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| |  |  | | --- | --- | | |  | | --- | | **Good morning/afternoon/evening, NAGPS, wherever you are in the world today,**  I hope that this letter finds everyone safe and well as we push forward into the Summer. We are moving forward into a Summer full of questions and concerns, some of which I hope to address here. 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.  We are happy to reannounce/update a few developments to the membership. We have recovered 93% of the misappropriated funds mentioned at the 2019 National Conference. Additionally, the issue regarding NAGPS’s taxes and non-profit status are in the process of being resolved. NAGPS has retained the services of a CPA: S.W. Hall & Associates who is currently working on those issues. We hope to have all of the financial issues resolved soon.  On Wednesday, June 3, 2020, Association launched it will national Message Congress Campaign, **#OPTandH1BforUandMe**, to urge the White House and the U.S. Congress to support the H-1B Visa and Optional Practical Training(OPT) programs. Recently, there have been calls to suspend the OPT and H-1B programs and it is rumored that the White House will soon take action. NAGPS strongly condemns the efforts to suspend these programs. Please join us as we continue our efforts. Vist the NAGPS [website](https://nagps.us13.list-manage.com/track/click?u=59dc3103db35bd6e5592ddc77&id=8cf4300c22&e=c074d44bbd) for more information.  The success of our Digital Legislative Action Days and Advocacy Summit has inspired us to pursue other online programming efforts. To that end, I am pleased to announce two events. First, the 2020 NAGPS Leadership Academy. Last year was the inaugural year of the Leadership rebranding and it was an unqualified success. We are hoping to do the same with this year’s event, being held**Saturday July 25th, from 12 pm to 8 pm EST**. Registration, expectation, and fee structure can be found in the RSVP form [here](https://nagps.us13.list-manage.com/track/click?u=59dc3103db35bd6e5592ddc77&id=3a874135eb&e=c074d44bbd). We hope to see you there!  The second event I would like to publicize is a new event, one that likely will recur over the year. In July of this year, we will be hosting a digital check-in with the membership, a town hall of sorts. This will be an opportunity for you to ask us questions, offer suggestions, raise issues or ideas that you have, etc. We are hoping that this event will allow us to increase our engagement with all of you and vice versa. In anticipation of high attendance, we are looking into the technical aspects of how this would happen. Once we have it figured out, we will be announcing the date, time, and call information.   As we continue to strengthen and develop the Association’s operations, we have been pursuing new and exciting partnerships to offer to our members. As such, we are happy to announce a partnership with [The Grad Academy](https://nagps.us13.list-manage.com/track/click?u=59dc3103db35bd6e5592ddc77&id=7589eeeac5&e=c074d44bbd), a company which offers courses on how to best navigate and prepare for grad school. The core values of The Grad Academy line up with our commitment to supporting graduate and professional students in their higher education journey. We hope that resources like this will be of use to you. Use the code NAGPS to get 20% off!  As the Summer season is now well underway, there are positions and committees that we need to fill. We are currently looking for [applicants](https://nagps.us13.list-manage.com/track/click?u=59dc3103db35bd6e5592ddc77&id=a6f2ef964f&e=c074d44bbd)**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](mailto:vice-president@nagps.org)), or myself ([president@nagps.org](mailto:president@nagps.org)). Inquiries specific to Assistant Director of Outreach should be directed to Vinnie Amato, Director of Outreach ([outreach@nagps.org](mailto: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](mailto: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](mailto:president@nagps.org)  Bylaws Committee - [president@nagps.org](mailto:president@nagps.org)  Election Committee - [vice-president@nagps.org](mailto:vice-president@nagps.org)  Finance and Fundraising Committee - [fin@nagps.org](mailto:fin@nagps.org)  or [external@nagps.org](mailto:external@nagps.org)   Advocacy Committee - [dsjc@nagps.org](mailto:dsjc@nagps.org)  Outreach Committee - [outreach@nagps.org](mailto: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.  This year was challenging beyond anyone’s expectations. I want to take a moment and [congratulate](mailto:https://docs.google.com/document/d/1Klp1EEl3lsQ_TQORW52MWJw-WAHZryYCnWjnI8_B20U/edit?usp=sharing) everyone in the Class of 2020. Your achievements would stand strongly on their own in any year. In the context of this year and the additional challenges thrust upon you, they are beyond compare. I want to personally congratulate you for your tremendous accomplishment and to wish you well in your future endeavours. You always have friends and allies here in NAGPS.  Congratulations are also in store for all newly-elected and out-going GSO officers. For all out-going officers: we thank you for the service that you have given to your peers and colleagues and for the cause of graduate and professional student advocacy. Incoming officers, we appreciate your willingness to take up these important charges and we look forward to working with you going forward. Please feel free to contact us and I do hope that you’ll join us for our Digital Leadership Academy event.   2020 has been nothing short of unprecedented.   COVID-19 completely uprooted the normal contours of our lives. It’s impact on the country has been dramatic and the end of this grave threat does not look to be going away soon. I want to applaud each and every one of you for the precautions that you have taken, the sacrifices you have made, and the ways in which you have handled this upheaval. It takes an extraordinary amount of courage and grace to handle such calamity and your efforts deserve the highest of praise. In order to better understand your experience, we have attached a COVID-19 Survey. Even if you don’t fill it out, please feel free to reach out to myself or the Board if you need to. We’re here to help.  We are truly living through a historical moment. The murders of George Floyd and Breonna Taylor at the hands of the police, and lynching of Ahmaud Arbery by white supremacists left us saddened, outraged, and shocked. The systemic racism and violence of modern America has terrorized Black and Brown communities across this country since its inception. The protests against police brutality have spread across the country and the world. We at NAGPS stand firmly in support of justice and equality. We abhor racism and discrimination, as well as the violence that sustains the system which perpetuates them. We support the creation of more diverse, inclusive, and representative communities in higher education and we ask that everyone take a moment to listen. Our friends and colleagues in the Black community are talking to us; it is now time for us to listen. We condemn, in the strongest possible terms, the efforts of law enforcement to violently attack peaceful protesters. We deplore the actions of those acting in bad faith, who attempt to vilify the protesters, shifting the attention away from the message. Black Lives Matter. I say again, unequivocally and without qualification: [Black Lives Matter](https://nagps.us13.list-manage.com/track/click?u=59dc3103db35bd6e5592ddc77&id=b483194054&e=c074d44bbd).   We would also like to take a moment and acknowledge  Pride Month. NAGPS supports all efforts to make higher education more inclusive to students in the LGTBQIA community, to make our universities safe, and we condemn any efforts to discriminate based on gender and sexual identity.  While it is unfortunate that we cannot celebrate Pride2020 the way we normally would, from me to you let me just say; Happy Pride 2020 to and from all of us in the LGTBQIA community.   No matter what you do, we ask that you take care of yourself. If, as states and cities start to reopen, you decide to go out, continue to wear a mask. If you choose to celebrate Pride, do so responsibly and with correct and appropriate safety standards. If you join a Black Lives Matter protest, please look out for yourself and you with a platform: use it. Listen to those around you.   I leave you now with the words of Elie Wiesel:  *"Neutrality helps the oppressor, never the victim. Silence encourages the tormentor, never the tormented. Sometimes we must interfere. When human lives are endangered, when human dignity is in jeopardy, national borders and sensitivities become irrelevant."*  Be safe. Be well. And stay cool.  **You are the Association. We are NAGPS.**  Bradley J. Sommer *President & CEO* National Association of Graduate-Professional Students (NAGPS) | | |