



U.S. Public Service Academy

1225 I Street NW, Suite 600 • Washington, DC 20005 • 202-712-9121

www.uspublicserviceacademy.org

2006: The Academy's Year in Review

2006 was the year the Academy got off the ground. In Fall 2005, after Hurricane Katrina had ravaged the Gulf Coast, Chris Myers Asch wrote up a twelve-page proposal to build a national college dedicated to developing civilian leadership. He began sending it to friends for comment, and soon he had enlisted Shawn Raymond – the two had lived together during their Teach for America years and they had co-founded a non-profit educational organization in Sunflower County, Mississippi. They revised and strengthened the proposal and by early 2006, they were ready to go public with it. Here is a good-natured look at a great year.

January—February

- Asch & Raymond devise a timetable to get a bill before Congress by the end of 2007. Eyes roll.
- They send the first bound proposals to public officials and civic leaders around the country. No one responds. All they hear are crickets.
- Asch & Raymond launch “Operation Nakshon,” an email and phone assault on unsuspecting targets in academia, service organizations, and the military. The mission lands the first six members of the Advisory Board: Amitai Etzioni, Michael Feinberg, William Ferris, Steve Loflin, Steven Tomaszewski, and Peter Wood.



March—April

- While working full-time at other jobs, Asch & Raymond tag-team on conference calls with anyone and everyone who might be interested. The responses are overwhelmingly enthusiastic.
- The board lineup adds several heavy hitters – Dennis Ross, Hodding Carter, and Charles Moskos, among others.
- Academy supporter Ty Reese Foreman goes to listen to some blues at Club Ebony in Indianola, Miss. There he encounters a mysterious tourist in town visiting his nephew. The man happens to be a *Washington Post* reporter. Cue portentous music.

May—June

- The *Washington Post* publishes an article about the Academy, complete with the Academy logo and a terrible picture of Asch. It generates a tremendous response. Eyes stop rolling.
- Enter Sen. Hillary Clinton. Although the Academy was described in the *Post* as “little more than a website,” Clinton sees potential. “Find them!” she instructs her staff. Minutes later, Asch & Raymond get a call. Eyes grow wide.
- More media follows — The *Chronicle of Higher Education* and *Inside Higher Ed* hustle to catch up to the *Post* and run articles on the Academy. Readers flock to a redesigned Academy website.



July—August

- The Academy leaves the Mississippi cotton fields for downtown Washington after the Downey McGrath Group offers Asch & Raymond office space. Cue music from “The Jeffersons.”
- The Academy begins to gather steam as military leaders endorse the effort. Two former West Point superintendents, Dave Palmer and Dan Christman, help recruit a number of West Pointers to the cause. Not to be outdone, the dean of the Naval Academy invites Asch for a campus visit and offers Navy wisdom and guidance.
- More than 50 experts join eight task forces to study various aspects of the Academy proposal.

September—October

- U.S. Public Service Academy Act gets introduced in the Senate and House by a bipartisan group of legislators led by Sens. Hillary Clinton and Arlen Specter and Reps. Chris Shays and Jim Moran..
- The bill gains more co-sponsors: Sens. Edward Kennedy and Barbara Mikulski, as well as Reps. Tom Davis, Harold Ford, and Sheila Jackson-Lee.
- The Academy launches an online petition to build a network of supporters. AmeriCorps Alums swamp the petition with signatures.
- Op-ed pieces begin appearing around the country — in the *Raleigh News & Observer*, *Kansas City Star*, and *Philadelphia Inquirer*.



November—December

- The Johnson Foundation awards the Academy a grant to host a Wingspread Conference. The Foundation agrees to an expedited schedule that will bring Academy supporters to Wingspread's center in Wisconsin in February. Brrr!
- The Academy continues to win endorsements from conservatives and liberals alike. It is a rare idea indeed that can win the support of both former Sen. Jeremiah Denton (R-AL) and former Sen. Tom Daschle (D-SD).
- Asch & Raymond launch a fundraising drive to sustain the Academy. Will they hear crickets again?