

Cynthia S. Johnson
Forty-First President
1980-1981

ACPA's 41st president and 14th woman to lead the association was Cynthia Senn Johnson. At the 1979 convention in Los Angeles, a short distance up the coast from her home in Laguna Beach, the election results were announced during an Executive Council meeting on March 25. Three days later at the Bonaventure Hotel, she was one of the first three "Senior Professionals" who hosted the Annuet Coeptis dinner for outstanding new professionals.

Johnson was Director of the Career Planning and Placement Center at the University of California, Irvine (UCI) in 1974. During 1975-76, she was Acting Assistant Vice Chancellor, Student Affairs. She took a leave of absence from UCI for a year (1979-80) to attend Michigan State University (MSU) as a graduate student and work toward a doctoral degree during her year as president-elect. In 1968 at UCI, she began work as Associate Dean of Students, Student Activities, becoming Associate Dean of Students, Educational Support, during 1971-74.

Born in Milwaukee, Wisconsin, Johnson attended California State University at Los Angeles (CSULA), where she was the outstanding senior and was awarded the B.A. degree in Education. Upon graduation, she worked there with responsibility for housing, financial aid, and student activities, which became Assistant Dean of Students. She completed course work at CSULA for a master's degree in counseling and guidance at which time she was Student Activities Advisor/Assistant Dean of Students. She was associated with the CSULA Alumni Association as Director for 16 years.

With a graduate fellowship in minority education, she studied at Pacific Oak College in Pasadena, where she was also a consultant and lecturer. Meanwhile, she was the Child Development Supervisor for the Pasadena Head Start program and had supervisory responsibility for a staff of over 100 and budgetary responsibility for several million dollars. At UCI, Cynthia Johnson was granted an Executive Management Fellowship, where she completed additional study in the Graduate School of Management.

Married to Robert W. Johnson during her undergraduate years, the Johnsons had three children, two sons and a daughter, who were all in college in California when Cynthia Johnson decided to pursue her doctoral work at MSU.

For nine consecutive years, she served on the ACPA Executive Council. In 1973, she was elected to the Council for a three-year term, 1973-76. One of her early roles on the Council was to help establish a graduate student representative among that group. Cynthia was voted Vice President for State Divisions in 1976, and at the national convention in Chicago that year, the Council increased her two-year term one year to assure that a vice president of commissions or state divisions would be elected every other year. As Vice President for State divisions (1976-79), Johnson provided a steady column of "State Division Memo" for most issues of ACPA *Developments*. At the 1978 national convention in Detroit, she was commended by the Council for outstanding work for state divisions. In 1989 when she was voted ACPA Governing Council representative to AACD for a three-year term, she re-cycled back to the membership on the Executive council.

An affiliate member of ACPA Commission IV, Students, Their Activities and Their Community and VI, Career Counseling and Placement, Johnson was appointed a member of the Women's Task Force in the early 70s. A substitute ACPA Senator to APGA during 1973, she was also a member of a Self Study

Committee. In 1975 she was named to a subcommittee to plan strategies for better understanding and effective communication about the Phase II statement of the Tomorrow's Higher Education Project (Project). The Project was reconstituted in late September 1980, during her presidency. A former California CPA president (1973-74), she chaired an ACPA committee that completed a "kit" in the fall of 1975 to serve as a manual for state division presidents and presidents-elect.

While president-elect of ACPA, she chaired the Bylaws Committee and was appointed to the Executive Committee on Organization and Functioning, charged to examine that group's structure, and asked to present a proposal to the Executive Council at the mid-year meeting.

President Cynthia Johnson communicated with the membership in four issues of *ACPA Developments*. She presided at the Executive Council meeting during the national convention in Boston on Wednesday afternoon, April 30, 1980 for new officers at which time she outlined her 1980-81 goals and priorities. She indicated that Paul Bloland, an ACPA past-president, agreed to chair the Long Range Planning Committee. Other administrative goals were fiscal accountability, organizational objectives and activities to help graduate students, intra-associational communication, and professional development activities. To deal with a second major area, professionalism, she placed in motion an ad hoc committee designed to produce a statement on ethical standards, professional preparation, and accreditation. A third general emphasis, membership, was intended to stop the decline and increase membership five percent. At that meeting, a motion was approved to have Johnson appoint an ad hoc committee to begin work immediately to investigate all parameters and ramifications of the relationship of ACPA with APGA. On September 15, 1980, she presented testimony in Washington, DC on the Career Education Act.

During the mid-year November 5-7 Executive Council meeting in Erlanger, Kentucky, 20 state division officers attended. The fourth draft of the "Statement of Ethical and Professional Standards" was adopted on November 6, and a motion was approved to publish the standards in ACPA's journal. Another motion was approved for Johnson to appoint a standing committee on Ethical and Professional Conduct and to disseminate the standards to the profession-at-large, professional student affairs associations, and APGA divisions and regions. To help recruit graduate students to join ACPA, ACPA approved the publication of a *Graduate Student Newsletter* once a year. Membership at the end of 1980 was 6,023.

Early in 1981, President Johnson was one of three who represented ACPA at the Conference on Higher Education. The two-color 16-page preconvention issue of *ACPA Developments* was the largest newsletter produced by ACPA to that date. Prior to the annual convention, a copy of the program booklet was sent to active ACPA members as a special service for planning convenience.

The 1981 national ACPA convention was held in Cincinnati during March 29-April 1. The theme was "Professional Roots, Current Realities and Future Possibilities." Convention headquarters was at Stouffers Hotel. There were 16 pre-convention workshops. Reports were that 2,191 registered. There were 220 job listings in the Placement Center with 350 candidates investigating those available positions. Newly chartered state divisions were Connecticut and Rhode Island.

The president's report in Cincinnati indicated that the Long Range Planning Committee developed a list of 14 areas of concern and planning for the next 5 to 10 years. At the opening ACPA Banquet on March 29, President Johnson and President-elect David Borland dialogued about professionalism. ACPA assets as of June 30, 1981 were \$185,846.39.

While immediate past-president (1981-82), Johnson chaired the Nominations and Elections Committee and was appointed to chair the newly created Professional Ethics and Conduct Committee. She was a member of that committee the following two years, also. At the national convention with APGA in Detroit (1982), during the ACPA Executive Council meeting on March 16, she reported plans for theme tracts on ethics for future conventions. During 1983-84 she was a member of the NASPA/ACPA Task Force on Professional Development. After serving as a member of External Relations during 1984-85, Johnson was appointed to the Awards and Commendations Committee during 1985-86. A nomination by President Marvalene Hughes placed her initially on the AACD Long Range Planning Committee during 1987-88, which she chaired. A member of the AACD Strategic Planning Committee, Johnson helped draft the current AACD Strategic Plan.

At the beginning of her ACPA presidency, Cynthia Johnson returned to her position at UCI for two years until 1982. Then she accepted the position of Lecturer/Faculty Associate during 1982-83 in the Counseling and Personnel Services Department at the University of Maryland (UM). MSU granted her the Ph.D. degree (Administration and Higher Education) in 1983. The title of her dissertation was "A Developmental Management Model for Student Affairs." She was promoted to Assistant Professor/Faculty Associate at UM in 1983. Two years later, she accepted an appointment as Associate Professor of Higher and Adult Education at Teachers College, Columbia University (TC). Four years later (1989) she returned to the West Coast to work at California State University, Long Beach where she assumed the positions of Associate Professor in the Department of Educational Psychology, Coordinator of Counselor Education and School Psychology, and chair of the Department of Student Development in Higher Education. Now retired, she is Professor Emeritus of Student Development and Higher Education, California State University, Long Beach.

In 2000, Cynthia accepted the position of Scholar in Residence with ACPA. For five years, she led many special projects for the Association. She was instrumental in securing grant funding from the Kellogg Foundation to conduct a retention study in South African Universities and grant funding for the first Symposium on Spirituality hosted by California State University at Long Beach.

Research Scientist with the Educational Testing Service, Project Learn, during the early 80s, Johnson was responsible for all training and consultation for a national career planning project for the adult learner. She secured over \$50,000 in grants from corporations for career center projects. She solicited and secured grants in excess of \$3 million including money from the W.K. Kellogg Foundation for work with a computer based career decision-making program and two grants from the National Science Foundation for work with a computer based career decision-making program and two grants from the National Science Foundation for the development of a model national program for careers in science for the handicapped.

Numerous publications and professional presentations at international, national, regional, and state levels resulted from her computer research project activities.

Johnson said in 1990 that her work at Teachers College and celebrating the 75th anniversary of Student Affairs Preparation Programs (1913-1988) with Esther Lloyd-Jones was a highlight for her.

In her letter dated September 11, 1990, Cynthia Johnson indicated that she was especially pleased with the passage of ACPA's first code of ethics during her term and her role in the addition of a graduate student representative and a Vice President for State Divisions to the Executive Council and of the work

of the Long Range Planning group. Although she had no major message for the profession's future, she expressed that her professional passions, interests, and concerns were:

- (1) that we are not providing the leadership necessary to accomplish Higher Education's important agenda for the future— an agenda that is "our" agenda. We are too busy managing and administering our professional associations and our Student Affairs divisions to provide critical institutional and national leadership;
- (2) that we reinstate "spiritual maturation" in our mission;
- (3) that we work to move to a more global focus—one called for in the 1937 *Student Personnel Point of View* and now more critical than ever; and
- (4) that we are not adequately addressing the needs of the new adult student now comprising over 40% of our campuses and have not adequately looking at student development in terms of the "new majority."

Shortly after ACPA separated from the American Counseling Association to form an independent organization, Cynthia was instrumental in leading the Association through a reconsideration of its governance structure. In 1993 the Association honored her by presenting her with the Esther Lloyd-Jones Professional Service Award and in 1995 she was named a Senior Scholar. In 2005, she was honored by ACPA with the Presidential Service Medallion and the ACPA leadership conferred on her the title of Scholar in Residence Emeritus, and in 2009 she received ACPA's Lifetime Achievement Award. Cynthia Johnson's record of scholarly accomplishments, her success as a grants writer, and her leadership and service to both ACPA and to the Student Affairs profession are well documented.

Cynthia Johnson, 78, died on January 7, 2011, in Aptos, California. On March 29, 2011 at the ACPA Convention in Baltimore, Maryland, a memorial resolution in her honor was approved at the ACPA Annual Business Meeting recognizing her for her many professional accomplishments. "Cynthia's spirit lives on in ACPA and in the lives of friends, colleagues, and students who have known and loved her."

ACPA Presidents Page Credits

<http://www.bgsu.edu/colleges/library/cac/sahp/pages/keepsakesgallery.html>

Information about ACPA presidents who served from 1924 through 1975 was originally published by ACPA in *Presidential Profiles* (1975). Presidential profiles for those who served from 1975-1991 were originally published by ACPA in Vernon Lee Sheeley's *Fulfilling Visions: Emerging Leaders of ACPA* (1991). In 2008, William A. Bryan updated ACPA presidential profiles for 1924-1991.

The Student Affairs History Project

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