

Candidate: Shelagh Gallagher, Ph.D.

Position: President-elect

Biography (150 words max) that provides NAGC members information regarding your background experience, and qualifications for the position. Be sure to include the most significant ways you have contributed to and participated in NAGC.

Dr. Shelagh Gallagher's career in gifted education spans over 30 years, with positions including teacher, Director of Research (Illinois Mathematics and Science Academy), grant manager (William & Mary Center for Gifted Education), and 13 years running a gifted education program and directing Javits grants (UNC Charlotte). Along the way, she helped found two charter schools for gifted students and created award-winning curriculum. Today she conducts research, provides professional development, leads equity-based advocacy efforts, and contributes to state and national policy initiatives. She is a reading mentor to 4th-graders and spends summers with gifted youth at Camp Yunasa. Throughout, Shelagh has been active in NAGC, missing one convention since 1986. Her roles in NAGC include Convention Program Committee, Convention Task Force (co-chair), Development Committee (chair), Javits-Frasier Scholars program presenter, two Secondary Task Forces (chair once), Assessment Task Force, Research and Evaluation newsletter editor, and three terms on the Board of Directors.

Personal Statement (200 words max) explaining why you want to serve an organization whose mission is to support those who enhance the growth and development of gifted and talented children through education, advocacy, community building, and research.

I want to serve NAGC because there is still so much to do and so many exciting new possibilities within our reach. My dual background in psychology and education grounds my belief that while all children deserve an engaging and challenging education, gifted children require an education that develops advanced levels of knowledge, reason, imagination, and passion--a qualitatively different education. Many gifted students still don't have learning environments that allow them to flourish, especially children of color and children in poverty. Equity has been a centerpiece of my advocacy work for years and must remain a top priority for NAGC. But there is other work to do as well. In this internet age, NAGC should explore how to leverage its position to connect qualified teachers with students who don't have gifted programs. As a field, we have made progress in providing effective, rigorous curriculum models for teachers, but we can do more to ensure that they know the pedagogy of advanced instruction. Gifted education remains unaddressed in preservice teacher preparation, perpetuating pervasive problems, including insufficient high-end differentiation in the regular classroom and inaccurate referrals to gifted programs. I would be honored to lead NAGC towards achieving these aims.

Additional Questions

How would your knowledge, experience, abilities, and vision contribute to increasing the public's urgency to support the needs of gifted and talented children and youth (i.e., Minds)?

Over 30 years I acquired experience persuading the Minds of the public while: 1) working on teams founding two gifted charter schools, 2) revitalizing a university gifted education program, 3) directing Javits grants in Title 1 schools, and 4) most importantly, engaging agencies outside of gifted education in advocacy for gifted students of color or in poverty. Each of these ventures required knowledge, a vision of the long-term aims and benefits of gifted education, and the ability to encourage people outside the field to embrace that vision; I hope to use all of these to chart new paths for NAGC.

How would your knowledge, experience, abilities, and vision contribute to advocating for the adoption of policies that promote programs and service in which gifted and talented children and youth will thrive (i.e., Policies)?

Policies are crucial to ensuring appropriate, accessible, and equitable programs for gifted students regardless of their race, gender, income, or geographic location. My experience includes historical knowledge and new contributions to research, theory, and practice that inform policy. My direct experience in developing policies spans from building-level for schools to state and national policies. A specific national contribution is America Agrees, a public opinion poll which documents public support for gifted education. This report led to my initiation of NCs Talent Delayed/Talent Denied efforts, which invite diverse advocacy organizations into conversation and collaboration around policy to close the Excellence Gap.

How would your knowledge, experience, abilities, and vision contribute to empowering supporters to implement effective practices for all gifted and talented children and youth in homes, schools, and communities (i.e., Practices)?

My vision for Practice is for teachers to build upon gifted students' natural penchant for inquiry by adding the knowledge, tools, dispositions, and personal agency needed to pursue ideas with an expert's skill and devotion. I contribute experience helping educators acquire skills in curriculum and instruction consistent with this vision while (1) leading a university program, (2) adjunct teaching, (3) leading workshops for teachers and parents, and (4) helping gifted students develop their sense of self at camp Yunasa. I also have experience developing award-winning curriculum and guiding its implementation, primarily though Javits grants I either contributed to or directed.

