# **NABS Notes: August 2018**

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## **President’s Note**

Thank you! Thank you for believing in me. Thank you for trusting my leadership and vision for our organization. Thank you for lending an extra hand in expanding our reach even further then we already have. Thank you for being honest in feedback, open in suggestions, and constant in dedication. I appreciate you. It’s been almost two months since our National Convention; and the effort and commitment from our leadership, whether NABS Board or committees, is unmeasurable. It is an amazing feeling, as a leader, to have so much faith and energy in the future of this strong organization. With whatever amount of effort you can give, we appreciate you; for representing blind people in a positive way, you are doing life right. I want to take a moment to tell you good luck this semester. Whether you are starting college, entering another year of high school, or going an alternative route, you are pushing your limits every day in this changing world. We are here to provide resources; and we want you to contact us.

## Meet the New NABS Board!

Please read below to learn more about the newly elected 2018 NABS board. Additionally, you will find each member’s contact information and the states for which they serve as a liaison.

President: Kathryn Webster

[nabs.president@gmail.com](mailto:nabs.president@gmail.com)

I am so honored to serve as President of this fine organization. After graduating with my Bachelors of Science degree in Data Analytics and Statistics from Wake Forest University in the spring of 2017, I began my career at Deloitte Consulting, LLP as a Strategy & Data Analyst. Part-time, I am the Coordinator of Project RISE, NFB of Virginia’s transition program for blind youth. I plan to pursue my MBA in the fall of 2019 in order to take my experience to the next level. I enjoy spending time with friends and family, lounging on the beach, reading non-fiction books, and traveling the world to gain cultural understanding through different lenses. I have a passion for giving back. The National Federation of the Blind taught me that it is my duty to shower fellow blind students with endless resources, support, friendship, and advice to equalize the playing field. We are as capable, willing, eager, and ready, if not more, than our sighted counterparts. Let’s break down those misconceptions and build our vast network while changing what it means to be blind! Excited to connect with you!

First Vice President: Syed Rizvi

[syedrizvinfb@gmail.com](mailto:syedrizvinfb@gmail.com)

Hey NABSters! I’m from Longmeadow, Massachusetts and attend college at the University of Texas at Austin. There, I am pursuing a major in Government and attaining a minor in Philosophy. I lift for the UT Austin Power Lifting team and am very involved in on-campus organizations that cater to South Asian and Muslim students. When I’m not hitting the text books, mosque, or gym, I am bonding with friends and family over delicious food. As a proud graduate of the Louisiana Center for the Blind, the Federation has made all my wildest dreams come true. I hope I can do the same for you!

Contact me regarding the following states:

• Alaska

• California

• Hawaii

• Minnesota

• New Jersey

• Texas

• Utah

•Washington

Second Vice President: Kenia Flores

[kenia.flores@furman.edu](mailto:kenia.flores@furman.edu)

Hello, fellow Federationists! I am currently a junior at Furman University, where I am majoring in Politics and International Affairs. After graduating, I plan to attend law school to equip me with the knowledge and expertise to become a civil rights attorney. Outside of my commitments as a student, mentor, and advocate, I enjoy rock climbing, spending time at the beach with a good novel in hand, and attending concerts. I, along with my fellow board members, are looking forward to preparing our fellow students with the necessary tools and confidence to ensure success in the classroom and beyond. We want to help you turn your dreams into reality, so please do not hesitate to reach out to us. Together, let’s go build the National Federation of the blind with love, hope and determination!

Contact me regarding the following states:

• Alabama

• Georgia

• Illinois

• Iowa

• New Mexico

• South Carolina

• Vermont

Treasurer: Dustin Cather

[cather.dustin@gmail.com](mailto:cather.dustin@gmail.com)

My name is Dustin Cather, and I am proud to serve as your Treasurer of NABS. I am a senior at Oregon State University studying Political Science via their online program. I live in the small town of Pekin Illinois, where I am a cook for an upscale restaurant. In my free time, I enjoy hanging out with my cat Oakley, and playing the trombone. I am looking forward to working with a lot of you during my time with NABS!

Contact me regarding the following states:

• Florida

• Hawaii

• Massachusetts

• Kansas

• New York

• South Dakota

• Wyoming

Secretary: Melissa Carney

[carne23m@mtholyoke.edu](mailto:carne23m@mtholyoke.edu)

I am thrilled to serve on the NABS board and work with all of you! I am originally from the small town of Deep River, Connecticut. I am a senior at Mount Holyoke College in Massachusetts, pursuing a double major in English and Psychology. After receiving my Bachelor’s, I plan to obtain my doctorate in clinical psychology. In addition to my academic interests and career goals, I am passionate about disability rights and advocacy, resolving access barriers, and fostering independence and mentorship within the community. I am conducting research on accessibility at IBM over the summer, and will be interning with the National Council on Independent Living in the fall. I serve as the president of the Connecticut Association of Blind students, secretary of the Massachusetts Association of Blind Students, and a Peer Mentor for incoming freshmen with disabilities at Mount Holyoke. In my free time, I enjoy reading science fiction, writing poetry, running, and any other recreational outdoor activity. I am an avid horseback rider and skier, as well as a competitive singer. I always enjoy meeting new students, hearing your stories, and giving advice or encouragement when needed, so feel free to reach out!

Contact me regarding the following states:

• Arkansas

• Delaware

• Indiana

• Maryland

• Mississippi

• New Hampshire

• Oklahoma

Board Member 1: Mausam Mehta

Mausam.mehta00@gmail.com

I am thrilled to work with the National Student Division to build our momentum and exceed our goals. I am from a small town in Virginia, and I’m working towards a bachelor’s in Business Administration and Information Technology at the University of Virginia. Outside of my exciting work with NABS, I love breathing the air of new and strange places, reading frightening suspense novels, and petting fluffy animals. I’m so honored to be a part of NABS, and I can’t wait to see where our dreams will lead us!

Contact me regarding the following states:

•Kentucky

•Louisiana

•Nebraska

•Oregon

•Virginia

Board Member 2: Tarik Williams

[williams.tarik20@gmail.com](mailto:williams.tarik20@gmail.com)

I grew up in Pennsylvania, where I was part of my high school basketball team. Sports has always been a huge part of my life, so after I lost my vision, I still wanted to be a part of a team. I joined the marching band, which I participated in all 4 years of college. After becoming Mr. West Chester and graduating with a Bachelor’s of Arts in English, I decided that before I went onto graduate school to become a VR counselor, I should increase my assistive technology skills so I decided to go to Louisiana Center for the Blind. While there, I realized that my passion was to work hands on with students and so I decided to go to Louisiana Tech University to get a Master’s in Counseling and Guidance, with certifications in Orientation and Mobility and Rehabilitation Teaching. After graduation, I accepted a job at SAAVI Services for the Blind where I teach Cane travel and is a program advisor. If you want to be on my good side, just tell me how much you love the Dallas Cowboys and how awesome LeBron James is and you are set!

Contact me regarding the following states:

•Montana

•North Dakota

•Pennsylvania

•Ohio

•Puerto Rico

•Rhode Island

•Washington, DC

Board Member 3: Janae Burgmeier

[janae.burgmeier@gmail.com](mailto:janae.burgmeier@gmail.com)

I am from Des Moines, Iowa and have been an NFB member for 12 years, however I have become a more active member over the past 3 years. I am currently obtaining a Master’s degree in Business Administration, while working at Wells Fargo as a financial Crimes Specialist. I also serve in the local community as a board member for the Des Moines chapter of New Leaders Council, as well as the Statewide Independent Living Council. I enjoy participating in Pub trivia with friends, hiking, reading, and traveling to new and exciting places. I am so excited to get involved and continue to build the Federation.

Contact me regarding the following states:

•Colorado

•Connecticut

•Michigan

•Nevada

•Tennessee

•West Virginia

•Wisconsin

Board Member 4: Justin Salisbury

[president@alumni.ecu.edu](mailto:president@alumni.ecu.edu)

I am thrilled to be back on the NABS Board in the exact same position I held from 2012 to 2014, and I am even further thrilled to be serving with such a phenomenal group of student leaders on this new board. I am taking classes in education and public administration as I prepare for a PhD program in education. I am particularly interested in programs focusing on education leadership and policy analysis, as well as social and cultural foundations of education. It is an honor to be welcomed back into student leadership as I return to higher education. I grew up mostly in rural northeastern Connecticut and joined the National Federation of the Blind through the Connecticut affiliate in 2008, thanks to our scholarship program. I thought I would take the money and run, but I found something greater than a scholarship check. I have served six years as a student division president between Connecticut, North Carolina, and Hawaii. I hold a Bachelor of Arts in mathematics and economics from East Carolina University. After college, I attended the Louisiana Center for the Blind in a gap year before a PhD program in agricultural and applied economics at the University of Wisconsin-Madison. That year of training changed my life, and I became obsessed with helping other blind people achieve the freedom and empowerment that can come from training at an NFB training center. I also dove headfirst into the legislative work of the Federation. I stopped writing my dissertation and left UW-Madison to attend Louisiana Tech University, where I earned a master’s degree in teaching cane travel. Today, I teach cane travel at a training center in Honolulu, Hawaii.

Contact me regarding the following states:

•Arizona

•Idaho

•Maine

•Missouri

•North Carolina

## **New Resource – NABS Phone Number**

Our leadership wants to provide an outlet for students to voice concerns, seek advice, and learn about resources you may otherwise not be familiar with. With that, we launched our very own NABS phone number, where a NABS leader is on call to speak with blind students across the country. Please call 410-417-8360.

## **Follow Us on Instagram**

NABS has an Insta account now, so follow us @NABSLink!

## Space Available Program

The John McCain National Defense Authorization Act was recently signed into law. It contains language expanding eligibility for the Space Available program that will allow Vietnam-era veterans who are blind or have other disabilities to travel on military flights if space is available. The press release is at available at:

<https://nfb.org/military-space-available-accommodation-expanded-more-veterans-disabilities>.

## Accessibility User Research Collective

The below research participant solicitation is being provided for informational purposes only. The National Federation of the Blind has no involvement in this research, but we believe that it may contribute to our research mission.

The Accessibility User Research Collective (AURC) is looking for people who are blind or have very low vision to take part in ongoing research projects that we conduct as a research partner for Microsoft. The goal of these studies is to use real feedback from real people to assist Microsoft in improving the usefulness and accessibility of their apps and products. The studies can include emailed surveys, in-person interviews or focus groups. Joining the AURC doesn’t mean you will be inundated with survey requests. Only when a study requires someone with a specific disability is that person contacted; and they are free to turn down the request if it comes at an inconvenient time for them. The privacy and anonymity of participant personal information, both in the database and during any studies they participate in, is protected by strict HIPPAA requirements as well as by special research security protocols that are required for studies involving human subjects.

The studies usually provide a modest monetary stipend as thanks for participating; and from conversations with study participants, they value the opportunity to help to improve the accessibility and usefulness of apps.

If you decide to join us, you can sign up to our database by filling out a survey at this link: <https://is.gd/AURCmemberform>

AURC web site: <https://accessibilityuserresearchcollective.org/>

## Museum Experience Survey

The below research participant solicitation is being provided for informational purposes only. The National Federation of the Blind has no involvement in this research, but we believe that it may contribute to our research mission.

Cheryl Fogle-Hatch, Ph.D. (an independent archaeologist and museum professional) and Don Winiecki, Ed.D., Ph.D. (a professor at Boise State University) are conducting survey research to identify experiences of blind and visually-impaired individuals at museums. If you choose to complete the survey it will take you about 15 to 20 minutes. More information about the survey and the research is included below.

Survey URL: <https://boisestate.az1.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV\_23HYlClohjBVQah><https://boisestate.az1.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_23HYlClohjBVQah>

Eligibility: The survey is intended for individuals who are (a) 18-years old or older, (b) blind or visually-impaired, and (c) who have visited one or more museums in the past.

## NABS Committee Updates

### Get involved!

* Legislative Advocacy Committee

When: third Sunday of the month | 8pm eastern

Chair: Kenia Flores ([kenia.flores@furman.edu](mailto:kenia.flores@furman.edu))

Co-Chairs: Rilee Sloan and Justin Salisbury

* Fundraising Committee

When: Second Sunday of the month | 8pm eastern

Chair: Kathryn Webster ([nabs.president@gmail.com](mailto:nabs.president@gmail.com))

Co-Chairs: Harry Staley, Dustin Cather, and Elizabeth Rouse

* Outreach Committee

When: first Monday of the month | 9pm eastern

Chair: Janae Burgmeier ([Janae.burgmeier@gmail.com](mailto:Janae.burgmeier@gmail.com))

Co-Chairs: Melissa Carney, Elizabeth Sheeler, and Matt Gip

Web Master: Dustin Cather ([cather.dustin@gmail.com](mailto:cather.dustin@gmail.com))

* Special Projects

When: Meetings as Needed

Chairs: Syed Rizvi, Tarik Williams, and Mausam Mehta

## Student Division Spotlight

Are you curious to see what your fellow students are up to? Please check out the following updates from several of our proud divisions.

Please note: All text was taken directly from our state student division leadership and not amended in any way.

* Arizona

We are eared up and ready to rock during our 2018 State Convention. We have some great events planned for the student seminar as well as some wise speakers to share their knowledge during the annual business meeting. As per custom we will be holding elections for the Arizona Association of Blind Students board. We are excited to pass the baton to the next generation of leaders and support them in the work that is being done. Thank you so much to the current board and we wish them well as they continue to build this federation in other leadership roles. Shout out to Tarik Williams, who is graciously representing our national student division during our 2018 State Convention! Thanks for reading!

## NABS Facebook Group

Join our Facebook group by visiting:

<https://m.facebook.com/groups/173482726798026>

The National Association of blind Students

A proud division of the National Federation of the Blind

Nfbstudents.org

(203) 273-8463