



Membership Recruitment & Retention Plan: 2026-2029

Updated: July 2026

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Situational Analysis and Future of NAGAP

NAGAP, The Association for Graduate Enrollment Management (NAGAP), is the only professional association devoted exclusively to the concerns of professionals working in the field of graduate enrollment management (GEM) within colleges and universities. Membership in NAGAP provides an opportunity to network with colleagues at educational institutions of all types, including public, private, large, small, secular, and non-secular (NAGAP website, 2026).

Membership Profile-May 2026:

Member tenure:

66%-1-3 years as NAGAP member

14%-4-6 years as NAGAP member

20%-7+ years as NAGAP member

Member GEM Experience:

- 21%-members with >3 years of experience in graduate enrollment
- 23%-members with 4-6 years of experience in graduate enrollment
- 56% members with 7+ years of experience in graduate enrollment

The current membership distribution reveals a notable gap in retention of members in the 4-6 year membership range. This imbalance highlights a critical transition point where members may disengage before successfully gaining deeper involvement and leadership within NAGAP. To address this, NAGAP must prioritize intentional engagement strategies that support members beyond initial onboarding and sustain their connection through the middle years of membership. Central to this effort is leveraging the experience and expertise of long-tenured members to actively support and engage newer professionals and those earlier in their careers. By creating structured opportunities for knowledge sharing, mentorship, and collaboration, the association can strengthen relationships across experience levels while reinforcing the value of continued membership. In doing so, NAGAP can better support mid-tenure members in finding purpose, growth, and connection within the organization, ultimately improving retention, strengthening the leadership pipeline, and fostering a more cohesive and engaged community across all stages of the membership lifecycle.

The industry of higher education has been under scrutiny in recent years. In addition to shrinking pools of high school graduates, the value of a college degree has come into question, leaving institutions to face enrollment declines, budget cuts, and in some cases, closure (Seltzer, 2019). With fewer resources, declining recruitment pipelines, and increasing expectations to do more with less, now more than ever, individuals working within graduate enrollment management need accessible professional development, relevant resources, and opportunities to network and share ideas. For current members, continued engagement through these offerings is essential to ensuring they remain active, connected, and supported as institutional challenges evolve.

A changing education landscape is not the only challenge higher education professionals are facing. Today's workforce includes individuals at multiple career stages who bring different experiences, communication preferences, and expectations for professional involvement. These differences influence how members engage with associations, access information, and participate in networking opportunities. As a result, associations must adopt flexible, inclusive engagement strategies that meet members where they are and support sustained participation over time, rather than focusing solely on initial recruitment.

In addition to these workforce dynamics, several ongoing challenges impact association membership. One continuing trend is a shift in how professionals evaluate the return on investment of membership. In some cases, individuals are not fully aware of the breadth of resources available, or they may not immediately see how membership aligns with their professional goals. Additionally, budget constraints within higher education have created increased scrutiny on

professional development spending, often making it more difficult to justify membership and participation in association activities.

According to an article in *Higher Ed Jobs*, one of the greatest benefits of association membership is the networking and camaraderie that occurs among members. However, to realize these benefits, individuals must feel encouraged and supported in investing their time and becoming actively involved (Cherwin, 2010). This highlights the importance of intentional engagement strategies that go beyond recruitment to foster ongoing participation, connection, and leadership development among current members.

Associations that are successful in both attracting and retaining members focus on delivering clear, ongoing value through relevant programming, accessible resources, and meaningful community-building experiences. These organizations also prioritize creating welcoming and inclusive environments that help members quickly develop a sense of belonging and continue to see value as their careers evolve (Kaiser, 2017).

While attracting new members remains important, equal emphasis must be placed on retaining and engaging current members through targeted communication, varied programming, and opportunities for deeper involvement such as volunteering, leadership pathways, and knowledge sharing. Providing a range of engagement options that reflect diverse professional roles, institution types, and career stages will strengthen member satisfaction and long-term commitment.

NAGAP Strategic Pillars

Building on the 2026-2029 Strategic Pillars for NAGAP, pillars 3 and 4 address many items related to the work of the membership committee. The following outline provides strategies to support these priorities.

Pillar One: Thought Leadership through Collaboration

Pillar Two: Professional Development and Education

Pillar Three: Member and Community Engagement

Pillar Four: Organizational Sustainability and Innovation

Member Recruitment Strategy and Initiatives

Identify New Membership Opportunities

- Review current membership data and demographics to identify underrepresented areas such as:
 - states or regions in which there are no NAGAP members,
 - underrepresented groups by race and gender,
 - institution type (public, private, enrollment size), and
 - disciplinary role.
- Determine prospective members utilizing a variety of NAGAP “products”
 - Research reports and other partnerships: Get names from partner landing sites (e.g., Carnegie, RNL NAGAP research project – names collected to download of report)
 - Research grant: Names gathered by Research Committee during outreach promoting research grant, and names captured from grant proposals received from non-members (students and professionals)

- Survey respondents: Salary survey and Flash Feedback survey – distribute beyond NAGAP membership, gather contact info from survey respondents
 - Rosters of webinar participants, annual conference and PDI attendees, and Leadership Academy participants from the most recent 1-2 years and identify individuals who are not currently members.
 - Encourage Membership Among Individuals Who Have Participated in a NAGAP Activity but are Not Members
 - Work with the Chapters to identify and convert chapter members who have yet to join the Association.
- Launch a prospective member campaign that utilizes membership data/demographics to inform content and outreach. This campaign will showcase signature resources and professional offerings, utilizing focused calls to action that drive institutional investment and member conversion.
 - Analyze data of new member campaign and update campaign accordingly
- Implement Request for information form on website
 - Data points for RFI form created and provide to Talley
- In-Person Recruitment Activities
 - Send a NAGAP representative to attend events to attract prospective NAGAP members
 - Identify other association and vendor conferences and events where we could have a physical activity (present, brown bag, reception, table, etc.) to generate interest and collect names.
 - Provide materials for representatives who are already attending
 - Engage chapter presidents for access to events and representatives
 - Request for NAGAP information for event attendance (in Exchange for flyers or online for printing, etc)
- Leverage Early Bird Registration for Summit with New Membership
 - Align Summit registration timeline with new membership option for extended membership
 - Create a campaign to inform potential Summit attendees of Early Bird Registration and additional months of new NAGAP membership at time of Summit Registration
- Member Referral Campaign
 - Current member video/testimonial to advertise
 - Incentive: free Summit registration or annual membership

Membership Retention & Engagement Strategy and Initiatives

Retain New Members within the First Year or the First Activity

- Deliver NAGAP 101 webinar each fall and spring to provide a uniform introduction for new members. Webinar will showcase the value of the association through committee overviews, research and professional development opportunities, and diverse engagement pathways featuring member testimonials and leadership journey profiles.
- Leverage the experience and outcomes of the First Timer's Reception at the annual conference

- Provide opportunities to engage and network through Bingo activity
- Allow time for first timer's to get to know NAGAP leadership
- Provide a new "swag" item for first timers: lapel pin
- Provide an opportunity for the Chapters to take an active role so individuals understand all of the benefits available to them.
- Distinguish the First Timer's Reception at Summit as different from NAGAP 101 session. Focus on what is unique about attending the conference, that new participants will want to understand (e.g., how to meet and authentically engage with other attendees and build a professional network here at this event).
- Create and implement a new member email campaign designed to facilitate immediate involvement and familiarity with NAGAP. This initiative will outline essential tools and professional offerings, providing participants with distinct, practical methods to fully leverage their organizational investment and connection.
 - Analyze data of new member campaign and update campaign accordingly
- Create a "New Member" group in The Exchange to include all new members during their first 12 months of membership. Identify 2-3 volunteer Ambassadors to assist with content:
 - seed conversation, offer relevant announcements, and help connect individual new members with opportunities to further engage with NAGAP (e.g., encourage proposal submissions for annual conference sessions, highlight benefits of summer PDI, facilitate networking conversations, provide discussions prompts on relevant topics)
- Create a NAGAP at a glance brochure for new members for distribution to new members
- Welcome packet mailed to new members monthly, which includes:
 - Digital postcard for new members
 - Digital link for NAGAP swag to be mailed to them
 - Welcome letter from the Membership Chair
 - Membership brochure/new member toolkit
 - Welcome letter from President of NAGAP
 - New member swag
 - Chapter information

Engage and retain members beyond 1 year of membership

- Referral program
- Chapter engagement
- Committee engagement
- Board membership
- Create an Ambassador program for current members to recruit additional NAGAP members
 - Ambassadors receive a training session, including a brief "elevator pitch" on the benefits of the NAGAP network, member benefits, educational activities, and research and publications activities.
 - Ambassadors receive specific "swag" from NAGAP for serving in this role (e.g., NAGAP polo shirts) that identify them as NAGAP representatives while they are attending recruitment events

- on behalf of their institutions. Ambassadors who travel extensively for student recruitment can recruit NAGAP members at recruitment events across all regions.
 - Ambassadors send emails and make phone calls to prospective new members, under the direction of the membership committee, based on identified groups that are underrepresented in the current membership.
 - Ambassadors contact existing members whose membership renewals are past due, to encourage renewal and/or understand reasons for non-renewal.
- Engage members in volunteer opportunities to build affinity and commitment to NAGAP (e.g., committees, event support, chapters)
 - Send call for members to volunteer: twice per year
 - Develop outreach campaign to encourage participation in call for volunteers
 - Distribute results to committees as received
 - Clarify expectations of committee chairs in volunteer engagement and follow-up
 - Conduct occasional outreach (2-3 messages per year) to members who have responded to the call for volunteers but were not matched with any committees or activities
 - Create videos or webinars on volunteer opportunities and other pathways to engagement

Optimize The Exchange as a Networking Platform for ongoing NAGAP Members

- Develop engagement strategies and related action plans to promote networking in The Exchange beyond discussion boards and existing communities.
- Determine “members only” content to be available on The Exchange, as well as content available on The Exchange for non-members, to serve as member recruitment opportunities.
- Determine member engagement using tool available within the platform to measure member engagement and identify new areas of opportunity.

Communication Plans for Target Audiences

Communication Plan: Suspects

Customized messages based on audience, with link to NAGAP RFI form as needed to be incorporated into prospective member campaign upon completion of RFI form

Communication Plan: Prospective members

- Day 1: New lead email (based on referral status) OR RFI form completion
- Day 14: NAGAP Professional Development opportunities
- Day 28: Become a member
- Day 44: Member testimonial
- Day 58: Events
- Day 72: Research Tools
- Day 96: Networking Opportunities
- Day 120: Join NAGAP Now!

Communication Plan: New Members

- Day 1: Welcome Email upon membership
- Day 1-7: NAGAP news shout out (first NAGAP news after membership)

- Day 21: Welcome wagon-personal email from member of membership committee (within first 3 weeks of membership)
- Day 35: The Exchange
- Day 45: Chapters
- Day 55: Professional Development Opportunities
- Day 65: Research Tools
- Day 75: Events
- Day 85: Mentor Program
- Day 95: Communities
- Day 105: Financial benefits of membership
- Day 120: Leadership Academy

Communication Plan: Membership Renewal

Membership renewal is due by July 1. Any members who do not renew will be removed from all platforms on or after August 31

- Membership renewal e-mail campaign starts in May as follows:
 - May 1-first renewal notice
 - June 1-second renewal notice
 - June 15-third renewal notice
 - June 30-last day to renew
 - August 15—to all graced members
 - October 30-lapsed members

Infrastructure & Resources Needed

Budget Resources

- Funds required for membership recruitment and retention
 - Print materials (NAGAP brochure, member toolkit)
 - Swag for ambassadors when promoting NAGAP
 - First timer's attendee lapel pin
 - New member swag to be mailed
 - Travel for in person event attendance for ambassadors

Inquiry Form

- Request for Information Form: add to NAGAP website-data demographics already with Talley

Data Access and Analytics

- MemberClicks
 - Membership demographics and renewal analytics: career stage, job title or role, institution (size, public, private), geography, member age, race, gender
 - Event attendance
 - Renewal rate data: time to renew
 - Committee participation

- Recruitment to member conversion rates (time to join, % prospect to member, referral program, ambassador program)
- Constant Contact
 - Email campaign analytics (prospective and new members): open rate, click through, engagement, unsubscribe trends
- The Exchange
 - Community and group participation rates
 - Active user reports
 - Downloads and resources used analytics

Assessing Our Effectiveness: Key Performance Indicators

Key Performance Indicators-Member Recruitment

- Meeting or exceeding the annual membership goals
 - 2027 annual membership increase of 5% from 2026
 - 2028 annual membership increase of 10% from 2027
 - 2029 annual membership increase of 5% from 2028
 - Constant Contact campaign success information

Key Performance Indicators-Member Retention and Engagement

- Meeting or exceeding the annual membership goals
 - 2027 annual membership increase of 5% from 2026
 - 2028 annual membership increase of 10% from 2027
 - 2029 annual membership increase of 5% from 2028
- Engagement in The Exchange: Identify current and target percentages of members with active profiles. Launch and leverage the engagement scoring tool within The Exchange to measure effectiveness of new engagement strategies and activities.
- Attendance at the Annual First Timer's Reception and evaluation results. Conduct a yearly analysis of attendance numbers and engagement levels.
- Identify current NAGAP member retention rates for each membership category, compare with industry standards, and set target retention goals in tandem with new membership goals for future years
- Participation in new member initiatives. Collect data to be used to measure engagement level at different activities or with different initiatives.
- Participation in educational activities. Goal to be at or above past participation levels.
- Open and click rate of NAGAP News. Goal to be at or above industry standard.
- Open and click rate of *Perspectives* digital issues. Goal to be at or above past rates

Membership Goals for 2026-2029

The following membership goals have been set by the NAGAP Board of Directors for the 2026-2029 membership year:

Category	Fee	Current	10% increase	Goal
Individual Member	\$350	355	35	390
Institutional Member	\$355	303	30	333
Institutional Group Member	Based on number of members	611	61	672
Affiliate Membership	\$625	28	3	31
Associate Membership	\$200	11	1	12
Student Membership	\$50	5	1	6
Retired Membership	\$50	3	1	4
Totals		1316	132	1448

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