



NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF
GRADUATE-PROFESSIONAL
STUDENTS

Good morning/afternoon/evening, NAGPS, wherever you are in the world today,

I hope that this letter finds everyone safe and well as we all continue to adapt to our new (ab)normal. We are about to close the door on a Spring Semester that was unlike any other in a long time. In keeping with the new tradition, I wanted to reach out to you all, keeping you abreast of Association business while offering some advice and some counsel. So let's get to it.

In the recent weeks since the COVID-19 outbreak and the subsequent social, economic, and cultural shutdowns, we have been forced to refocus our efforts. We had great success in shifting our programming. The in-person events of Northeast Regional Conference and Spring Legislative Action Days and Advocacy Summit were, unfortunately, cancelled. However, we were able to transition them into very productive and successful digital events. Continuing that trend, we are happy to announce our efforts around other digital events. We are looking to hold digital conferences for the Midwest, South Central, and Southeast, possibly even in joint events like has been done in the recent past. Additionally, we are currently exploring the logistics and interest in hosting a **Digital NAGPS Leadership Academy** this summer. The inaugural rebrand of the Leadership Academy last year at the National Conference was a great success. We hope to continue our popular leadership training programs. Please be on the lookout for additional information and updates regarding these events.

We know that we are reaching the time of year when our eyes are turned towards National Conference. The Board fielded several quality bids. A few final logistics need to be made before we officially announce the host of the **2020 National Conference** but I can say: be on the lookout for an email soon in early May!

I want to again state that the success of these digital efforts relies on all of us. The Board continues to work diligently on the logistics, content, and infrastructure for these events. The

ultimate success of these events is shared, though, and to that end, we need your help to make them work. First, we invite all of you to attend the events as you see fit and as able. The more attendance we have, the better the events will be. Most importantly, however, is the content. Our events are not successful without quality presentations, many of which come from you.

The Board of Directors continues to work on issues related to higher education and COVID-19. We have received media inquiries from publications like *Inside Higher Education* as well as collaborative requests from some of our partner organizations in graduate and higher education. One of the things that we are routinely asked for in these interactions is information. In order to be more responsive to you and to increase our ability to work on your behalf NAGPS is working on a **Membership Survey**. We are hoping to send this survey in the next week or so. The survey will have three principle parts: member information, questions about your Department or College, and your institution's response to COVID-19 and its impact. The survey will be personally anonymous; your name WILL NOT be asked. This survey will be designed to inform us on some of the broader aspects of your graduate experience - funding status, access to university resources, etc. - but will also let us know how universities, from the top-down, are responding to the current crisis. Once it is ready, we will be emailing it out to the entire membership and we hope that you will consider filling it out and passing it on to your constituents.

As Spring ends and Summer begins, there are positions and committees that we need to fill. We are currently looking for **applicants for the following positions:**

- Director of Legislative Affairs
- Director of the Southeast Region
- Director of the South Central Region
- Assistant Director of Outreach
- Assistant Director of Communications

If you are interested in any of these positions, contact Fang Zhang, Vice President & COO (vice-president@nagps.org), or myself (president@nagps.org). Inquiries specific to Assistant

Director of Outreach should be directed to Vinnie Amato, Director of Outreach.(outreach@nagps.org) while inquiries specific to Assistant Director of Communications should be addressed to Diane Lieu, Director of Communication and CCO (communications@nagps.org).

We are also **looking for members for our many committees**. If you are interested in any of the following committees, please feel free to reach out to the respective committee chair:

Strategic Planning Committee - president@nagps.org

Bylaws Committee - president@nagps.org

Election Committee - vice-president@nagps.org

Finance and Fundraising Committee - fin@nagps.org or external@nagps.org

Advocacy Committee - dsjc@nagps.org

Outreach Committee - outreach@nagps.org

With the situation we are currently in, we are looking to mobilize our internal operations and operating procedures over the summer. Please consider joining us as we tackle many important and exciting projects.

We are in the midst of a moment that none of us have ever seen or ever expected to see. This moment has presented all of us with challenges, none of which we were prepared to handle. I want to applaud the efforts of the entire Board of Directors and all of our Regional Board Members for their work during this crisis. Nothing in the last month and a half has been easy. It seems like every morning brings with it new challenges. The disruption of business is one thing but this moment has disrupted and destroyed many of the normal contours of our daily lives. Graduation deadlines have been moved. Funding has been delayed. College campuses, sources of life, energy, creative, and passion, are now eerily silent as higher education faces its greatest crisis.

There are good things, though.

This moment has brought us together, while staying apart, like nothing ever has. We are seeing firsthand the unbridled and inextinguishable optimism of the human spirit. Graduate and professional students are a talented, compassionate, and resilient bunch. Jokes and memes abound on the internet about how quarantine/social isolation is nothing new for the graduate-professional student. While this is true to a certain degree I want to take a moment to acknowledge each and every one of you. There is no right way to handle this crisis. As long as you are being safe and taking the recommended and appropriate precautions, what you're doing is probably fine, and is probably the right thing for you. Your response and reaction to this moment is yours and no one else's and I think it's important for you to know: you're doing a great job.

Giving yourself a break during this time is hard. On that, I think we can all agree. If nothing else, I would ask that you extend that kindness to yourself and to others. Your experience is different from mine, which is different from anyone else's. Now more than ever, we need to support one another. Give yourself a break. Give your friends and colleagues a break. Many of you are finishing your times as campus leaders (we thank you for all that you have done!) and you know what that transition is like. Help your successor. Give them some time to adjust. Giving people time, space, and support is the biggest and most impactful thing that any of us can do right now. It's a simple gesture, one that requires little of each of us, but like so many of the simpler things in life, it means the most.

We hope that all of you are well. We hope that your family and friends are well. For those of you that have lost someone as a result of this, you have our deepest condolences. For those of you who have had your lives upset by this moment, you have our sympathy. All of you have our support. Know that you can reach out to us (board@nagps.org or president@nagps.org) at any time. I am here to help. We are here to help. As students, teachers, and professionals, you have all demonstrated a tremendous ability to rise to any occasion. I am confident that together, we can do so again.

Be safe and be well,

And please; wear a mask and wash your hands.

You are the Association. We are NAGPS.

Best,

Brad