NAEP Candidate Nomination Application for Elected Office

The following criteria represents the standard information about potential candidates for elected office required by NAEP’s Nominating Committee. This basic form should be completed by each candidate. A resume may be attached to further describe detailed information but should not be submitted in lieu of this application.

About You:
Position of Interest: 2nd Vice President

Name of Candidate: Aaron Carter
Title: Assistant Vice President
Institution: University of Illinois
Address: Illini Union Bookstore, 807 S. Wright St., Suite 340
City: Champaign
State: IL
Zip: 61820
Telephone: (217) 300-3545
Email: aacarter@uillinois.edu

Questions:

1. Number of years as an active member of NAEP: 5.5
2. Types of Service to NAEP and or the regions:
   a. Participation on committees, task forces, special projects, and other functions:
   b. Author of an article(s), monograph(s), book(s) or other publication for NAEP:
   c. Recognition, Awards and/or Certificates of Achievement:
   d. Presentation(s) at meeting(s) or educational programs:
      Presenter/Panelist 2019 NAEP National

3. Service to an associated professional organization (whose principal purpose is the betterment of the procurement profession or education community)
   a. Participation on committees, task forces, special projects, and other functions:
      A long-serving member of the IAPPO Legislative Committee.
   b. Author of an article(s), monograph(s), book(s) or other publication:
      Author of IAPPO Legislative Committee Member Update.
   c. Recognition, Awards and/or Certificates of Achievement:
   d. Presentation(s) at meeting(s) or educational programs:
      Coordinator of Illinois Certification program through NIGP/UPPCC
      Regular presenter/Contributor at State and Regional Diversity and Procurement Events.

4. Educational achievement (higher education institution and/or certification, NAEP’s Institutes or Academy, etc):
   B.A, Southern Illinois University Edwardsville
   MBA, University of Illinois Gies School of Business
   NAEP Procurement Academy Tier III

5. Procurement positions held (title/institution/organization):
   Assistant Vice President, University of Illinois
   Executive Director, Illinois Procurement Policy Board
National board member selection criteria:

Please provide a comprehensive statement to the below questions. You only have to answer the questions that apply to your personal experiences.

1. Do you possess an area of expertise that helps the association meet one or more of our strategic initiatives (see attached Strategic Plan)?

In a way, I believe I can contribute to all three of NAEP’s Strategic Initiatives, with varying levels of strength in key areas. With NAEP’s focus on Education, through recognition as an authority and provider of vital resources, I believe I can contribute to both the conversation and decisions behind adequate curriculum formulation but also in the proper approach to providing access to members. It’s vital when providing education that NAEP puts forth fresh, new ideas, fresh faces and provides an educational opportunity that energizes not only the long tenure professional but those new to our profession.

NAEP’s initiative to connect with its members and create an inclusive community starts with more frequent but meaningful communication. Utilizing different and continually varying mediums to connect with a diverse membership base will enhance exposure. While a nationwide reach is more intensive, my current skill set lends itself to successful statewide communication of a very large geographic area with increasingly diverse needs. Continual communication with consistent messaging provided through the varying medium will assist in attracting more talent and more participation, with the hope of bringing members together not just at National but at Regional events as well.

Finally, NAEP’s initiative to foster Strategic Partnerships is an area where perhaps I can offer the most expertise. For years in Illinois, we’ve all been forced to do more with less, for a couple of years more with less meant basically more with nothing and strategic partnerships aided in our survival. We utilized partnerships with national organizations as well as our vendor partnerships to become more cooperative as a state and created an environment that allowed our strategic partners to believe in the ability to truly find value in a partnership. This same model can be successful within NAEP, a diverse membership should expect and accept the value that could be provided on a national level, devoid of any “alternate” rationale.

2. Broader perspective: Please list other noteworthy voluntary contributions of time, effort, resources and leadership abilities to NAEP and the procurement profession.

Perhaps the most challenging question to answer as I don’t feel I have had the opportunity to fully contribute to the NAEP. It is reasonable that I haven’t asked the right question or failed to embrace the current regional structure, but my efforts to contribute to our profession are present and frequent. While Illinois is unique in its regulatory environment I am a regular contributor at State Legislative Committees, working with lawmakers, speaking and presenting at diversity and sustainable events on behalf of Higher Education Procurement. In my prior role, I managed the State’s education and certification imitative through the NIGP and spoke regularly on behalf of all professional procurement in the State of Illinois.

3. Provide examples of the ability to develop strategic direction/vision and/or implement a strategic direction/vision. Have you been identified by peers as a thought leader?
Have I been identified as a thought leader?....I think it is always interesting to self-validate a question like this. I think perhaps yes, as I've been recognized for my achievements in many areas of procurement and diversity and have been asked to join organizational committees with the purposes of strategic planning and leadership. Personally, while I embrace the idea that I have been of value in many leadership settings, it’s always difficult to get too far away from the worker mentality. While varying positions of the hierarchy call for varying levels of engagement, the ability to be creative and solve problems is a skill set I value in myself and others.

Examples of my ability to develop strategic direction/ vision and implement direction happen on small and large scales. In my current role, the vision for how we engaged statewide procurement professionals has changed drastically. Regular calls, often with input from only a few individuals have been replaced with two in-person conferences, one small one large with the assistance of Strategic Partnerships. With my insistence and guidance, my team developed and implemented a vision to bring over 250 people to the state’s Capital once a year for a multi-day learning and vendor interaction conference. This is something we have developed and while ever-changing the purpose of education and recognition remains the same. Similarly, we have implemented a new vision for diversity and inclusion. With a robust goal in mind, my team has expanded our ability to utilize diverse firms statewide through communication, coaching, mentorship and most important strategic partnerships between our primary vendors, diverse suppliers and our States Institutions.

4. Do you recognize and promote trends, issues and best practices for your institution and profession? Please describe.

Yes, absolutely, but in a thoughtful and cautionary way. Any institution, like a large membership organization, can grow weary of the “latest and Greatest” especially if not fully vetted and implemented. Issues, like inclusion, sustainability, even cost savings, when addressed turn into best practices and using a platform like NAEP allows us to learn and grow from each other in how we are evolving as a profession. In ways like this, we’ve not always been able to be the tip of the sword, but have learned a great deal from our like member institutions. The term Trend is interesting. When I think of trends, the rush to automate everything with technology comes to mind. Yes, it’s a trend that it is likely to not only persist but expand. But I am cautious of what this means for us as a profession. While absolutely necessary to assist in what is sure to be reduced staffing for most, I have watched as over automation, relegates our profession to button pushers or reviewers, we lose the opportunity to engage, to build up small businesses in our community and produce greater cost savings. NAEP is the organization that really is best suited to monitor and disseminate trends, coming issues and the very best, best practices.

5. Please describe how you would confidently and articulately lead discussions and express opinions in a collaborative, collegial manner.

From Leading (staffing) Boards/Commissions to transitioning to an active and thoughtful participate (member) it’s always been so vitally important to understand all points of view and ensure that I am always listening. I learned a long time ago that there is always someone to match my enthusiasm with the opposite perspective. Especially with such a large representative organization like NAEP, it’s so important to gain perspective from as many as possible to ensure that we can adequately represent the membership, both large and small.
6. Do you mentor, engage and share information with current and potential NAEP national, regional or committee leaders? Or with staff?

Absolutely! Finding day to day opportunities to mentor staff is less challenging as learning opportunities present themselves very regularly. Ensuring the importance of not only how our work product but the institution and our profession is viewed is and will be vitally important to future success. When I think about engagement with the committee and overall NAEP leaders, this for me has potentially never been greater than in the past year. More and more those of us with like institutions, or really any institutions are coming together to discuss and foster best practices not only for greater efficiency but for “right” reasons. When I say the “right” reasons, it’s more important than ever to ensure that those we partner with outside of our institutions or Higher Education keep the Institutional advantages in the forefront, rather than the bottom line of their organization or business.

7. What vision do you have for NAEP during your term? (Biggest challenges and how to solve them).

What I have often said, as we look at the landscape of our profession, NAEP is all that we have. Unfortunately, and while difficult to pinpoint the reason, the grassroots efforts so vital to the overall success have been diminishing through the last few years, perhaps longer. While I am absolutely guilty of this, the statement I hear most often surrounding NAEP, specifically regionally is that “I won’t waste the time and resources sending staff to regional, we’ll wait for National”. From my perspective, the true value really does present itself at the national conference but to grow as an organization and to grow as a profession we have to cultivate the “base” and ensure that our regions or not only inclusive but meaningful and fun. To sum up the answer to the question, we have to ensure NAEP is in a position to support its members and to be an active leader in growing our profession. This, as I have found more regionally, presents a big challenge.

Candidates should also have a commitment to contribute the time, interest, ability, and resources necessary to complete assignments promptly and professionally.

**IF SUCCESSFUL, FINAL CANDIDATES WILL BE REQUESTED TO PROVIDE THE FOLLOWING INFORMATION:**

Candidates for national board positions should have the support of their employer organization to attend all board meetings, in addition to other related activities, as appropriate for the duration of their term of office:

2nd VP: 5-year term

Please provide a recommendation letter (by the direct supervisor, indicating if the person is elected the institution that the supervisor will support the candidate and allow him/her to participate as part of his/her professional development).