



## **A Welcome Back Message from the President**

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

I hope that this letter finds everyone safe and well as we move towards Fall Semester. It's been a very busy and active Summer for the Association, and I'm sure for you as well. As the process of returning to classes, if not necessarily to campuses, begins, I wanted to reach out to you all, keeping you abreast of some Association business while offering some advice and some counsel. So let's get to it.

The ongoing measures to address **NAGPS's tax and corporate filing status** are on the way to resolution. The accounting agency we have retained, SW. Hall & Associates, recently informed us that we have until November 15, 2020 to rectify the situation, rather than the previous deadline of August 15. This deadline gives us a little extra time to ensure that everything is in order. SW Hall is making progress, and we are optimistic that the situation will be resolved in its entirety soon. Additionally, we are in the process of reviewing and drafting a proposed budget. If you would like to be a part of this drafting process, please email Director of Finance & CFO, Paul Welfer, at [fin@nagps.org](mailto:fin@nagps.org)

On a programming front, the recent **Annual Leadership Academy** was conducted on July 25. Our first effort at a comprehensive and fully-online NAGPS event, the Academy was well-attended with **over 125 registrations**. Attendees were treated to a variety of speakers and topics. Your attendance and participation at the event helped to make it an unqualified success. Special thanks to Vice President & COO, Dr. Fang Zhang, who planned and executed this excellent event.

We are committed to providing you with the content which you have come to expect from your membership in NAGPS. The success of our online Leadership Academy has us confident that we can effectively conduct other online events this year. To that end, we are pleased to announce the 2020 **Fall Legislative Action Days and Advocacy Summit** - LAD - will be fully online this semester. LAD is going to be held on **Saturday October 3**: registration and information can be found [here](#). The program is close to being finalized. We're looking to get a few last speakers for some of our panels, specifically the Congressional Staffer Panel. If you know have any suggestions for the staffer panel, please contact Special Assistant for Legislative Events, Beth Oates, at [sa\\_legislativeevents@nagps.org](mailto:sa_legislativeevents@nagps.org)

Additionally, as you are likely aware, NAGPS had a contract with the Westin Hotel in Crystal City for the Spring LAD. That contract was amended and extended for this year. With the on-going crisis around COVID-19, we reached out to the Westin about an additional extension. I'm happy to announce that we have been able to secure an extension of the previous contract through November 15, 2021. We



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are very happy with this result as it allows us great flexibility in which event we host at the hotel next year.

In keeping with the online and socially-distance programming year, I am happy to announce the dates for our premier event, the **2020 NAGPS National Conference; November 14 and 15**. NAGPS will still be partnering with our selected host, the [University of North Texas Graduate Student Council](#), as we develop the programming for this fully-digital event. While we continue to develop the agenda, there are a few items we are currently looking for: applications for the [2020 Parliamentarian](#) and applications for the [2021 National Conference Host](#) (applications for 2021 Board of Director positions and submissions for 2020 resolutions will be following soon).

As many of you are aware, the Board of Directors has had several openings throughout the year. I'm happy to announce and introduce that we have filled 3 of those positions. Please join me in welcoming the following new Board Members:

- *Assistant Director of Communications* - **Chenxi Wang**, University of Massachusetts-Lowell
- *Assistant Director of Outreach* - **Parul Suri**, University of Kentucky-Lexington
- *West Regional Director* - **Kaashifah Fnu**, University of Nevada-Reno

We're very excited to have our Board nearing full-capacity. To that end, **we are still currently accepting applications** for the *Director of Legislative Affairs*, *Director of the Southeast*, and *Director of the South Central*. Please email [president@nagps.org](mailto:president@nagps.org) and [vice-president@nags.org](mailto:vice-president@nags.org) if you are interested.

As many of you are likely aware, **the new NAGPS member year begins on September 1**. As such, invoices for dues for the 2020-2021 membership year will be sent soon. Per the will of the membership, dues are set to increase slightly this year. Information on membership and membership rates can be found [here](#). If you have any questions, please feel free to contact Director of Finance & CFO, Paul Welfer, at [fin@nagps.org](mailto:fin@nagps.org)

As a part of the NAGPS support structure, the National Advisory Board (NAB) provides NAGPS with a variety of resources and expertise that we otherwise would not have access to. Much of the support for the financial reconciliation process has come from the NAB. Currently, **we are looking for new members for the NAB**. Requirements and qualifications for the NAB can be found [here](#).

As August slowly turns to September, many of us are gearing up to go back to school. Some of us have already returned. As universities move to reopen, we are faced with more and more challenges and uncertainty. Many of us remain in the dark about our work and graduation statuses. Access to campus



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resources - many of which are only available to graduate and professional students on campus - remains in question. Schools which have opened are already

experiencing problems, both foreseen and unforeseen. While NAGPS does not have an official stance on the status of university reopening policies, we do strongly encourage university administrators to take every prudent and necessary precautions to ensure the safety of all students, faculty, and staff. In order to ensure that the graduate-professional student experience is taken into account, we also strongly encourage universities to include graduate and professional students in the ongoing dialogue around campus reopening policies.

As is my wont, I am going to once again repeat myself. 2020 continues to be a year utterly lacking in precedence. Every month, every week, every single day seems to surprise us with another new challenge. Rarely are we prepared for these new challenges. And yet, somehow, you all continue to meet them. I am consistently and constantly impressed by your grace, aplomb, compassion, work ethic, and resiliency. Nothing you have done this year has been easy. Everything you've achieved this year has been earned. You deserve the highest and most unending of praise.

You've navigated a lot this year. The abrupt cancellation of the Spring Semester. The additional challenges of the Summer. The numerous upcoming obstacles of Fall. All of this on top of the already considerable challenges of being a graduate or professional student. The simple act of being has taken on new meaning in this moment. You continue to serve as pillars of your communities. Your strength, perseverance, and elegance are commendable, deserving of the highest praise.

Wherever you are, I hope you are well. Wherever lies ahead for you this semester, I hope that it goes well. It is important that we continue to stick together during this time. Offer you support when you can, listen when you are able. Even if we cannot physically be together, we can still be there. Take care of yourself. Wear a mask. Wash your hands.

You are the Association. We are NAGPS.

***Bradley J. Sommer***

President & CEO

National Association of Graduate-Professional Students (NAGPS)