The NASP Leadership Assembly has adopted three strategic goals that guide the association’s work. In your state, what are some gains being made in school psychology practice related to these goals, and what are some pressing challenges?

After NASP adopted the new strategic goals, we as the Kansas Association of School Psychologists (KASP) revised our strategic goal areas to be aligned with the practice model, workforce shortages solutions, and social justice. This was important to us as the needs within our state reflect these objectives. Within our state, we have improved our efforts in advocacy by co-hosting a Mental Health Lobby Day for school psychologists to learn about advocacy and engage in advocacy while meeting with legislators. In previous years, this event was co-hosted with school social workers and school counselors, however this past year we have also invited school nurses. We believe that the collaboration among all these service providers will help in our advocacy efforts. Additionally, one of the biggest challenges that we are facing in the state is a shortage of school psychologists and school psychology trainers. To aid in the shortage of school psychologists, KASP partnered with one of the training programs and created a work authorization program. This program was developed to help those who have a degree in a related field complete the school psychology program while using some of the credits from their previous training program. However, one of the barriers to this program that we have discovered is that work-authorized school psychologists are not staying in areas where the shortages are most present. Therefore, school psychologists around the state are routinely surveyed to determine common barriers. As a result, multiple committees and task forces have been created to help alleviate these barriers and challenges. Regarding the trainers shortage, one of the online graduate programs in Kansas was able to get funding to add an additional full-time school psychology faculty. This is an incredible accomplishment for that program.

To promote the NASP practice model and encourage school districts across the state to apply for the ESPS recognition program, the KASP board created a grant that helps with the cost of the application. One district has utilized this grant and after applying was granted a “proficient” designation.

During the annual fall state convention, the KASP board provided two scholarships to diverse graduate students. In recent years the board has had a decrease in applicants and in some years the scholarship was only given to one graduate student and in some years there were no recipients. In order to mitigate this, the KASP board expanded its definition of a diverse background to include those who are LGBTQ+ and those who have a disability. Additionally, multiple efforts were made to solicit applicants for the scholarship. This resulted in an increase in applicants as well as being able to grant two scholarships in the last year and two during this year’s convention.