concern for the recognition of advisors and students with the inclusion of the Advisor of the Year Program at the district and state level leading to national recognition. In the 1990's Kathy Coll, Andy Costanzo, Polly Hendrickson, and George Meyer were all recognized as the Advisor of the Year in the Mid-Atlantic Region. Outstanding students in the summer workshop programs were recognized as part of the national association's Dale Hawley Awards Program. This decade also saw the creation of several new PASC programs including the Principals-Advisors-Leaders bi-annual one-day conference bringing together school leadership teams for early fall motivation and team building experiences. PASC also began to focus more on leadership training for advisors beginning with the creation of an advisors' summer workshop for graduate credit based on the model of the successful Gold Workshop program for students. That program eventually evolved into the present bi-annual Advisors Weekend Experience held in late February. During this era, the

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association also became more politically concerned about representing student issues at a state level. A Youth Lobbying Day Program began in 1990 that developed into the present annual Youth in Harrisburg Day Program designed to give Pennsylvania students the opportunity to discuss critical issues, develop and debate proposals, and to present their views to the Education Committee of the Pennsylvania House of Representatives. Several innovations occurred with state conferences in the mid- 1990's with the formalizing of a state service project begun as a statewide can food drive at Somerset in 1997. It has included a highly successful Habitat of Humanity fund raising effort (\$88,000) at Governor Mifflin in 1998 that lead to Contributions to H for H chapters in the seven PASC regions and culminated in the building of a PASC Habitat House in Reading. An equally successful book drive for literary for Head Start Programs was initiated by William Allen HS in Allentown in 1999 with the collection of over 1,100 children's books that were distributed statewide. The state conferences of 1995 and 1996 also showed the creativity of PASC as seven small schools of Tioga County combined to host the 1995 state conference using the facilities of Mansfield University. In 1996 Northern Lebanon HS and MS used the barracks of Fort Indiantown Gap for student delegate housing and designed the conference around outdoor experiential programs at several sites in the Lebanon' Schuylkill, and Berks County areas. In the 1990's PASC's involvement with NASC programs continued to show support through the hosting of NASC Area Conferences at Hershey (1993), Valley Forge (1997), and Pittsburgh (1999). In 1998-1999, Ethan Clay of North Allegheny MS served as the NASC Region 2 representative. Again in 1998 PASC played host to the mid-winter meeting of State Executive Directors and the National Association of Workshop Directors Conference in Pittsburgh.

The 21st Century saw membership in PASC rise to over 800 secondary schools in the Commonwealth. PASC has continued to sponsor many of the programs developed in the 1990's. PASC commitment to service also continued with statewide projects including a second Habitat for Humanity fund raising effort (\$135,000) initiated by Hatboro-Horsham HS that earned PASC that association's Golden Hammer Award in 2000. Dallastown HS initiated a Big Brother Big Sister effort collecting \$26,000 in funds but also promoting the establishment of BBBS Chapters by student councils throughout the state, and the 2002 project sponsored by North Penn HS has a goal of raising \$125,000 for the Make A Wish Foundation and granting wishes to at least 14 Pennsylvania young people. Service to others was also seen in the

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community service project initiated at the expanded Advance Gold workshop program now located on the University of Pittsburgh's Johnstown campus. In the summer of 2002, and Advanced Blue Middle level pilot program began also on the UPJ campus that also included a community service component. With the greater use of computers, PASC developed a website under the leadership of Website Coordinator, Dotty Noll, that is recognized as one of the finest state student council websites in the nation. PASC continues its strong involvement at the national level as it continues to send large delegations to national conferences throughout the country and combining them with outstanding pre-conference travel and leadership development experiences under the direction of PASC Assistant Executive Director, Kathy Coll. Kathy has also distinguished herself by her selection to serve simultaneously on the Executive Board of the National Association of State Executive Directors and the Executive Board of the National Association of Student Councils representing in both case the Middle Atlantic Region of the country. In 2000, Kathy took PASC to the international level leading a six-member PASC delegation to the first international student council conference in Australia. Kathy continues to work with others in planning for a similar program in 2004 in Edmonton, Canada. In 2003, PASC will also host a fourth NASC Area Conference as that program returns in March to the 1997 Valley Forge site. 2001 saw national recognition come to our long time Executive Director, Jim Finnemeyer when he was named the Warren E. Shull National Student Council Advisor of the Year at the national conference in Charlotte, North Carolina. As we continue into the 21st Century, the PASC organization of student leaders, adult advisors, and supportive school administrators seeks to continue the long tradition of programs of excellence while looking forward to new opportunities to serve and support the growth of student leaders and their advisors.