



# AMERICAN PSYCHOLOGICAL ASSOCIATION

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To the Student Community:

It is with a heavy heart that I write to you in the wake of the Hoffman report. If, as the report claims, some leaders in psychology were involved in inhumane or unethical actions that in any way supported torture, then their actions are inexcusable. As your chair and current Board of Directors representative, I believe it is my responsibility to share my thoughts with you and inform you of the action APAGS is taking in light of these recent events.

I am acutely aware of my privileged status and want to “own” this before delving into details. My position within APA gives me access to information and an understanding of our organization that few students have. As a Board member, I’ve had the chance to review the report for a longer period, giving me additional time to work through my thoughts and feelings.

At different points recently I’ve felt my faith in psychology shaken almost to its core. The last month or so has been the most difficult and challenging time of my professional career. I was shocked, discouraged and appalled while I read and digested the findings of the report. I went through periods of denial and anger. I often feel confused about how to move APAGS forward through this crisis and represent all of you well. At times I am unclear about how to be a good leader in these difficult moments and have turned to my mentors and fellow leaders for support and guidance.

Like me, many students feel lost, confused, disappointed and unsure of how this organization can continue to be a home for their professional careers. Some students are wondering what these findings mean for their futures. These feelings are legitimate, and the questions students have about whether to remain involved in APA are fair. Indeed, the following weeks, months and years will be difficult times for our APA community. Although I certainly do not have all the answers, I do want to let you know explicitly what action steps APAGS is taking now to ensure that the student voice serves as an active agent of change in APA.

Our current action steps include:

- The APAGS chair-elect and I co-wrote an informational post that can be found on the [gradPSYCH blog](#).
- I am coauthoring a blog post with Angela Kuemmel, PhD, cochair and Public Interest representative of the Committee on Early Career Psychologists (ECPs), on reasons to stay involved with APA. This post will highlight the unique position students and ECPs are in to create change within the organization. When this is available, you can access it at the gradPSYCH blog link above.
- Your elected and appointed APAGS Committee and subcommittee chairs are holding calls to discuss the report and work toward actions APAGS can take.
- The APAGS Committee is formulating the best and most efficient way to collect feedback from students and deliver this feedback to APA governance so that student recommendations have prominence when decisions are being made by APA.
- We are discussing creating an APAGS position statement after eliciting feedback from members like you.
- We are encouraging continuing student presence in governance and hope you will reach out to us. Please know that you and all fellow student members of APA are represented on APA's membership council—the Council of Representatives—by me ([Emily Voelkel](#)) and by [Christine Jehu](#), chair-elect of APAGS. Feel free to contact us anytime.
- We look forward to hearing your ideas about what APA needs to do to move forward. A special email address has been set up to collect your recommendations: [IRFeedback@apa.org](mailto:IRFeedback@apa.org). In addition, there is a comment section on the APA website at [www.apa.org/independent-review/index.aspx](http://www.apa.org/independent-review/index.aspx).

To all fellow APA convention attendees:

- If Council is in open session, please come by to observe the governance process. The schedule and format of the Council meeting are still being created, so please be aware that it is possible an open session may not occur.

- I encourage all of you to attend a **town hall meeting** on the Hoffman report on **Saturday, August 8, from 3 p.m. to 4:50 p.m. in the Convention Centre** to process your thoughts and feelings openly about the report.
- As I write this, APAGS is actively discussing holding a students-only forum in addition to the general town hall. Stop by the APAGS booth for updates and location information about any of this.

As you digest the report and reflect on it, I hope you will find ways to remember why you have been proud in the past to be a part of APA and will continue your membership so that you can influence change. I know that despite the wealth of good APA and APAGS does on a daily basis, the report's findings cast a shadow over that goodness. It is our collective challenge to hold both the good and the ugly together. It is our duty to steer APA in directions that restore our confidence and preserve the field of psychology for the future. I have full confidence that the involvement of students and ECPs will help right this ship and create an APA based on integrity, ethics and a commitment to human rights. I encourage you to join with me in hope—hope that we can create a better APA together.

Emily Voelkel  
*APAGS Chair*

*Disclaimer: This document does not necessarily represent the views of the APAGS Committee or APAGS staff.*



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