



**FINANCIAL
PLANNING
ASSOCIATION**

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February 9, 2021

OneFPA Advisory Council
Financial Planning Association
1290 Broadway, Suite 1625
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Regarding: The OneFPA Advisory Council Post-Meeting Report from November 2020

Dear OneFPA Advisory Council Representatives,

We want to once again thank you for taking the time to share a report covering the key takeaways from the November 2020 meeting of the OneFPA Advisory Council (“Council”). The entire FPA Board of Directors (“Board”) reviewed the report and engaged in a vibrant discussion as part of our January Board meeting. We want to share our reaction with you and also let you know about some action steps that are being taken.

Since the Board is a volunteer body that is focused on the strategic direction of the Association, we focused our review and discussion on those issues in the report that are more strategic. This is different from the FPA Central Office staff, which has been reviewing the report to identify those issues that are tactical and operational where staff can take action. You will find a ‘tactical response plan’ accompanying this letter. That document is the result of our Association’s staff carefully reviewing the report and mapping out a path forward to make improvements in the short-term.

As we said in our December 18 letter to the Council, the entire Board shares your concern about the strategic challenges facing FPA today. While the report presented a variety of issues, we focused on a few core strategic issues that are—and will be—of critical importance to FPA’s ability to grow and flourish in the years ahead, including:

- The need for FPA to define and fully commit to its target/core member.
- The need for FPA to clearly define and articulate a compelling value proposition.
- The need for FPA to be more intentional in how it engages stakeholders, including chapters.

Target/Core Member

In the post-meeting report, the Council stated, *“FPA needs to identify and commit to a target member. If we are the membership association for CFP® professionals, we need to commit to it. If we*



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are the membership association for all financial planners regardless of designation, we need to commit to it. Whoever we are going to serve, we need to be clear as to who it is we want. Right now, we are trying to offend no one and appeal to everyone. We need to define our target market and pursue it fully.” We agree.

When FPA was established in 2000, the intent was for the Association to be focused primarily on serving the needs of CERTIFIED FINANCIAL PLANNER™ professionals while providing a home for others engaged in the financial planning process. And while we have remained relatively consistent with that focus, we have certainly strayed at times. Several years ago, the Board recognized our loss of focus and engaged in numerous conversations with consultants, staff and other stakeholders to coalesce around a shared vision of who we serve. That work resulted in a [set of policies and statements](#) (released last year) to clarify our target/core member and purpose.

It is also recognized that FPA has often been characterized as a “big tent” organization for anyone in the financial services industry and financial planning profession. While FPA has always been compensation-neutral and business model-agnostic, which is the likely reason for the “big tent” perception, CFP® professionals have always comprised a vast majority of our membership base. It is the one quality that has connected most of our members, unlike an organization like NAPFA that focuses on fee-only compensation. The fact is that FPA will never be a homogenous organization like NAPFA. We believe financial planning is not dependent on how a professional operates or how they are paid, but rather on their competency and ethics.

Despite this, we know work needs to be done to clarify our target/core members better. If we exist to serve CFP® professionals as our core members, we must unapologetically declare it and not stray from it. The same is true if we want to position FPA as the home for all professionals, no matter the designation they bear. The Board is meeting in February to discuss this critically important issue so we can move closer to resolution. You will hear more about this by the end of the first quarter as the Board solidifies the Association’s position.

Compelling Value Proposition

One of the byproducts of not clearly defining who we serve and remaining consistent is that we have tried to be too many things to too many people. When your audience lacks definition, the value you provide naturally suffers because you try to offer too much and don’t do anything at an exceptional level. This is a dynamic we are hopeful will be rectified by committing to our target/core members and providing clear direction to staff.



The FPA Central Office staff can use this clarity to create a value proposition that speaks explicitly to our core members about FPA's relevance, how FPA can meet their needs and how that is accomplished. More importantly, it can be developed to capture the equally important value FPA chapters offer. A compelling value proposition that is clear, concise, complete and consistently communicated at all levels of the Association will create more resonance about what FPA represents in the profession and our members' lives.

Under FPA CEO Patrick Mahoney's leadership, the staff will be able to use the definition of our core members and the value proposition to carefully review every program and service to determine the value they add to membership and whether or not they need to be maintained, revamped or eliminated. They will also potentially identify new services and benefits that are additive to the membership experience and fill gaps for members. By focusing our resources on services and programs that deliver on the value proposition and making our core members better financial planners, FPA can realize a positive growth trajectory.

Intentionally Engage Stakeholders

At FPA, we have seen how communication struggles can hamstring an organization, prevent progress from being realized and, worse yet, create animosity. The organization has always sought to communicate openly with chapters and other stakeholders, but a disconnect in what we have communicated, why we communicated it, and how we communicated it has persisted. For the Association to grow, we need to shed ourselves of how we have communicated in the past so we can better inform and elicit much-needed input from all in our community. To do this, we will encourage FPA national leaders and FPA Central Office staff to:

- Develop a schedule of executive communications that provide a consistent look at what is transpiring in the association.
- Ensure communications are clear, concise and provide an honest, transparent look at the Association's operations.
- Speak with candor when engaging stakeholders on FPA matters.
- Review existing communications channels to seek improvements on how communications are disseminated to stakeholders.
- Embrace the importance of participatory governance by positively engaging with the Council and our network of chapters and communities.

Summary and Next Steps

We share the Council's views on these crucial strategic issues and are frustrated that these challenges have persisted for as long as they have. If we don't thoughtfully address these



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issues now, we run the risk of FPA being left behind entirely. We will not let that happen and will take the following action steps (as outlined in this letter):

- The Board will meet in February to explore the question about our target/core member and will provide an update by the end of the first quarter.
- The FPA Central Office staff will create a compelling value proposition based on identifying our core members and ensure it is consistently shared and displayed across the Association.
- A comprehensive member recruitment and retention strategy that thoughtfully incorporates the chapter system will be developed and shared.
- A review of our ongoing communications with stakeholders will be completed, and a strategy will be adopted to ensure clear, concise and transparent communication with stakeholders.
- The FPA Central Office staff will use the attached 'tactical response plan' to address many of the programmatic issues identified by the Council and will provide updates.

We thank you for taking the time to voice your concerns and views on these issues. Your participation in this work and in support of participatory governance will make FPA a better organization for our members and profession. We look forward to our continued communication and hearing from you following your upcoming Council meetings throughout the year.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Skip Schweiss".

Skip Schweiss, CFP[®], AIF[®]
2021 FPA President

A handwritten signature in purple ink that reads "Martin C. Seay".

Martin C. Seay, Ph.D., CFP[®]
2021 FPA Chair

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Dennis Moore".

Dennis Moore, MBA, CFP[®]
2021 FPA President-elect

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Patrick D. Mahoney".

Patrick D. Mahoney
Chief Executive Officer

Attachment: *Tactical Response Plan*