

Candidate Statements

2013 NASCO Board Elections

Mingwei Huang

Nominated by Qumbya Housing Cooperative

Part I: Personal Data & Statement: *Please provide a brief description of your relevant experience and qualifications. Include your involvement with co-ops and a statement on why you are running for the Board.*

Nearly seven years ago as a student at UW-Madison, I became a cooperator by moving into the Audre Lorde housing cooperative of Madison Community Cooperative (MCC). I was active in my house and served as the MCC Membership Officer or Vice President, gaining experience and skills in conflict resolution, fair housing practices, member education, anti-oppression, inclusion, accessibility, personnel management, governance, and turning around houses "in trouble." In 2007, I attended my first Institute, leaving Michigan thoroughly inspired and energized and with a term on the board as the People of Color Caucus Chair. In 2008 I participated in NASCO Anti-Oppression Action Camp and began working for NASCO as the Director of Education and Training in early 2009. Over the two and a half years that I worked for NASCO, I have incredible opportunities to develop my skills as a cooperative educator through planning and participating in Action Camp, Institute, Emerging Co-op Leaders and other programs; attending national cooperative conferences; and visiting housing, food, consumer, and worker co-ops and credit unions across the United States and Ontario. Since leaving staff for graduate school, I have briefly returned to the board and hope to continue my involvement over the next three years.

Part II: Questions *(candidates may choose to answer separately or collectively):*

- 1) *Why are you involved in co-ops?*
2. *What is your vision of NASCO within the cooperative movement? What is important for NASCO's long-term success in cooperative education?*
3. *Of the items listed in the Requirements of NASCO Directors, in what areas do you think you can best aid NASCO in its mission? What skills will you bring to the board?*
4. *How are you able to contribute to the organization outside Board meetings? How will your other commitments allow you to give time and energy to the Board over the next three years?*
5. *Are there specific issues you would like to work on as a board member?*

The relevance of cooperatives for social and economic justice is what I continue to find most compelling about our movement. Democratic ownership and participation are tried-and-true solutions for people and communities who are systematically disadvantaged in housing, work, food, healthcare, and financial institutions, and co-ops must strive to be accessible those who may be the most empowered by the cooperative model. Cooperatives are crucial to building a solidarity economy that prioritizes people over profit, and a more just and sustainable—socially, economically, and politically—world.

In my experience with the broader cooperative movement, NASCO plays an important role in fostering a new generation of leadership and championing issues of justice and cooperative education. NASCO's educational programs, such as Institute, anti-oppression education, and Cooperative Internship Network, introduce young cooperators to the movement beyond housing co-ops, potential co-op careers, life-long cooperation, and issues of anti-oppression, access, and inclusion. These types of programs are rare in the North American cooperative movement, and inform how we engage with the broader movement. In recent years, culminating with the United Nations International Year of the Cooperative in 2012, NASCO and allied organizations such as the USA Youth Cooperative Council have made tremendous gains in raising the profile of our movement locally and globally. Moving forward, maintaining this momentum in its cooperative education and movement building work is vital.

In light of recent organizational changes, this is an exciting time to be involved in efforts to rethink the strategic plan, financial sustainability, member services, and education programs. Considering the problem of board turnover, I believe that the board functions best with a mix of long-term board members, new perspectives, and former staff. One of my strongest contributions to the board is my six years of institutional memory as a board and staff member. Outside of meetings, I would like to strategize with board members and staff on how to revive, in some sustainable form, currently defunct but important programs such as Action Camp and Emerging Co-op Leaders. Between these two programs, they offer anti-oppression, cross-sector cooperative education, and leadership development that contribute movement building more broadly, and crucially foster leadership within NASCO, especially of multiply marginalized folks. Additionally, I am interested in working on is rethinking NASCO's member engagement and services strategy. As a member-based organization, the value and relevance of services to

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active, associate, and individual members in the U.S. and Canada are central to NASCO's sustainability. Along with revamping member services, NASCO needs to expand its membership and connections with currently underrepresented co-ops—particularly student housing co-ops in Ontario and Canada—and reaching out to former members, new developing student and community housing co-ops, individual alumni, and allied organizations. While the Co-op Voices newsletter and Annual General Meeting are key hubs for communication, NASCO might consider repurposing regional (e.g. “bashes”) and online networks (e.g. blogs, Shared Resource Library, Co-op Guide) for more robust year-round engagement.

I am currently on the Planning Committee that works on the strategic plan for the NASCO family, and hope to continue working with this group. If elected for a three-year term, I plan to dedicate my energies, although not all at once, to: the Inclusion Committee with leadership development and anti-oppression programs, the Member Engagement Committee with a membership strategy, Institute fundraising efforts, and board and staff visioning of education programs. Although my time is limited as a PhD student, I expect to have more time as I complete coursework this spring. Being realistic about commitments and accountability are important to me. I have really enjoyed my time with NASCO and hope to stay involved in this movement!

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Ben Hasan

Nominated by Oberlin Student Cooperative Association

Part I: Personal Data & Statement: *Please provide a brief description of your relevant experience and qualifications. Include your involvement with co-ops and a statement on why you are running for the Board.*

My name is Ben Hasan and I would like to be part of your NASCO Board! I have spent the past four years enmeshed in the workings of the Oberlin Student Cooperative Association(OSCA). In this time I have filled positions from ice-cream maker, to cleanliness inspector, to treasurer for OSCA as a whole. I have sat on the OSCA board, participated in various committees, supported and overseen staff, and cooked oodles and oodles of pancakes; all things that I think would give me some level of preparation for sitting on the NASCO Board. My interest in sitting on the NASCO Board comes from a desire to fill the Rochdale Principle of "Cooperation amongst Cooperatives." In OSCA I have been mostly focused on the operations of our co-ops, and have done relatively little outreach. I see the NASCO Board as an opportunity to take some of my experience in cooperative movement and apply it in NASCO while simultaneously learning about NASCO and the many members it encompasses.

Part II: Questions *(candidates may choose to answer separately or collectively):*

1) *Why are you involved in co-ops?*

While my initial involvement with co-ops was rather haphazard, the reasons I've stuck with co-ops have been the strong sense of community that they inspire and their economic advantages. The fact that we can have a great community and pay as little, if not less than, the alternatives strikes me as one of the compelling instances of people power that we need more of in the world. The tie-in in my life between my belief in a better world and the place where I live is that co-ops combine our concern for community with the impact of our spending and our lifestyles.

2) *What is your vision of NASCO within the cooperative movement? What is important for NASCO's long-term success in cooperative education?*

I see NASCO as an umbrella organization for all of the North American co-ops. I've been highly impressed by the NASCO Institutes every year and think that they do great things for educating and networking co-ops. It is difficult for co-ops to engage in effective outreach and support for each other across states, nations, and continents. To this end I think that NASCO plays a critical role in bringing the cooperative movement together, forming and strengthening cooperation amongst cooperatives.

3) *Of the items listed in the Requirements of NASCO Directors, in what areas do you think you can best aid NASCO in its mission? What skills will you bring to the board?*

In my time in OSCA I have had extensive experience in the forming and evaluation of budgets and business plans. My time sitting on the OSCA Board and my participation in its Finance and Personnel committees have given me some experience in the issues I may deal with on the NASCO Board. I feel that these experiences in cooperative board structures and organization will add to my NASCO Board experience.

4) *How are you able to contribute to the organization outside Board meetings? How will your other commitments allow you to give time and energy to the Board over the next three years?*

As of now my commitments are minimal or uncertain, giving me ample time to build around my commitment to NASCO Board. My current occupations as both a full-time student and a staff member of OSCA have given me ample experience in working in several full time commitments. As such I feel comfortable saying that my life will continue to have room for ample participation and contribution in the Board inside and outside of meetings.

5) *Are there specific issues you would like to work on as a board member?*

In my experience in OSCA, and my experience with different co-ops, there is distinct need for advice in legal and financial matters. These are needs that almost every co-op has at some time, but cannot always be addressed with our available resources. Given this, I would like to work on increasing our member co-ops' knowledge of and access to informed and affordable legal advice, as well as experienced and honest bookkeepers and accountants.

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Lana Wong

Nominated by WCRI, Waterloo, ON

Part I: Personal Data & Statement: *Please provide a brief description of your relevant experience and qualifications. Include your involvement with co-ops and a statement on why you are running for the Board.*

I have been living at Waterloo Co-operative Residence Inc (WCRI) for four years and I have recently graduated from the Math Faculty of the University of Waterloo. Serving my second term on the Board of Directors, I am currently the President. I have also served as the Corporate Secretary, and on the Redevelopment Committee and HR Committee. I have knowledge in board governance, strategic planning, finance, Carver Policy Governance, and planning of meetings, linkage socials and retreats.

I am running for the NASCO Board to further my contribution to the co-op movement, to a wider and more diverse audience. For a large organization like NASCO, it is important to have a strong and accountable Board. I have attained valuable board governance knowledge from WCRI and sector co-ops like COCHF, On Co-op and OSCA, and I wish to apply the knowledge on the NASCO Board.

Part II: Questions *(candidates may choose to answer separately or collectively):*

1) *Why are you involved in co-ops?*

I first joined WCRI for the affordable accommodation. Through the involvement in the Co-op community, I learned the power of co-ops – they pool resources together, thereby enabling individuals and groups collectively achieve goals that are difficult to attain alone.

2) *What is your vision of NASCO within the cooperative movement? What is important for NASCO's long-term success in cooperative education?*

I see NASCO continue to be a leader in co-op education and anti-oppression training. Furthermore, I see NASCO taking a more active role in connecting co-ops together. Since NASCO continues to experience financial hardship and high turnover, one of the efficient ways to serve the needs of its large, diverse membership is to encourage co-op members to help each other.

For long-term success in co-op education, NASCO should set S.M.A.R.T. short-term and long-term goals, be transparent, and focus on talent attraction and retention. Fortunately, strategic goals have been established by current board and staff, with appropriate action plans. It is important to communicate regularly and clearly with the membership and the external community to ensure transparency, which contributes to NASCO's accountability as a whole. Like any organization, human resource is vital to NASCO's success.

3) *Of the items listed in the Requirements of NASCO Directors, in what areas do you think you can best aid NASCO in its mission?*

As mentioned above, I have knowledge in board governance, strategic planning, finance, Carver Policy Governance, and planning of events. In addition, my accounting, marketing and computer skills may be useful to NASCO.

4) *How are you able to contribute to the organization outside Board meetings? How will your other commitments allow you to give time and energy to the Board over the next three years?*

Since directors and staff are spread out all over the continent and board meetings only happen few times a year. I see myself doing majority of board work outside board meetings, either individually or collaboratively with others via internet. As I reside in Canada, I also see myself representing NASCO at co-ops or regional conferences.

My other commitments over the next three years are not concrete yet, but I will be able to allocate enough time and energy to the board, just like how I did with the WCRI board.

5) *Are there specific issues you would like to work on as a board member?*

Aside from monitoring the progress of the strategic goals, I would like to work on improving NASCO's transparency and creating a plan to encourage cooperation among co-ops.

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Brian Van Slyke

Nominated by Boston Community Cooperatives

Part I: Personal Data & Statement: *Please provide a brief description of your relevant experience and qualifications. Include your involvement with co-ops and a statement on why you are running for the Board.*

I first became involved in the cooperative movement when I collectivized a record label I founded shortly after leaving high school. In 2007, I organized and facilitated a popular education class at a community-learning center for teens, which focused on starting cooperative record labels. That experience firmly cemented my dedication to democratizing education for democratizing our workplaces, economy, and society. Since then, I've designed workshops, curricula, board games (including Co-opoly: The Game of Cooperatives), and other educational resources on topics ranging from people's history to co-ops and social change movements. In addition to joining NASCO's board this year, I serve on the Cooperative Development Institute's board. In my mind, NASCO is a critically vital organization within the co-op movement. This importance comes from NASCO's dedication to keeping co-ops firmly rooted in social justice principles. My experience with NASCO, including through attending the institute and serving on the board since early this year, has convinced me that without the organization, the movement would be significantly less radical and have more difficulty engaging a younger generation. I believe that my experience in developing and implementing radical educational resources, for the co-op movement and beyond, is a natural fit to NASCO's missions.

Part II: Questions

1. Why are you involved in co-ops?

I am involved in the cooperative movement because I believe co-ops are both the means and the ends for building a new, just, democratic, and more equitable economy. Since I first became involved with co-ops and teaching about them, I have seen how they can transform individual lives, collective groups, and entire communities. Co-ops offer real-world, practical solutions to many (though certainly not all) social, economic, and environmental issues. They are not a far off theory, in contrast to many other ideas on how to build a more just society. As such, co-ops have the potential to improve lives and build better communities right now. During my nearly seven years of teaching about co-ops, this has stood out to me as what is especially exciting about the co-op movement.

2. What is your vision of NASCO within the cooperative movement? What is important for NASCO's long-term success in cooperative education?

To be frank, NASCO can play a role that I believe many co-op organizations are afraid to touch: bringing a more radical lens to the movement. This includes building anti-oppression resources for the organization's membership, but also for co-ops across all geographic ranges that NASCO represents. Many co-op organizations are unwilling to appear as anything but apolitical. My take is that this is where NASCO stands out. NASCO believes in building a world with a radically different frame of mind, and it is unapologetic about this philosophy.

In addition, NASCO's long term success in cooperative education depends on creating resources, materials, and opportunities that are engaging and speak to the direct needs and desires of the participants. Much of the co-op movement's education is still rooted in hierarchical approaches. However, in order to build democratic organizations and communities, we must utilize democratic approaches to education. The ways that people learn and teach directly shape how they work and interact with each other. One cannot simply be told what democracy is; they must experience and practice it. This, I believe, is somewhere else where NASCO can stand out in the co-op movement.

3. Of the items listed in Requirements of NASCO Directors, in what areas do you think you can best aid NASCO in its mission? What skills will you bring to the board?

Currently, I have just begun to serve as NASCO's development director on the board. I have done several successful fundraising campaigns outside of NASCO for co-op related projects, and have thus devised strategies and built up fundraising networks that could be used to aid NASCO. At the moment, the fundraising aspect of NASCO's board could be strengthened significantly. I believe that this is a unique area outside of education that I could help the organization develop its capacity around.

4. How are you able to contribute to the organization outside Board meetings? How will your other commitments allow you to give time and energy to the Board over the next three years?

My other commitments, primarily as a worker-owner at the Toolbox for Education and Social Action (TESA), perfectly lines up with my commitment to NASCO's board. TESA is a worker co-op that focuses on creating educational resources for social and economic change. A considerable amount of our work relates to the co-op movement as well as overlapping social justice issues. This is a perfect way to align my outside commitments with a commitment to NASCO's mission. We do a lot of education work with youth - from teenagers to college aged individuals - on co-ops and cooperation. I would easily use these opportunities as a venue to spread the word about

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NASCO and all that it has to offer.

5. *Are there specific issues you would like to work on as a board member?*

I would like to help NASCO envision stronger, sustainable fundraising approaches. I believe by working on some of these ideas, we can help stabilize some current issues that NASCO is facing. In addition, I know education is key to NASCO's work and mission. I would truly love to help NASCO envision creative approaches to utilizing democratic methods of education that are engaging and meaningful to its membership and the broader cooperative movement. As I previously stated, I believe this is a place where NASCO can play a vital and unique role in the co-op movement. I feel that its current capacity in this regard can be expanded and strengthened.

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Samantha Shain

Nominated by Life Center Association

Part I: Personal Data & Statement: *Please provide a brief description of your relevant experience and qualifications. Include your involvement with co-ops and a statement on why you are running for the Board.*

Joining the board of NASCO Education in fall 2012 was a pivotal moment in my cooperative trajectory, after two years of working with the Cooperative Food Empowerment Directive (CoFED) and co-founding the Beet Goes On food collective at Haverford College. I also researched the Mexican solidarity economy, created a 'zine about anti-oppression and cooperatives and will spend the coming summer working on a Philadelphia-based mapping and economic impact study of cooperatives. Collectively, these experiences have guided me towards making a lasting commitment to the cooperative movement.

Living in a Quaker housing co-op, participating in regional cooperative development (with CoFED and the emerging Philadelphia Area Cooperative Alliance) and building cooperative supply chains through a CSA distribution program have helped me develop the skills I needed to be a successful board member. While my position was originally interim, I strongly want to continue working with NASCO. As an undergraduate student, I am excited to keep youth voices involved in NASCO governance. NASCO plays a crucial role in providing a framework for cooperative, anti-oppressive leadership. Now that I've been trained for the past six months, I'm ready to take on a full term as a board member.

Part II: Questions *(candidates may choose to answer separately or collectively):*

- 1) *Why are you involved in co-ops?*
- 2) *What is your vision of NASCO within the cooperative movement? What is important for NASCO's long-term success in cooperative education?*
- 3) *Of the items listed in the Requirements of NASCO Directors, in what areas do you think you can best aid NASCO in its mission? What skills will you bring to the board?*
- 4) *How are you able to contribute to the organization outside Board meetings? How will your other commitments allow you to give time and energy to the Board over the next three years?*
- 5) *Are there specific issues you would like to work on as a board member?*

Years ago, cooperatives were a gateway for me to start engaging in radical politics and organizing for a more just and equitable future. The cooperative commitment to horizontal leadership and accountability deeply resonates with me. For me, this vision, sometimes criticized for being lofty or Utopian, finds meaning in the vast network of cooperatives that NASCO has helped to form and support over its many-decade history. The work we are doing requires a mixture of values and skills, and I've seen NASCO excel at providing both. As I look beyond my undergraduate years, I see the cooperative economy growing and expanding in new and creative ways, in large part because of the influence of youth reacting to uncertain (and, in many ways, dire) economic prospects. Moving from the International Year of the Cooperative to a Decade of Cooperation, I see amazing opportunities for collaboration and innovation in the cooperative sector/community. The combination of learning and praxis keeps bringing me back to cooperatives, and, more specifically, to NASCO.

In my experience as a current board member, I've most drawn on my interests and abilities in assessing/improving group dynamics, forming cooperative-oriented curricula and continuing to nurture our network of student cooperatives. I am deeply involved in campus-based social justice campaigns, primarily focused on environmental and food justice (in particular, the Real Food Challenge and the fossil fuel divestment movement).

Traveling from convergence to convergence, I meet many cooperative-minded folks who could benefit from linking into what NASCO has to offer. We need a balance of youth voices and elders to be a dynamic organization that meets the needs of our members, and I am well-suited to bolstering the youth side of this effort. Further, we need leaders who have experience and training in anti-oppression, a role to which I am happy to contribute.

Representing NASCO at mid-Atlantic cooperative functions, like CoFED trainings and PACA events (Cooperative Food Empowerment Directive and Philadelphia Area Cooperative Alliance, respectively) has been a joy! In my time on the board, I've been present at all required Board calls/meetings, a pattern which I plan to continue. I've

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genuinely enjoyed these commitments and learning from such talented and engaged people. NASCO is essential to the cooperative community in terms of providing much needed skills and maintenance support, continuous education and an opportunity for youth leadership development.

After gaining a nuanced perspective about the work NASCO does, and the future that we envision for the next phase of NASCO, I'm especially excited about implementing more anti-oppression action camps. NASCO frequently receives praise for our stellar programming on these themes, and there seems to be desire for more in-depth opportunities to study and dismantle systems of oppression. Since I already sit on the Inclusion Committee of the Board, I can see myself working closely with our staff collective and taking a larger role in organizing these events.

Moving forward, I would be honored to continue to be a conduit of information between the rapidly growing Philadelphia solidarity economy network, the NASCO Education Board and radicalized students engaged in organizing work on their campuses across the country. I am interested in furthering our work along lines of anti-oppression and doing outreach to more students-- and I have skills, knowledge and experience to be able to make these goals actionable. Since I have a solid background in both food justice and cooperatives, this is the perfect year to make a longer term commitment to NASCO as we move toward Institute season.

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Nick Harvey

Nominated by Whitehall Intentional Community, Austin, TX

Part I: Personal Data & Statement (Limit 200 Words.)*Please provide a brief description of your relevant experience and qualifications. Include your involvement with co-ops and a statement on why you are running for the Board.*

I hold a Bachelor's degree in English, a Paralegal license, and an Alternative Dispute Resolution certificate. I'm the VP of the board of my co-op, Cartier Square (Ottawa). We deal regularly with issues of inclusion: disputes, member engagement/involvement, and social events, due to the wide range of member lifestyles and origins--we always aim to resolve member issues or conflicts promptly and happily. We also work with our housing coordinator on finances/ledgers, and seek to research and execute optimal maintenance/repairs, so I'm comfortable with accounting and property management. Also, I've worked with the Labour Relations and HR departments of the Public Service Alliance of Canada, which manages several Canadian government unions. There I was able to observe mediations, arbitrations, and negotiations relating to grievances/accommodations--a perfect opportunity to learn about best methods of helping people collaborate/compromise to find harmonious conditions. And finally, since September I've been on the NASCO Education Board as an interim appointment. I've done my best to absorb all I could about NASCO's history, situation, and possible paths, as well as offer suggestions, help, and support. I want to ensure useful, beneficial member activities and decisions are initiated and maintained. I'd like to continue doing my part in helping the cooperative movement build on its already thriving chunk of virtually every sector--improving, developing, and cultivating quality and conditions of life as a result of sharing work and resources.

Part II: Questions (Limit 600 Words total.)

1) Why are you involved in co-ops?

I am involved in co-ops because I believe that community is crucial to quality of life and happiness. Humans are meant to work and live in close groups beyond family-level which cooperate *more than* just living near friends and neighbors with whom you contribute to the same GDP. Cooperation means that tasks, time, and energy are shared and spread out so that each individual finds far less struggle with financial or labor cost. Community can also mean sharing any other burdens and joys of life, and can provide opportunity for families, experiences, and development of all kinds.

2) What is your vision of NASCO within the cooperative movement? What is important for NASCO's long-term success in cooperative education?

My vision of NASCO within the cooperative movement is as a resource in virtually any element of a co-op's life or needs. This could mean that NASCO is there to help out with co-op creation/development (loans/mortgage/growth), co-op maintenance with physical systems as well as with logistics and member dynamics/relations/engagement/conflict resolution, and finally with education, training, anti-oppression audits/guidance, and other support. Ideally, NASCO would be the go-to organization for any service needed by a co-op, whether directly providing the service or linking members promptly and relevantly to what they need, and overseeing all resulting activities to ensure appropriate help was given.

NASCO's long-term success in cooperative education would require a board and a consulting circle of parties with a keen eye on the needs and paths of its members and cooperative movement trends in general. Next, NASCO needs to keep consistent and warm relations with educators, trainers, and researchers (including those who are already part of the boards) who are accessible and beneficial to members.

3) Of the items listed in the Requirements of NASCO Directors, in what areas do you think you can best aid NASCO in its mission? What skills will you bring to the board?

In terms of the requirements as laid out, I believe my skills would be primarily in the second category: helping provide guidance and oversight. I would be very interested to do my best with the other board members in keeping an eye on policies, initiatives, projects, and programs/services.

The feedback gathered from my contributions to discussion and brainstorming, as well as putting forth proposals and suggestions, would join the many unique perspectives needed to meld into the first category (planning, stewardship, development, strategic visioning, etc.). In this area I would collect research and do my part in adding

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my skills to an already stellar Board in helping ensure ideas and paths are explored in straightforward, efficient fashion.

Finally, I have experience with financial statements/accounting, and completed a small accounting course. I'll continue to offer suggestions based on observations, experience, and research on--for example--how to save money in NASCO's operations and logistics without sacrificing services or resources.

4) How are you able to contribute to the organization outside Board meetings? How will your other commitments allow you to give time and energy to the Board over the next three years?

I will continue to contribute all the time and energy I can to helping plan and execute each CETI (as I did last November), doing my part to help make events run smoothly for facilitators/presenters/volunteers/other board members/NASCO staff.

Also, I'm always researching and thinking carefully on ways NASCO can offer as many and as appropriate services as possible while operating on an optimal budget.

Finally, I regularly speak positively of the overwhelmingly positive activities and sentiment of NASCO in conversation (as, I hope, do the other board members and co-op members!).

5) Are there specific issues you would like to work on as a board member?

As a board member, particular areas of focus I might enjoy seeing NASCO head toward could include improving and maintaining the NASCO-hosted network directory of co-ops (both members and non-members of co-ops in every sector). This wasn't originally my idea, but in my opinion cross-sector 'webs' of people in food, residential, agricultural, financial, or other commercial co-ops are some of the most useful ways to increase access and cooperation while reducing costs.

Also, I believe reaching out to co-ops of types underrepresented in current NASCO membership is important (seeing what they need and aiming to provide it to them if within NASCO's mandate), whether it is the folks who live or work in them or the sectors they represent that is underrepresented. This in turn will help with my primary goal just above--uniting people in different areas of co-op life to seek a more harmonious overall existence.

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Maria Langlois

Nominated by College Houses, Austin, TX

Part I: Personal Data & Statement: My name is Maria Langlois and I am currently a member of College Houses Cooperatives in Austin, Texas. I am a student at The University of Texas at Austin working towards a B.S. in Psychology and a B.A. in Sociology. I have had the privilege of being a College Houses Cooperative member for three years now. I am currently in my second year as a board member of College Houses and in my second semester as director of Nueces Cooperative and a Membership and Marketing sub-committee member. My experience on the Board of Directors for College Houses Cooperatives has taught me to work with a team of diverse individuals in order to meet economic, social, and cultural needs for students through a democratic enterprise. As a member of College Houses, I work in developing and refining our organization's goals, purposes, and bylaws. Additionally, I have worked diligently with others in revising our organizational structure in order to increase social responsibility, ethical business practices, and reduce our environmental impact. I am running for the NASCO board because I am very passionate about the cooperative movement and community values and would like to assist cooperatives in forming and flourishing around the world.

Part II: Questions 1) *Why are you involved in co-ops?*

When I moved to Austin to attend The University of Texas, I found it very difficult to be away from my friends and family back home. Additionally, Austin was a very foreign city to me and I had yet to become acquainted to life here. Within my first year, I came to love the city and began to look at alternative housing options in order to truly embed myself within a strong community. The underlying source of my interest in cooperatives was fueled by my experiences as an immigrant and an only child of a single mother. I had craved the feeling of always being surrounded by a vast number of loved ones – I was able to find this through communal living. Living in a cooperative allows me to be a part of a genuine and truly magnificent family, where we can support, help, and care about one another.

2) *What is your vision of NASCO within the cooperative movement? What is important for NASCO's long-term success in cooperative education?*

I envision NASCO as both a supportive community and an imperative instrument through which cooperatives can find resources to improve their operations, learn more about other cooperatives, and find support through participation in an even larger community. I believe that it is imperative to NASCO's long-term success in cooperative education that we remain all-inclusive and more transparent. In order for the cooperative movement to continue to thrive, we must always look for ways to promote community engagement, the creation of new cooperatives, and ways to further diversify our organization.

3) *Of the items listed in the Requirements of NASCO Directors, in what areas do you think you can best aid NASCO in its mission? What skills will you bring to the board?*

Of the items listed, I feel that I am most helpful and skilled in Planning and Stewardship and Guidance and Oversight. Through my experiences at College Houses and as a co-oper, I have developed strong interpersonal communication skills, analytical skills, and a passion for knowledge and innovation that will lend itself well to NASCO. Becoming a part of the NASCO board would allow me the opportunity to help foster changes in policies and practices in order to work towards further developing an even more inclusive, efficient, and ethical organization.

4) *How are you able to contribute to the organization outside Board meetings? How will your other commitments allow you to give time and energy to the Board over the next three years?*

Not only will I contribute to NASCO during Board meetings, but I will also be engaged and fully involved with the organization throughout the three-year term. As an active member of my community, I feel that I am always learning and growing as an individual; thus, allocating time and energy to promote cooperative principles is a top priority for me. I am very enthusiastic about the prospects of combining my educational training and the skills I have gained in the community for implementation at NASCO through consistent communication with Board members and other cooperatives.

5) *Are there specific issues you would like to work on as a board member?*

I am very passionate about promoting diversity and community engagement both within cooperatives and throughout the general population. I feel that it is imperative to reach out to an even greater populace of potential members and further promote inclusive principles and empowerment. I would also like to address issues of environmental sustainability within cooperatives and our environmental, social, and political impact.

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Shaydanay Urbani

Nominated by Thomas Butler, Jonah Welch, Devlin Seymour, Arthur Smith, and Charles DeTar

Part I: Personal Data & Statement: I am a San Francisco Bay Area native and soon-to-be a alumna of UCLA. I've been formally involved in coops since I co-founded and became the project director of the UCLA Student Food Collective, a start-up grocery co-op in its second year of organizing that trains students in cooperative and sustainable businesses.

Last year I served as the Vice Chair of the Board of Directors for the Cooperative Food Empowerment Directive, a national network of student food cooperatives. I also served as co-chair for CoFED's membership committee, working closely with CoFED's regional staff and student organizers to develop its first membership plan and services.

I'm running for board, firstly, because of the value I've found in working with people who care about movement building and service. As I take some time off before pursuing a graduate degree I hope that I can contribute the skills and passion I've developed for board governance and cooperative education to further this movement and make NASCO a sustainable and thriving organization!

In my career beyond NASCO, I want to apply the deepened understanding of cooperative systems I would cultivate by serving on board to the global issues I care about--women's empowerment, sustainable resource management, and working with cross-cultural communities.

Part II: Questions

1) Why are you involved in co-ops?

I got involved with cooperatives because I was interested in local self-reliant communities and an active member of the California Student Sustainability Coalition, where I learned about how cooperatives could be an effective model for building a space on our campus where students could have a voice and support the local food economy.

I stayed involved with cooperatives because I love empowering, community-oriented models for skill building. I think co-op have an important place in student life because they bring together students with a shared need, but also cultivate skills they will have for a lifetime.

2) What is your vision of NASCO within the cooperative movement? What is important for NASCO's long-term success in cooperative education?

I would love to see NASCO make its educational services more accessible to under resourced and less developed coops. As with any membership-based organization, I think it's also important that NASCO develop good metrics for evaluating its impact.

3) Of the items listed in the Requirements of NASCO Directors, in what areas do you think you can best aid NASCO in its mission? What skills will you bring to the board?

During my term on the board of the Cooperative Food Empowerment Directive I served on the personnel committee, recruiting and hiring, managing staff transitions, evaluating staff performance and providing feedback on proposals. I also participated in strategic planning and reviewing budgets and development proposals.

As co-chair of the membership committee and in building the network of student food cooperatives in California, I have experience representing a national board to a broad range of student members, and working with those members to highlight their views and concerns at the board-level.

4) How are you able to contribute to the organization outside Board meetings? How will your other commitments allow you to give time and energy to the Board over the next three years?

Over the next few years I anticipate having the time and capacity to devote to board committee work. When I was Vice Chair for CoFED's Board of Directors I put in about 20 hours of board work per month on top of a rigorous academic schedule and directing the UCLA Student Food Collective--attesting to my commitment and work ethic. Now that I am graduating I would like to devote some of the extra time I will have outside of work and researching graduate programs to staying involved in the cooperative movement.

5) Are there specific issues you would like to work on as a board member?

I'm specifically interested in working with board members to make sure NASCO has a sustainable development plan, orderly finances, and solid metrics for evaluating the reach and effectiveness of NASCO's education services.

Candidate Statements

2013 NASCO Board Elections

Gabriela Palavicini Dominguez

Nominated by InterCooperative Council, Austin, TX

Part I: Personal Data & Statement (Limit 200 Words.): Living, working, playing, socializing and growing with UT Inter-Cooperative Council has been a fundamental part of my life for the last three years. Co-ops are near and dear to my heart because their supportive atmosphere. Rather than judgment for being a feminist, Mexican-American, queer, opinionated, woman, I have been treated as an equal. Participatory democracy has allowed me to be elected to house trustee, labor manager and education officer, in addition ICC's Planning and Development Coordinator. As the organization's Corporate Treasurer, I have worked on long and short term financial, facilities and growth planning. I have been also able to put the learning from my soon to be bachelors in Urban Studies & a Business Foundations Certificate from the University of Texas at Austin in practical use.

Over the last 13 months of being on ICC's Board of Directors, I have learned valuable lessons on how to serve the 188 members of a financially solvent nonprofit. This work has inspired me to continue working in affordable housing, the cooperative sector and with ethical business practices. As a member of the NASCO board, I aspire to preserve and grow the legacy that provides members with an educational and positive community.

Part II: Questions (Limit 600 Words total.) 1) *Why are you involved in co-ops?*

I am extremely grateful for the personal & professional opportunities that co-ops have allowed me to experience. I have been able to live in a home rather than an isolating apartment while I have gone to UT. Being a co-oper has also become engrained into my identity in the sense that I strive to put the Rochdale Principles of Co-operation into practice daily. I strongly believe in worker's rights to work & live in a safe and healthy atmosphere that is empowered through participatory democracy. To me, co-ops provide this positive atmosphere.

2) *What is your vision of NASCO within the cooperative movement? What is important for NASCO's long-term success in cooperative education?*

Three years ago I went to NASCO Institute not too long after my initial move into a co- op. Institute managed to completely inspire and invigorate me to become more involved in my co-op. This passion still remains and fuels me to want to spread the word to the public about how beneficial cooperatives could be to their lives. NASCO provides a national avenue to continue its outreach to the next generation of co-operators. I want NASCO to continue working to preserve current co-ops & help start new ones in order to grow the movement.

3) *Of the items listed in the Requirements of NASCO Directors, in what areas do you think you can best aid NASCO in its mission? What skills will you bring to the board?*

I bring 13 months of experience of working on ICC's long term financial, facilities, and growth planning including capital investments, redevelopment of current properties, real estate purchase & development, and 5-10 year budget planning. I have chaired, coordinated & ran Audit & Planning and Development Committee meetings. I hold myself to high standards of commitment to working hard on the tasks that I undertake. I also have an extroverted, positive and friendly personality, along with a healthy dose of prior experience with conflict mediation that allows me to work well with others. I would bring my positive, caring & passionate mindset to the NASCO board.

4) *How are you able to contribute to the organization outside Board meetings? How will your other commitments allow you to give time and energy to the Board over the next three years?*

Thankfully I will be moving on from my enormous commitment to the University of Texas this summer. I will continue to be an engaged member of ICC Austin on the house & organization level. I will eventually find a job, but will not allow my work with the NASCO board to suffer because by running for this position I am actively seeking to make NASCO a priority of mine. I will strive to be an active and helpful member to the board.

5) *Are there specific issues you would like to work on as a board member?*

I am inspired by NASCO's commitment to not only embracing diversity, but also supporting anti-oppression analysis & action. I think that NASCO can serve as a driving force in politicizing members to become more engaged citizens. Members are already used to participatory democracy within their organizations and companies, therefore why not urge members to become involved in their local and national government's politics? I think that voter registration drives at co-ops around the nation, in addition to political advocacy training can help form our generation's next batch of leaders. In order to grow the co-op movement and promote a more egalitarian society we need to work from within to encourage our members to be active members in our society.

Candidate Statements

2013 NASCO Board Elections

Daniel Kronovet

Nominated by Berkeley Student Cooperative, Berkeley, CA

Part I: Personal Data & Statement (Limit 200 Words.) While an undergrad, I spent the best three-and-a-half years of my life living as a member of the Berkeley Student Cooperative. I was lucky enough to experience four of the BSC's twenty co-ops, and experience a wide range of communities and styles of cooperation.

In addition, I spent my last two-and-a-half years in various leadership roles, serving first as a member-at-large on the BSC's executive committee, then for a year as the BSC's President, and then for another year as the BSC's Vice President of Education and Training. During that long tenure, I learned the broad range of skills necessary for serving on and leading a cooperative Board of Directors, and became intimately aware of the issues and challenges facing a modern non-profit Board. As such, I became adept at balancing both the "inward-facing" dimension of a cooperative board (representing the membership, maintaining democratic process) with the "outward-facing" dimension (dealing with external entities, responsibly carrying out fiduciary duties). I think this background makes me very well suited to the NASCO Board, where all of these skills are necessary.

I want to be on the NASCO Board because I both believe in the purpose and potential of NASCO, as well as recognize the responsibility of experienced co-ops to lend their time and energy to keeping NASCO going strongly.

Part II: Questions (Limit 600 Words total.)

1) Why are you involved in co-ops?

I am involved with the co-ops because my life has shown me that human beings thrive in environments where they are encouraged to treat each other with respect and as equals, where they can acknowledge and be acknowledged for jobs well done, and have opportunities to demonstrate their strengths and be supported in their weaknesses. Co-operatives, I think, provide all this and more.

2) What is your vision of NASCO within the cooperative movement? What is important for NASCO's long-term success in cooperative education?

I see NASCO's role as being that of internal coordination within the North American student co-operative movement, and of external advocacy to national and international actors. Internally, I see NASCO as being well positioned to collect and analyze information coming out of the member cooperatives and to organize and generate new knowledge to help co-ops reach their goals. Additionally, I see NASCO as playing a major role in fostering horizontal connections between co-operatives, to encourage additional coordination among co-ops.

Externally, I see NASCO being well positioned to take stock of the achievements and challenges of its member co-ops, and to advocate for student co-ops in national and international fora.

3) Of the items listed in the Requirements of NASCO Directors, in what areas do you think you can best aid NASCO in its mission? What skills will you bring to the board?

I think that while I will be able to effectively contribute in all aspects of the NASCO Board, my biggest impact will probably be in regards to the second responsibility, "Guidance and Oversight." My time at the BSC taught me how important--and how difficult--it is to balance both the internal ideals and aspirations of a large cooperative with the external restrictions and challenges that come from operating a non-profit in North America.

I have spent many years trying to find this balance. As a result, I think that--in addition to my skills and experience in cooperative governance--I bring a sense of sound judgment in environments of uncertainty and conflicting values. I know how to keep focused on the mission, to analyze the facts on the ground, and to act in a way that advances ideals while addressing mundane challenges and leaves everybody feeling understood and respected.

4) How are you able to contribute to the organization outside Board meetings? How will your other commitments allow you to give time and energy to the Board over the next three years?

I will begin working on a three-year law degree this August, which will be my main commitment during my term on the NASCO Board. It will be a major commitment (and I expect to get involved with on-campus activities as well), but I am very much hoping that I will be able to integrate everything I will be learning into my work at NASCO, helping to keep the organization safe and stable as it grows in the future. I see this commitment--although time-intensive--as an asset to my work on the NASCO Board.

5) Are there specific issues you would like to work on as a board member?

My first year at Institute, as the BSC's President and representative, I was struck by how--out of all the events and activities--the most intense and productive was the thirty-minute "regional break-out session" that took place during the Annual General Meeting. It was the first time I had been face-to-face with representatives from other nearby co-ops, and the energy in that circle was incredible. I felt--and others I've spoken to agree--that while there is a need and desire for regional cooperation and coordination, the moment such coordination is highly inconsistent. I would want to investigate how NASCO could help foster regional coordination among co-operatives, and to identify what roles, if any, NASCO should be playing in this regard.

Candidate Statements

2013 NASCO Board Elections

Vivian Onuoha

Nominated by Mingwei Huang, Esteban Kelly, Nick Harvey, Vanessa Toro, and Samantha Shain

Part I: Personal Data & Statement (Limit 200 Words.)

My name is Vivian Onuoha. I am currently a fourth year student at the University of California, Berkeley, studying Applied Mathematics. I have been living in the Berkeley Student coops for the past 3 years. Coming from an immigrant background, cooperative living and communitarianism has become an instrumental part of my social development. I feel like the BSC has helped me grow as an individual and it has helped me learn what it means to have a sense of shared ownership over space and diversity. I have lived in Cloyne Court for all of my time in the BSC and I have found the experience to be rewarding.

Part II: Questions (Limit 600 Words total.)

1. *Why are you involved in co-ops?*
2. *What is your vision of NASCO within the cooperative movement? What is important for NASCO's long-term success in cooperative education?*
3. *Of the items listed in the Requirements of NASCO Directors, in what areas do you think you can best aid NASCO in its mission? What skills will you bring to the board?*
4. *How are you able to contribute to the organization outside Board meetings? How will your other commitments allow you to give time and energy to the Board over the next three years?*
5. *Are there specific issues you would like to work on as a board member?*

In order to give back to my house and the BSC, I have taken on a number of manager positions and projects in order to maintain the historical and philanthropic integrity of the organization. I was the maintenance manager at Cloyne for 3 semesters and a summer. Currently, I am the assistant facilities manager. In Spring 2012, I received the BSC Pioneer Award for my contribution to my house and the BSC.

With regards to my experience with NASCO, I first attended the institute in November 2011, where I was appointed the co-chair of the People of Color Caucus. Since NASCO, I have active gauged the influence of race in housing contracts. In the three years that I have lived in Cloyne, I often felt like the environment was not for me because for several semesters, I was the only African (American) living in a house of 150 people. But, I realized that true co-oper has the responsibility to create a welcoming and inclusive environment for all. I have facilitated five workshops on Diversity and Privilege in order to raise awareness to why the historically marginalized peoples who should benefit from a non-profit organization like the BSC are not doing so.

Last August, I decided that I wanted to contribute to the NASCO and cooperative movement. So, I submitted a workshop proposal to NASCO's Director of Education and Training and I was invited back to NASCO Institute to facilitate a three hour workshop intensive on Diversity in Student Housing Coops. I also facilitated the People of Color Caucus, where I brought back many of the concerns that many people of color and people from the LGBTQIA community have when it comes to being accepted and included in a space that should be reclaimed as their own. I feel honored to have lived in the BSC and I would represent the BSC in the greatest capacity on NASCO board.