



A Letter 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 the end of this historic and unprecedented semester. As many of us march towards the end of the Fall Semester, and a much-deserved break, 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 nearly resolved. As you likely recall from my letter last month, Director of Finance Paul Welfer and I were able to get confirmation that we are on our way and that the necessary documentation will be filed by the reinstatement deadline. We're very excited to have this situation resolved, as are all of you, I am sure. Once SW Hall gets the final 990 tax forms to us, I will sign and send them to SW Hall for processing.

This is just the first step, though. Getting our taxes filed and securing our 501(c)(3) status is only addressing an inherited problem, not the situation which allowed it to transpire. To that end, the Board of Directors and the Finance and Fundraising Committee are currently exploring changes to the NAGPS Bylaws and Standard Operating Procedures to embed compliance as a priority of NAGPS. If you have any suggestions on that topic, please let us know. Like I mentioned last month, a provisional budget for the 2020-2021 fiscal year has been approved by the Finance and Fundraising Committee as well as the Board of Directors. The budget is linked [here](#), in case you have not yet received it. Please review this before National Conference so that we can move directly into conversation, debate, and voting. If you have any questions about the finances of the Association, please email Director of Finance & CFO, Paul Welfer, at fin@nagps.org.

November on the calendar means one thing for the Association year: National Conference. The **2020 NAGPS National Conference** is coming up; **November 13 to 15**. NAGPS is partnering with our colleagues at the [University of North Texas Graduate Student Council](#). The tentative agenda can be found [here](#). The theme for this year's conference is "**Resiliency in 2020: Redefining Normalcy**". Currently, we are looking for applications and submissions for the following items and positions:

- [2021 Board of Directors Nominations](#);
- [2020 Resolutions Template](#);
- [National Conference Parliamentarian and Business Chairs](#);
- [2021 National Conference Hosts](#);
- [2020 Member of the Year Award](#).



One of the things about the event we are particularly excited about is how we are conducting the business meetings. As I mentioned before, with the fully-digital format, we are making the conference more accessible than ever. To that end, we are pleased to announce that **every member institution of NAGPS will be guaranteed one free individual admission to the business meetings**, to ensure that money does not prevent any member from having representation.

Because of the digital format, we are going to be implementing some protocols to ensure a smoother process. Whenever there is a timed section in a business meeting (mostly, but not exclusively candidate speeches, Q&A, and presenting resolutions) we are going to be strict in enforcing the time limits. This will include potentially muting folks who are going over time. The format we are in makes it harder for us to ensure that everyone can speak and contribute so we are going to make sure that we keep the meetings fair and on track. We will be following up soon with information on Robert's Rules of Order, as well as the various technology and meeting platforms we will be using, including Zoom and [Discord](#) (these will be in an email and will also be located on the National Conference Attendee Toolkit, located in the agenda). We hope that this makes it easier for members to attend, have representation, and participate in elections, budget discussions, and resolution debates. We look forward to seeing you there!

As many of you are likely aware, **the new NAGPS member year began on September 1**. As such, invoices for dues for the 2020-2021 membership year have been sent. Per the will of the membership, dues increased 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.

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](#).

Fall is fully underway and winter is coming (no, not like that). The challenges of this year are not specific to the pandemic. 2020 is an election year, one of the most important in recent memory. While NAGPS does not endorse political candidates or parties we **strongly encourage anyone who can vote, to vote, to have a voting plan, and to vote how you think is best**. In order to ensure that the graduate-professional student experience is taken into account, it is essential that we make our voices heard and our opinions known, and the franchise is still the most powerful means to that end. If you are able to vote, please do so if you have not already. There are reports of potential altercations and intimidation tactics at polling stations. I implore you all to be safe. Have a plan. Go to the polls early, be prepared to wait, and if you can, please go with friends. In times like these, solidarity is a small thing



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but it can make the biggest difference. You're part of the most politically-active populations in this country and I trust all of you to make the choice that is right and best for you.

These last few years have been challenging for higher education and this year, this election cycle, has been extremely stressful and distressing. If you are feeling stressed, anxious, sad, or depressed, whether because of this election cycle or for reasons outside of it, I encourage you to reach out and seek help if you need it. Asking for help is a sign of strength, not weakness, and there are people out there who care and will help you.

By now, you know what's coming; "Here comes Brad, about to repeat himself again." And you're right. Spot on.

2020 is unrelenting. Brutal. Every day seems to be a struggle. Every moment of every day is a challenge. Victories are few and far between and often come with the greatest effort and cost. These challenges are never convenient. There seems to be no end to the deluge.

And yet, despite this, you all continue to succeed and excel. I am beyond impressed. In fact, I stopped being impressed long ago. Now, I am speechless. I stand in awe of your grace, your poise, and your strength. I long ago ran out of words to describe the things you have done this year. Yours is a power that few people possess. It has been a profound personal and professional honor to have served you this year as President, an honor I am sure I did not and still do not deserve, but one which I appreciate all the same.

Wherever you are, I hope you are well. It is important that we continue to stick together during this time. Lend a hand when you can. Support one another.. 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)