



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 into the fall. We're into a time of cooler weather and spooky times. It's been a very busy and active month for the Association, and I'm sure for you as well, as the Fall Semester is well underway. As we continued to settle into our new normal, adapting to change and adopting new routines, 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, our accountants, S.W. Hall & Associates, recently informed us that we have until mid-November to rectify the situation. In a recent phone conversation with S.W. Hall, Director of Finance Paul Welfer and I were able to get confirmation that we are on our way and that, barring some unforeseen complication, the issue will be resolved by the deadline. We're very excited to have this situation resolved, as are all of you, I am sure. 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. Lastly on the Finance side, the Finance and Fundraising Committee has conditionally approved a provisional budget for the 2020-2021 fiscal year. The budget has been sent to the Board for approval. In turn that will be sent to the membership to review before debating and voting on it at National Conference. Please be on the lookout for that in the next week. If you have any questions about the finances of The Association, please email Director of Finance & CFO, Paul Welfer, at fin@nagps.org.

Even as COVID forces us to adapt consistently and constantly, we still strive to bring you the programming and content that you have come to expect from us and that NAGPS has been known for over the last 34 years. On that programming front, the **2020 Fall Legislative Action Days and Advocacy Summit** was just held last weekend (3-4 October). The event was a great success with 50+ registrations from schools across the country, including many first-time attendees and many non-members. The event touched upon issues ranging from the recent DHS letter, higher education funding, science and humanities funding, social justice, and more, eventually culminating in a wonderful interaction with four current policy fellows, all of who are former graduate students, and even some NAGPS alumni. We had a few technical issues on Day Two (my fault to be sure) but other than that it was a wonderful weekend and a highly-productive conference. A big thanks to the entire



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Board of Directors for their help but a special moment of recognition to our legislative team: Special Assistant for Legislative Analysis Ellie Johnson, and Interim Director of Legislative Affairs Beth Oates. The success of the conference is theirs, and I hope you'll all join me in giving them the praise and recognition that they absolutely deserve. If you have any questions about the content from the event, or just general legislative questions, contact Beth Oates at legislative@nagps.org.

In keeping with the online and socially-distanced programming year, I am happy to announce the dates for our premier event, the **2020 NAGPS National Conference; November 13 to 15**. NAGPS will be partnering with the [University of North Texas Graduate Student Council](#) as we develop the programming for this fully-digital event. 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:

- [National Conference Speaker](#);
- [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. With our fully-digital event, 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. 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 aware, the Board of Directors has had several openings throughout the year. Last month, we filled three of those positions and this month, we filled another. Please join me in welcoming the following new Board Member:

- *South Central Regional Director, **Vivek Gurung**, The University of Kansas Medical Center.*

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* and *Southeast Regional Director*. Please email president@nagps.org and vice-president@nagps.org if you are interested.



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.

Please join me in welcoming the following new member organizations to the Association:

- Arkansas State University Graduate Student Council
- University of Arkansas at Pine Bluff
- Seattle University Graduate Student Council

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. The leaves are changing (in some places), the temperature is dropping (for some of us), and everything is now pumpkin-flavored or scented (this one is probably common to all of us). The patterns of this semester are different from any other, even if some of the basic beats sound the same. The challenges and uncertainty of August and September have not gone away as the calendar has turned. Questions of on-campus safety, health insurance, teaching loads, accessibility, and graduation deadlines all remain. Many of us remain in the dark.

While NAGPS does not have an official stance on the efficiency or effectiveness of reopening policies, we **strongly encourage university administrators to take every prudent and necessary precaution 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**. Graduate and professional students represent a core constituency within the university space, as both students and workers, learners and teachers. Any viable plan for the present and the future is one that will include graduate and professional students; we are essential.

As is my wont, I am going to once again repeat myself. 2020 continues to be a year utterly lacking in precedence. Every moment of every day is a challenge. Rarely, if ever, do these challenges wait for a time or a place of our choosing to manifest. We are over a month into the new semester and somehow,



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perhaps unsurprisingly, you all continue to succeed and excel. I am consistently and constantly impressed by you. Your ability to operate under these extreme circumstances is inspiring. You deserve the highest and most genuine praise.

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)