# NABS Notes: February 2018

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### President’s Note

When I ponder the effectiveness of leadership, I immediately turn to myself. What can I do better? How could I have improved a situation? What worked well; or what should I no longer do when approaching issues? On the other hand, I look to myself in shaping the future student leaders in the National Federation of the Blind. One way in which the national student leadership has followed through on this notion is by bringing thirty of our finest leaders with glowing potential to the Jernigan Institute for a student leadership weekend. Prior to Washington Seminar, curious minds and blossoming leaders gathered alongside our affiliate presidents and national president to learn, grow, and collaborate. The NABS Board conducted seminars on leadership, public speaking, conflict resolution, building relationships, running meetings, and so much more. We were enlightened by words of wisdom from our national president as he shed light on our philosophy and the evolution of the Federation. Our student and affiliate leaders participated in a sexual assault prevention and awareness training in order to be appropriately equipped with the tools to be an active by-stander.

After leaving a weekend with big ideas, an energized heart, and excitement around building our students up, we convened in our nation’s capital, where a record-breaking number of students registered for our annual NABS Winter Seminar. More than 95 students were loud and proud in the audience, ready to participate with strong and vibrant voices. With the gracious support of President Riccobono, our Washington Seminar sponsorship program continues to grow, helping 35 students in attending this year’s event.

What brought you into our federation family? For some, it was a blind friend of yours who introduced you to our extended family. For others, it was a flier in the mail inviting you to a State Convention. And, for many, it is our national scholarship program. In fact, I graduated four years ago from high school with money on my mind. Private universities are expensive! As you can tell, that scholarship brought me into a huge part of my life and introduced me to a group of loved ones who I will always cherish. As cliché as that may sound, I am so grateful for our national scholarship program; and the application period closes in just one month! I challenge you to apply, regardless of your confidence in your application. Get your essay proof read, ask for a recommendation from a person you know thinks highly of you, and click submit on that form! You deserve a shot at the financial assistance, influential mentorship, and experience that you will not forget. No one will get to cling onto this opportunity if you don’t apply!

I’m always here to chat and listen to the great ideas stirring in your mind!

Love,

Kathryn C. Webster

President

## 2018 Mid-West Regional Student Seminar

### What’s Next for You?

Who: blind and low vision students (high school and up)

When: 6PM, Friday, April 20 – 12PM, Sunday, April 22, 2018

Where: Holiday Inn O’Hare, 5615 N. Cumberland Avenue, Chicago, IL 60631

Cost: $50 for meals and registration, $109 plus tax per night

To reserve a room, call 773-693-5800. Mention NFB of Illinois to get our special group rate!

Want roommates to cut down costs? Email Kathryn Webster

WHY WAIT? Event and hotel registration is open from February 1 – March 31, 2018

[REGISTER](https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSdDvp87a-j_Yv6mpfEDmYU7dWNmg0CVDRpGbftGwIj7goYVDg/viewform)

Direct questions and special requests to Kathryn Webster

For financial assistance, contact your affiliate president by March 20.

This year’s regional student seminar will be a weekend of fun, engagement, and information! It’s all about the next step in your life, whatever that may look like: taking a step back, learning about options, and paving the path for your future. We will have experts from blindness training centers, working professionals, career guidance, college preparation, health & wellness, and so much more. This seminar gives students an invaluable tool: the power of networking. Both Friday and Saturday night, we will engage in activities and social events. With students traveling from neighboring states, the interactions you’ll experience will be unlike anything else!

## Summer Opportunities | NFB Training Centers

### BLINDNESS: Learning in New Dimensions (BLIND,) Inc.

Minneapolis, MN

BLIND, Incorporated is seeking dynamic, enthusiastic individuals to work as counselors in our PREP, STYLE, and Buddy Programs!  Our PREP and STYLE programs serve high school students 14 to 21 years of age.  Students in the Buddy Program range from 9 to 13 years of age.  Applicants must be able to serve as role models as well as understand and share our positive philosophy regarding blindness. These individuals must be skilled in the non-visual alternative techniques of blindness that we teach at our training center. While being a graduate of an National Federation of the Blind (NFB) training center is not a requirement, one should have the same level of skill, self-confidence, and independence that we expect from our graduates.

The most qualified applicants possess the following skill set:

•  Aspirations to work with children/teenagers

• Ability to communicate effectively with co-workers and supervisors

• Willingness to work as part of a team

• Willingness and ability to teach students of all levels and backgrounds

• Proficiency in using word processing, spreadsheets, the internet, and email using either the JAWS, Voiceover or NVDA screen readers

• Ability to write clear and concise reports on student progress

• Ability to read and write Braille

Note: All applicants must pass a background check.

PREP Counselor: June 3 – August 15

STYLE Counselor: July 10 – August 15

Buddy Counselor: July 10 – August 15

For more information, contact Michell Gip, Youth Services Coordinator at 612-872-0100 ext. 231 or email a cover letter and resume to mgip@blindinc.org.

### Colorado Center for the Blind

Littleton, CO

The Colorado Center for the Blind is now accepting applications from positive blind role models to be residential counselors and classroom instructors in our 2018 summer programs. We offer 3 programs for students: Summer for Success College Prep Program, Earn and Learn High School Program and the Initiation to Independence Middle School Program.

Staff must be available May 29 through August 10, 2018. Applicants must be good role models, competent in the skills of blindness, well-rounded, flexible, must possess excellent communication skills, and be willing to lead by example. Must be excited to work with blind students ages 11 – 20. Challenge recreation is an exciting component of the job. Staff will go rock climbing, hiking, canoeing, white water rafting, attend martial arts classes and much more. All staff and students will attend the week long national convention of the National Federation of the Blind.

To learn more about our summer programs, please click the following links

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?x-yt-cl=84503534&v=6yBomtj12KU&x-yt-ts=1421914688&feature=player_embedded#t=0>

<http://cocenter.org/dreaming-warmer-2018-summer-programs//>

If interested, please contact Martin Becerra-Miranda at 303-778-1130 x 223 or via email at mbecerra@cocenter.orgg

### Louisiana center for the Blind

Ruston, LA

If interested in working for one of the LCB summer programs, contact Eric Guillory at eguillory@louisianacenter.org.

## 2018 NFB National Scholarship Program

### APPLY NOW

[http://www.nfb.org/scholarships<http://www.nfb.org/scholarships>](http://www.nfb.org/scholarships%3Chttp%3A//www.nfb.org/scholarships%3E)

Are you legally blind? Do you reside in the United States, the District of Columbia, or Puerto Rico? Are you pursuing or planning to pursue a full-time, postsecondary course of study at a U.S. institution in the 2016 scholastic year? Are you available to attend the entire NFB National Convention in Orlando, Florida from July 3-July 8, 2018? Are you eager to meet Federation leaders and network with some of the brightest, most passionate mentors out there?

If you said yes to all of these questions, then we strongly encourage you to apply to our 2018 National Scholarship Program! To recognize achievement by blind scholars, the National Federation of the Blind annually offers blind college students in the United States and Puerto Rico the opportunity to win one of thirty merit-based, national-level scholarships ranging in value of $3,000 to $12,000. All scholarships awarded are based on academic excellence, community service, and leadership. Visit our website at [www.nfb.org/scholarships](http://www.nfb.org/scholarships)<<http://www.nfb.org/scholarships>> to begin your application!

Remember: applications, along with all necessary documents, must be submitted no later than March 31, 2018. Do not wait until the end of February to start gathering additional information and beginning the online form.

## NABS Legislative Toolkit

The NABS Legislative Toolkit is a complete and comprehensive guide for all blind students to more actively participate in the fight for equal access. Included are step by step instructions on how to write your personal testimony, how to approach your university for support, and even how to hold a legislative workshop with your student division. The Legislative committee exists to further explain and assist students in their implementation of the kit. The National Association of Blind Students Legislative Committee knows that through changing laws, we can change lives. Join us, use this invaluable tool. Together, through collective action, we can achieve equality for the blind in the classroom, and beyond. This toolkit will be up on our web site soon, as well as distributed to student presidents.

## December and February Blog Post

### February

The National Association of Blind Students believes in students taking full advantage of all the college experiences available to them, regardless of their blindness. Therefore, we are teaming up with an organization called MIUSA, that allows blind people to knock down barriers while traveling abroad. Below, please find a blog from MIUSA, describing the experience our previous NABS president had traveling to south America. Don't let blindness be a factor preventing you from traveling to Egypt's pyramids or Ice Land's volcanos. NABS and MIUSA together can turn your wildest safari dreams into reality.

Catching a wave in the Caribbean. Cruising down the slopes of a volcano. Zipping through rainforests along a cable. Reading a textbook. When you think of extreme adventure, one of these is not like the other. Yet what Sean Whalen discovered while traveling is that, for blind people in Nicaragua, accessing one of these activities is perceived to be a near-impossible challenge – and it’s not the one you’d expect. Sean didn’t know what to expect on his first journey abroad, so he focused on the usual.

“I wondered how easy it would be to get around, what people’s reactions would be to me, and how different it would be from what I’m used to in the United States.”

What he discovered in Nicaragua was the travel concerns ended up being much less of an issue, for which he now admits he may have over prepared. Instead, he found himself grappling more with the cultural contradictions he discovered there.

Sean, who is blind, traveled for several weeks with a small group from the United States to do interviews with organizations working on behalf of blind people in the country, with government officials, and with blind school children and their families.

He learned of this opportunity through an alumna of Harvard University’s Kennedy School of Government, where he was a graduate student. Sean was looking for a summer internship, and as luck would have it, a Boston-based non-profit was looking for someone with policy experience to assess its viability to run programs in Nicaragua.

Before traveling, Sean learned Nicaragua’s constitution provides equal access to everyone in education, including students with disabilities. The reality of what he found on the ground was quite different.

Lack of resources contributed to disabled students being pulled out of school at an early age or left without access to assistive technology. He also sensed a lack of societal expectation, especially in rural areas, that a person with a disability can have independence or a professional life.

“I think it has given me a perspective on how important good policy can be and how also having things on paper that look great won’t necessarily translate into good outcomes in reality."

People he met in Nicaragua were surprised to see Sean navigating the community with his cane and to learn that he was a university student with a career living on his own. Ironically, when he went ziplining, surfing, hiking or volcano boarding, none of the locals or tour guides seemed too concerned that he was blind.

“If I went anywhere in the United States to do that, there would be a safety concern and a big fight just to get to do it like anyone else. But in Nicaragua, it was, ‘Here’s five dollars’ and ‘Here’s your board.’ It was strange – it felt really good and in that moment, I thought, ‘You think I can do this, but you don’t think your son, if he had a disability, could go to school?’"

As president of the National Association of Blind Students, a division of the National Federation of the Blind in the United States, Sean is heavily engaged in working on a volunteer basis on policy issues on the education of blind people.

This includes a lot of work on access to technology in the classroom, though on a far different level than what is needed in Nicaragua. Until this point, he has seen his policy work as domestically focused. His overseas experience has caused him to question whether that is enough.

“There’s just a far greater need out there, and I wonder what responsibility I have, do we have, to be aware of that need and to help when we can. I think I’d have a broader perspective if I’d had the nerve to go abroad earlier in my life."

After graduation, Sean, who is eager to make up for lost time, headed back to Nicaragua with the same non-profit for six months and will be seizing more opportunities to travel and engage in advocacy efforts abroad in the future. He is currently Director of Strategic Partnerships for ETI, the nonprofit organization committed to the development of an inclusive society by transforming the social stigma against disabilities across the globe and empowering blind youth to be the authors of their futures and change makers of their societies.

### December

Ellana Crew is a sparkling leader with many great qualities. As one who grew up in Maryland, her loyalty continues as she is now furthering her education in Baltimore. Ellana is proud to serve as president of the Maryland student division and as the co-chair for the Outreach Committee for our national student division. It’s hard to not mention Ellana’s contagious attitude and genuine personality. She loves building the National Federation of the Blind and learning about others’ differences and identities. Join us in reading this month’s blog post!

I think I can speak for many of us when I say that although we love our families dearly and are excited for the holidays, the family gatherings of the season can get just a little bit crazy sometimes. With all of the traveling, gift shopping, cooking, and everything in between, the winter months can certainly leave us all feeling a little exhausted and sometimes stressed. One winter as I traveled home for the Christmas break, I was preparing for all of these things, but I was not prepared for one thing in particular that I did not expect to happen that year.

It was 2015 and I was right in the middle of the CORE program at Blind Industries and Services of Maryland, a structured discovery blindness training center in—you guessed it—Maryland. It was the first year I would be going to the Christmas gathering with a cane in my hand, naturally, I was a little bit nervous. What were my relatives going to say? Would they treat me any differently?

The time finally came on Christmas day for the whole family to come together at my grandparents’ house for food, presents, and lots of hugging and storytelling. When I got there, unfortunately, some of my fears were confirmed. Even though they had never done so before, even though I had always been blind, my grandfather was suddenly far more attentive to moving things out of my way, my grandmother was extra insistent on making my plate for me, and people seemed to make an extra effort to move around me than they had in previous years. It was a little disheartening, and really, I couldn’t understand how my act of using a tool to enhance my own independence had somehow caused my family to believe I now had less of it.

I began to realize just how little I must have done for myself in the past. I had started thinking about the fact that, before training, I had never made my own plate at the family Christmas dinner. My mom would often keep her hand on my shoulder to help guide me through the house, my grandparents would get my drinks for me, and I would usually find one place to sit and avoid walking around very much. But this year was going to be different. I had spent the last several months learning that I could walk around as freely as I wanted with my cane, I had gone through several buffet lines at large meals for 40 and served myself at every one, and I had learned how to work around obstacles that I found in my path with no problem. I was more than capable of doing so many other things I had never done before, and I wanted to show my family what I had learned.

So, when my grandfather insisted on moving things out of my way so that I could get through the house, I said “oh no, I’m okay. I don’t trip over things anymore. Let me show you how I use my cane.” And when my grandmother insisted on making my plate for me, I said “oh, you don’t have to do that. If you tell me the order of things on the counter, I am able to independently serve myself.” And instead of sticking to one spot on the couch and staying there, I decided I would walk around and join conversations myself this year, using my cane to navigate where I wanted, when I wanted. I started teaching my family what I was able to do and how I was able to do it, showing them the things I had learned and the skills I had gained, and everybody benefited. They appreciated the explanation, and I appreciated not being fussed over too much.

Simply educating your friends and family can make a world of difference, and while my family is still learning to adapt to the new me, we are able to talk openly and honestly about what helps and what doesn’t. I am sure to let them know that if I do want some help, I will definitely ask them, and when they see me use my newly acquired skills to do what I need to do, it helps them understand a little bit more about what blind people are really capable of.

### Committee Updates

If you have ever wanted to get involved with the work the National Association of Blind Students is doing, this is your chance. We have recently reorganized our committees and are looking for students with a passion to work beside us in building the Federation. If you are interested in joining one or more of our committees, please select the committee(s) you are most interested in and send an email to the Chair of the committee. Or, join the conference line at the designated times when it is most convenient to you. We look forward to working with you to build the National Federation of the Blind.

### Outreach Committee

Chair: Syed Rizvi

The outreach committee is hosting its annual national scholarship call Sunday, February 25th at 8PM Eastern.

NABS will be fully transitioning from the Facebook profile to the Facebook page by national convention or when we hit 1,000 followers.

The outreach committee is teaming up with MIUSA, an organization that enables disabled students to travel abroad.

We are launching a membership program, building recruit databases in all our affiliates.

### Legislative advocacy Committee

Chair: Kenia Flores

The Legislative Advocacy Committee had a productive call after Washington Seminar under the new leadership to discuss what the committee plans on focusing on during the next few months. A larger emphasis will be placed on involving student divisions in legislative efforts. We look forward to advancing the legislative priorities of the National Federation of the Blind alongside you in 2018.

### Fundraising Committee

The Fundraising Committee is fast at work preparing for National Convention and ensuring that profit for NABS does not come from only our members. We are excited to be selling our annual cook books, as well as launching a new discount card initiative. Stay tuned!

The National association of Blind Students

 A proud division of the National Federation of the Blind

President, Kathryn Webster

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