

An Appeal for Principled Unity – From Your President

It saddens me that there is so much anguish coming out of the corridors of the Academy these days. Commentary regarding the selection for the next DAP President abounds. There is no need for me to reconstitute news and opinion that are more adequately covered by email exchanges and informal discussions.

As your outgoing President, I wholeheartedly believe that this coming election is vital to the future of the Academy, and we all see the need to invest in a reasoned outcome.

I join the call for civility and the clamor for the debate not to turn ugly. Neither sloganeering nor anonymous broadsides will make us enlightened. I reject the idea that the path to building a broad consensus is to narrow our focus and exclude issues.

The key is to galvanize everyone behind principled unity and engage each one in a discourse based on principled criticism.

We should not unite for the sake of unity. Unity does not mean uniformity. Moreover, I don't believe that uniting must mean silencing or excluding the positions of those who vigilantly try to keep the selection process open, fair and transparent, despite the difficult circumstances.

The main thing is for the basis of unity to be clear. I believe there is sufficient consensus among us to unite on the following:

- Uphold fairness by keeping the playing field level, where no candidate has undue advantage.**
- Rejecting any action that will not result in the most qualified candidate being selected DAP President.**
- Maintaining an intelligent discourse and an evenhanded give-and-take.**

We have to make sure all candidates adhere to the high ethical and professional standards that the Academy is known for. We should encourage each of them to be his/her own candidate, not someone else's.

Divided, we are of little use to each other. We have witnessed the destructive power of division as a result of harmful, unethical actions. Providing that there were no serious procedural obstacles, there would be no reason not to unite. This power of unity will give everyone the confidence to do what needs to be rightfully done.

It is not necessary for us to ask of each other that we forget our differences or the unpleasantness of past conflicts. All that is required is that we not let any of our disagreements get in the way of joining hands to grasp the opportunities for fair play that only unity makes possible.

There is a high road. On that road, questions are answered, problems are solved and the means and methods necessary to move forward are not sacrificed in the altar of unprincipled expediency.

I will continue to do my part, to rise above the unjust and the unfair always.

Let us make sure that this appeal extends to all, especially those who are under-represented.

We are friends, co-workers and colleagues. We should speak with one voice.

In the seven years that I have been with you, I tried my best to seek and celebrate common ground, before delineating differences. My challenge to you, as I step down as your President, is to keep the spirit of principled unity alive, and to discover both enrichment and strength in it.