

TO: AGPA Board of Directors

FROM: Diversity, Equity, & Inclusion Task Force; Community Outreach Task Force; and Racial & Ethnic Diversity Special Interest Group

DATE: June 15, 2020

RE: Recommendations for Promoting Equity & Inclusion within AGPA

Dear AGPA Board of Directors:

The Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Task Force, the Community Outreach Task Force, and the Racial and Ethnic Diversity Special Interest Group of AGPA recognize the courageous strides the Board has already taken to support AGPA in becoming a more inclusive organization, including diversifying the Board, supporting mandatory training on inclusion for Annual Meeting faculty, adding a column pertaining to these topics in the newsletter, and approving the recent Call to End Racially Motivated Violence. This statement in particular was an important step in declaring the organization's intention to work toward systemic change.

With the goal of furthering that work, we are reaching out to suggest some follow-up actions that will build on the momentum of the public statement. During review of that statement by the Board, it was suggested that the following sentence be added to the statement: *"AGPA is committed to the long term work of reflecting and listening to membership and the community on how we might deconstruct racism and white supremacy within ourselves and our organization."* This is an excellent starting point, but we felt it spoke to the kind of commitment that should be communicated to the membership directly from the Board.

To that end, we are specifically recommending that the AGPA Board write to the membership clearly laying out that commitment, accompanied by a list of steps that will be taken to further goals of promoting equity and inclusion, in particular dismantling white supremacy, within the organization. Many professional organizations within the field have taken a similar approach.

With that goal in mind, we submit the following recommendations for action items to be taken by the AGPA Board. It is our collective goal to work toward social justice, eliminate institutional oppression, actively incorporate anti-racist practices, and to help shape our organization to be a leader in the national movement toward equity and inclusion.

Recommended Short-Term Action Steps for the AGPA Board:

1. **As suggested above, release communication to the membership affirming the organization's commitment to address social justice issues and work toward furthering the goals of diversity, equity, and inclusion, while dismantling white supremacy in the organization.** This statement might include a list of actions that have already been taken organizationally, as well as a plan for further structural change.

2. **Hold a moderated town hall meeting to address issues of systemic racism in society and within AGPA, inclusive of recent issues of racism and violence relevant to those who identify as Black/African American, Asian American/Pacific Islander, and Native American/Indigenous.**
 - It is critical that this town hall be facilitated by leaders who have expertise in working sensitively and knowledgeably with group dynamics such as systemic racism, microaggressions, and white fragility.
 - Additionally, we recommend that guidelines be presented to attendees outlining ground rules for participation, and to set a frame for how people can communicate safely about injuries that have occurred.
3. **Host small-group listening sessions/focus groups during which People of Color and those who hold marginalized identities within AGPA can inform the Board directly about their experiences in the organization and their ideas for fostering equity and inclusion.**
 - Such groups could take place over a week's time, for example, with a large group feedback session or a formal report summarizing and communicating the themes derived from these conversations back to the membership as a whole.

Recommended Long-Term Action Steps for the AGPA Board:

4. **Create a budget and fund to hire outside consultants to provide an organizational review and comprehensive recommendations for implementation of necessary changes and training to address diversity, equity, and inclusion. We recommend hiring a consulting firm that holds expertise in addressing organizational change within white-dominant organizations.**
5. **Create a strategic plan that integrates the values of diversity, equity, and inclusion throughout all facets of the organization (including leadership, training, policy/procedure, and outreach) and includes specific plans for increasing diverse member participation in all aspects of the organization.**
 - To ensure integration across the entire organization, the AGPA Board commits as part of that plan to working collaboratively with the Tri-Organizational Boards to ensure that all three entities adopt the goals of the strategic plan, including supporting budgetary line items necessary to actualize these efforts.
6. **In order to further increase access to leadership positions, generate a document, easily accessible by members through the AGPA website, that contains an organizational chart with transparent information about specific criteria for membership on Boards, committees, task forces, and work groups.**
 - To ensure that the integration is inclusive of the entire organization, the AGPA Boards commit to work collaboratively within the tripartite structure to duplicate this process for each Board.
 - If it is found that leadership positions are by invitation only, or through other criteria that preclude general membership from self-identifying or independently volunteering for service, then reexamining policy/procedure to increase attention to equity and inclusion of diverse voices.
 - This chart could also include clarity around which meetings of these entities are open to attendance by general members. The aim is to reduce the impact of in-group networking contributing to exclusivity and to provide a more welcoming and inclusive invitation for wider participation.

7. **Commit to further developing procedures for organizational response when injury occurs, which advance the good work already done on the Safe Environment Conduct policy.**
- Ensure clear and transparent processes to handle psychological injuries that occur within any AGPA sanctioned event or activity, including how to report, restorative practices and processes that will be used to address incidents reported, and processes to address repeated reports of similar behavior.
 - This might include creating a position for a listserv moderator whose job it is to monitor and respond to discussions that need boundaries and limits on the listserv.
 - Commit to partner with IBCGP and the Group Foundation Board to work on attention to the same.

We have identified initial action steps for your consideration, yet to provide insight into the gravity of the issues, we want to highlight a sampling of some of the additional action areas we have been working to identify that need attention over time by the AGPA Board (please see the attached addendum). This list is not meant to overwhelm, but to capture the scope of what structural change would entail, which necessitates a coordinated leadership effort too vast for any single Task Force to manage. These identified areas of concern indicate the need for a full organizational assessment, with a climate survey, focus groups, and other information-gathering measures that would lead to the development of a strategic plan.

As AGPA is a closed system, structural change requires an outside perspective and expertise that might assist with retooling embedded organizational dynamics. It is for this reason that we are suggesting the need for an outside consulting firm. While we understand that this is a cost to the organization, we would like to highlight the possibility that we can direct both the monies generated from conference attendance and saved by having the conference on a digital platform to this purpose. This could be a transparent plan with the general membership, as a sign of AGPA's commitment, and would be a true selling point for the conference. Postings on the listserv have already highlighted how providing the conference in a distance format may foster greater access to providers for whom the traditional conference may be prohibitive.

Finally, we want to reiterate our appreciation for having a voice within the organization and to recognize the steps already taken over the past several years toward the goals of diversity, equity, and inclusion. It is from a place of love for this organization, both what it is and what it has the potential to be, that we offer these action items.

Respectfully Submitted,

Diversity, Equity & Inclusion Task Force

Community Outreach Task Force

Racial and Ethnic Diversity Special Interest Group

ADDENDUM TO JUNE 15 LETTER TO AGPA BOARD PERTAINING TO DIVERSITY, EQUITY, AND INCLUSION WITHIN AGPA

The following are concerns that arise from what we have consistently observed, experienced, assessed, and/or have been made aware of by membership over time.

Recommended Action Steps for Welcoming Diverse Voices within Membership and Leadership:

- Create a climate survey that assesses current experiences of inclusivity of membership.
- Conduct small focus groups to elicit feedback from the people of color within the AGPA community around their experiences.
- Commit to partner with the Group Foundation Board to reexamine financial requirements for members to be a part of the Group Foundation Board so as to promote more diverse participation.
- Commit to ongoing work with the Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Task Force, the Community Outreach Task Force, and the Racial and Ethnic Diversity Special Interest Group around recommendations and resources for support in organizational change and growth.

Recommended Action Steps relevant to Safety:

- Revise the AGPA My Communities Listserv Etiquette and Rules to more explicitly address conduct that is not allowed (attentive to such issues as hate speech, microaggressions, derogatory language). Hold members accountable to the revised rules and identify internal coaches to attend to that as well as serve as moderators to shape the learning in the organization toward growth and change that is attentive to addressing such issues as racism, sexism, ableism, transphobia, xenophobia, homophobia.
- Revise the Safe Environment Conduct Policy to be more attentive to safety relevant to ethnic diversity.
- Transition AGPA Guidelines for Inclusive group experience to a policy document.
- Survey membership about injuries experienced over time relevant to such things as their ethnicity, gender identity, sexual orientation, physical/mental ability.

Recommended Action Steps relevant to Training:

- Partner with IBCGP to attend to inclusion of an annual diversity training requirement for recertification for CGP.
- Partner with IBCGP to attend to diversifying staff providing Core Course training for those seeking CGPs, and review all materials utilized to provide instruction and revise as needed for attention to diversity, equity, and inclusion.
- Require all people who provide training within the organization, whether through the Annual Meeting or through e-learning, to attend diversity, equity and inclusion related training offered through AGPA and reinforce accountability (i.e., those who do not honor their agreement to take such training cannot be faculty members).
- Require all who serve in leadership roles within the organization to attend diversity, equity, and inclusion related training.
- Create a budget for training and consultation especially to compensate People of Color within the organization who educate the leadership around these concerns.
- Identify a Work Group to create a DEI-centered manual (similar to our Ethics, Trauma, Supervision, etc) to assist group practitioners with the integration of diversity, equity and inclusion issues into all aspects of group therapy.

Recommended Action Steps relevant to Organizational Structure and Processes:

- Commit to reexamine all of the current organizational structures for recruitment, membership, mentoring and nomination to all leadership roles to determine how access is obtained or granted. Conduct small

focus groups of diverse participants to elicit feedback from the AGPA community on steps in these changes. Change requirements for membership to minimize barriers to diversification and inclusion. This includes commitment to partnering with the Tri-Organizational Boards to ensure that each Board commits to these processes, including replication of the recent process by the AGPA Board to include diverse membership input in the planning process and steps to diversify the membership on the AGPA Board.

- Continue to partner with DEI TF in doing informal needs assessment of how AGPA is currently handling DEI issues. As areas that need addressing are identified, recommendations from DEI TF will go directly to the Board that will then work with the different areas of the organization for implementation. Request all members of the Tri-Organizational Boards to operate similarly.
- Work with the DEI TF and with AGPA Connect Co-Chairs, as well as e-Learning Co-Chairs, to evaluate and implement changes with forms, proposals, surveys, evaluations and follow-up that attend to diversity, equity, and inclusion.
- Commit to identifying process of revising Leadership track in AGPA to include attention to diversity, equity, and inclusion in both leadership and offerings.
- Commit to engaging Membership Committee Co-Chairs to attend to diversifying membership, utilizing such things as consultation and focus groups, to identify bridges and barriers to attracting and maintain diverse membership.