

# Membership Spotlight

## Sherri L. Wallace

Sherri L. Wallace is Interim Associate Dean and professor of political science at the University of Louisville, College of Arts and Sciences. Wallace has been an APSA member since 1994.

### How did you learn about APSA? When did you become a member of APSA, and what prompted you to join?

I learned about APSA as an undergraduate political science major at the University of Arkansas at Little Rock. I had the opportunity to attend my first APSA Conference in Washington, DC, as a selected participant in the 1988 second cohort of the Ralph Bunche Summer Institute—a graduate school pipeline program—that was held at Southern University and Louisiana State University in Baton Rouge, LA. This program was the original brainchild of the late Jewel L. Prestage; now, fully transformed and led by Paula D. McClain, APSA President 2019-20, at Duke University. I joined APSA in 1994 near the completion of my doctorate at Cornell University as I prepared for the job market.

### How have APSA membership and services been valuable to you at different stages of your career?

Although I was an unfunded fellow, the APSA Minority Fellowship Program—now the Diversity Fellowship Program—was helpful to me as a student entering graduate school. Association with this program positioned me to receive adequate funding for my graduate study at Cornell University. In the profession, the membership and services have been extremely valuable to me at the different stages of my career, starting with the (e)Jobs career service. To keep abreast or to learn new knowledge, I attend the professional development seminars/webinars, peruse the expansive online publications on the profession, participate in the diversity events/programs and organized sections, read the presidential task force reports, and browse the APSA Educate online library. The latter is the manifestation of an idea that came from when I was a member of the early APSA Teaching and Learning Committee. It has been extremely gratifying to grow and develop as a professional in an accessible and progressive organization like APSA. There are opportunities to network with the dedicated and professional APSA staff and within the numerous organized sections. I've received valuable career advice and mentoring from esteemed and generous colleagues. All of this has led to my ongoing service to the discipline in various leadership roles including membership on the Committee on the Status of Blacks in the Profession, the Executive Council, the Dianne Pinderhughes Presidential Task Force (2007-08), as program chair and co-chair for two Teaching and Learning Conferences (TLC), section chair of the Political



Science Education organized section, and the editorial board for the *Journal of Political Science Education (JPSE)*. Two recent highlights include when John Ishiyama, APSA President 2021-22, invited me to serve as conference program co-chair with Pei-Te Lien for the 2022 APSA Annual Meeting, and my recognition for the Lifetime Achievement Award by the Political Science Education organized section. I am so deeply honored and appreciative of how my membership and service in APSA has shaped my professional career.

### Can you tell us about your professional background and your research?

I have always been a servant at heart, always seeking to find ways to transform situations for the betterment of the community. Early in my career, I focused on policy as a student of the late Theodore J. Lowi, who chaired my dissertation committee. I was interested in enterprise zones—later empowerment zones—because of its promise to transform urban communities that lacked business or economic development. That led to my research and early publications on community economic development policy. As a member of the Committee on the Status of Blacks in the Profession, I co-authored an article on mentoring Blacks in the profession, which ignited my desire to focus on what we now refer to as diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI) to transform our discipline of political science. I co-authored articles with Marcus D. Allen focused on how we teach political science in terms of diversity in college textbooks. This led to my co-authorship with Robert C. Smith on the textbook, *American Politics and the African American Quest for Universal Freedom*, and my development of the accompanying instructional ancillaries. We have also co-published on inequities experienced by faculty of color—who often teach critical and challenging subjects—in student evaluations of teaching. In addition, I worked on a funded project to rethink the undergraduate political science major. My focus on DEI in the profession directed me to consulting work with prominent, national educational organizations and university baccalaureate program reviews.

### Which APSA programs or events would you recommend to people who are not members of the association, and why?

I would recommend to both members and non-members of the association our various diversity programs and the Teaching and Learning Conference (TLC). The Ralph Bunche Summer Institute is a pillar for APSA given the number of Black, Indigenous, Latinx, Asian, and other underrepresented professionals who have earned their doctorates in political science after exposure and participation in the program. Those of us who are “Bunchies” consider ourselves a truly unique

group of scholars, who have not only established co-authorships but also (peer) mentorships/sponsorships and lasting friendships. This legacy program began in 1986 and continues under APSA staff member, Dr. Kimberly Mealy, who connected me to the TLC and who works tirelessly to expand DEI and belongingness in the profession, including the creation of the R.E.S.P.E.C.T. campaign that encourages respectful professional conduct at our annual meetings. I've shared it outside of APSA.

I found my true intellectual home in the Political Science Education and the new Civic Engagement organized sections. These sections are intrinsically connected with the TLC that I thoroughly enjoy because my first love is teaching political science. I also enjoy my memberships in other organized sections, including the Race, Ethnicity and Politics, Public Policy, State Politics and Policy, Urban and Local Politics, Women, Gender and Politics as well. I think the APSA organized sections help to make this large organization of over 11,000 members accessible, navigable, and manageable. It's easy to get to know the colleagues within the profession through the organized sections. I strongly recommend and encourage colleagues to join a section for intellectual stimulation, scholarly collaboration and professional growth.

### Is there anything else you'd like people to know about you or the work that you do?

I would like people to know that my service and focus on DEI helped to sharpen my leadership skills, leading to my current administrative role as interim Associate Dean in the College of Arts and Sciences at the University of Louisville. Though as rewarding as it is difficult, I believe DEI efforts must be intentional and ongoing with representation by all who are committed to the work. I view my work as an opportunity to broaden our competencies to shape an inclusive profession, and I can see the progress at APSA. As I look over my career, I'm extremely grateful to those who came before me to create pathways that opened doors and laid foundations on which I stand. They are the founders and members of the National Conference of Black Political Scientists (NCOBPS), who challenged the early exclusivity of APSA, and later reunited in an active partnership. They are also my colleagues in the profession who understand what the late civil rights activist Ella Baker meant when she stated, "Give light and people will find a way." That's what I do. ■

## BOOKS BY OUR MEMBERS

### *The Paradoxes of the American Presidency*

Thomas E. Cronin, Michael A. Genovese, Meena Bose

Oxford University Press

### *The Modern Presidency: Six Debates that Define the Institution*

Michael A. Genovese

Columbia University Press

### *US Presidents and the Destruction of the Native American Nations*

Michael A. Genovese, Alys Landry

Palgrave Macmillan

### *The Republican Evolution: From Governing Party to Antigovernment Party, 1860-2020*

Kenneth Janda

Columbia University Press

### *A Tale of Two Parties: Living Amongst Democrats and Republicans since 1952*

Kenneth Janda

Taylor & Francis Group

### *The Gun Dilemma: How History is Against Expanded Gun Rights*

Bob Spitzer

Oxford University Press

