SAGE Coalition Call  
September 9, 2019, 9pm EDT  
Zoom Link to call in: [https://unc.zoom.us/j/431317162](https://unc.zoom.us/j/431317162)

Call started:

**Attendance:**

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Institution</th>
<th>Attending</th>
<th>Representatives</th>
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<tr>
<td>Michigan State University</td>
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<td>Danielle Jones</td>
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<td>The Ohio State University</td>
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<td>Rutgers University</td>
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<td>University of Arizona</td>
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<td>Dylan Barton</td>
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<td>University of California-Davis</td>
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<td>Gwen Chodur</td>
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<td>University of California-Irvine</td>
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<td>Connor Strobel</td>
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<td>University of California-San Diego</td>
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<td>Victor Wang</td>
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<td>University of Maryland</td>
<td>INACTIVE, X</td>
<td>Annie Rappeport</td>
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<td>University of Michigan</td>
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<td>Ashley Melnick, Marshall case</td>
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<td>University of North Carolina-Chapel Hill</td>
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<td>Carlos Patino Descovich, Manny Hernandez, Chastan Swain, Karson Nelson</td>
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<td>University of Pittsburgh</td>
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<td>Yashar Aucie</td>
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<td>University of Texas-Austin</td>
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<td>Samantha Fuchs, Kathryn Abercrombie, Christina Baze</td>
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<td>University of Washington</td>
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<td>Giuliana Conti; Maggie Dunham Jordahl; Abbie Shew</td>
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<td>Total in Attendance</td>
<td>10</td>
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Approval of Minutes:
1. Coaliton Call
   a. August Coalition Call minutes can be found [here](#).

2. President's Call
   . August President's Call minutes can be found [here](#).

C: Requests a motion for approval
Pitt: Motions to Approve
UC Davis: Second
C: Unanimous approval

Executive Board Reports
1. Chair- Manny Hernandez ([chair.sage@gmail.com](mailto:chair.sage@gmail.com))
   C: I have been having conversations with the Council of Graduate Schools. There is a mental health bill getting a lot of buzz in certain circles. It's a new bill coming out from the House pushing for a data gathering initiative trying to understand mental health in the university spheres and how to best improve mental health and how federal aid could come into it. But it's mostly data mining initially. It's not something we've seen much of before.
   UCI: Do you have a bill number?
   C: I will look it up.
   C: In our previous call, we discussed drafting a letter about our goals for a Higher Education Reauthorization Act, but that is still in development. We'll be sending that out soon.

2. Vice Chair- Samantha Fuchs ([vicechair.sage@gmail.com](mailto:vicechair.sage@gmail.com))
   a. Overview of President’s Call, August 2019
      VC: Great session including two inactive institutions. Conversations focused around budgets and affordability of student fees and tuition. Hoping HEA reauthorization will help with this. Also discussed better advocacy and labor rights. Next Pres call will include info on unionizing and self-advocacy, especially for those in states where unionization is more difficult. Will include guest speakers. Will possibly have time to mental health as well.
      b. Fall Summit - Oct 18-19th
         VC: Email sent out by IAD yesterday. Cody will discuss details. We’re meeting Oct 18-19. AZ is not available due to their eboard meeting being at the same time.
         AZ: We are present, just signed in a few minutes ago.
         VC: Please sign in.
         AZ: Don’t have the minutes.
         VC: Will be forwarded!
      i. Lodging and Transportation
         VC: Lodging will be at Aloft, which is $139 per night. We’re trying to fill every room to save costs, so please try to offer up space where available. AZ is also offering spare beds at the houses of the Eboard. Eboard is also offering carpool transportation to and from the airport on Thursday night and Sunday. Please see the email for further information.
         ii. CPAGE Grant
         VC: $300 per school available by application. AZ is also covering breakfasts and lunches on Friday and Saturday, as well as Friday dinner. Discussion will include best practices and creating white paper working groups.
         Comm: This information is also on the website via the event tab. You can find links there as well.
         C: Please register early and by plane tickets soon.

3. Political Director- Abbie Shew ([policy.sage@gmail.com](mailto:policy.sage@gmail.com))
C: Political Director is still in transit, hopefully will be on the call soon to discuss Presidential platforms as they relate to graduate students.

Pol: First, we have been working on a project comparing education platforms of current democratic presidential candidates (limited to the then qualifying for this debate). Their platforms will be posted on the website. We are also planning to Tweet directly at the candidates as none directly mention graduate students; hopefully some will respond. Second, one of the things we will be doing at FS will be to figure out Working Groups, and my personal goal is to limit working groups to 4-5. We can only present up to 3 papers on the Hill, and it is not ideal to have more groups working than presenting. So please be thinking of ways we can limit our focus.

UA: We want to limit working groups to 5, but will have up to 3 topics to discuss?

C: Usually yes. We normally vote on that in DC. Last year we had six white paper working groups and voted for three to present on the Hill.

Pol: The reason we do that is because legislative meetings are limited to 15-20 minutes, so the limitation allows us to discuss fewer topics in greater depth.

VC: We do vote on the ones to discuss. Last year we only discussed 3, but we published all 5 in a packet which we turned into the legislative offices. All working group work gets posted on the website to use as a tool for self-advocacy.

UA: I think it would be better to limit the topics to 3 up front in order to prevent diluting our message.

UW: I disagree, because we aren’t a one-issue organization, and the multiple issues rounds out grad student experience, and a multitude of working groups allows us to pick the 3 best to present. We want to present diverse issues on the hill.

UNC: I agree with the above statement. Issues in DC are constantly shifting, so it’s best to have a number of issues to present in order to maximize our impact. It would be great if every delegate could meet with their federal affairs Director to prepare.

Pol: Yes, it would be great! If you have an existing relationship, or even just know who they are, it’s great to have a dialogue.

Chair: E-board is talking about, similarly what y’all are saying. We will be reaching out to individual institutions to hear your concerns ahead of Fall Summit are so we can have an idea of what you are interested in ahead of time.

UT: Question to the President candidates Twitter - if we have a question, send it to the polical director email?

Pol: Yes

4. **Communications- Ashley Melnick** ([communications.sage@gmail.com](mailto:communications.sage@gmail.com))
   a. Presidential Candidate Twitter

Comm: We will be reaching out to Presidential Candidates via twitter to encourage them to respond to our questions about how their platforms will affect/include grad students. This will happen over the next few days until the debate. If you have specific questions you’d like asked, contact me.

   b. GSO president/member social media highlights

Comm: After Fall Summit we would like to highlight certain SAGE members, highlighting your career and what SAGE/advocacy means to you. If you’re interested, please send me an email and I’ll send you a survey.

   c. Follow us on social media and interact!

   i. Facebook

   ii. Twitter

Comm: The best way for us to be noticed is to share/like our content to generate traffic to our sites and encourage awareness/participation.

   d. Lapel pins
Comm: We found a good deal on lapel pins which will be coming to during DOTTH, with some being available during FS. T-shirts are in the works as well.
VC: Lapel pins are very pretty!

5. **Internal Affairs- Cody Love** ([internalaffairs.sage@gmail.com](mailto:internalaffairs.sage@gmail.com))
   a. Fall Summit Registration

IA: REGistration email is out. Hopefully the instructions are clear. There are two parts. The first is a google form with important questions about how many people, what accommodotions (food allergies, text) and etc to help us be prepared. Then there is an eventbrite link. Our registration fee is $20, plus the $2.49 fee for eventbrite per person. It helps us pay for internal expenses. The email includes the link for the hotel block, there’s contact information for UA, and instructions. Please only ask them about the lodging/carpool with the e-board, so they can focus on planning and we can keep traffic to a minimum.
C: When is the deadline to register?
IA: September 27th!

UNC: Last year, it was one delegate per school who registered. Is that the same this year?
IA: Yes, that is much better. We would like to have only one registration per school. Eventbrite has a limit
UA: If our members are going, do they also need to register?
IA: Yes

Maryland: We are formally inactive, trying to come back. Due to the time and financial constraints, we can't make it this year. Are we able to participate virtually?
C: We’re having conversations about that. We really want to find a balance, because we really want people to be there and participating, but also account for school’s financial situations.
Maryland: Completely understand. Also, if there are constraints for funding for anyone, Tucson is my hometown and I could try to find a few friends for a place for them to stay

b. Working Group Update

i. Requests from the President’s Call

ii. Primary Goals: GSO Structure and Budgets

IA: We had a couple of requests from the President’s call about information about fellow GSO’s structure, budgets, and graduate student fees. We’re working on collecting that and synthesizing it by Fall Summit. We’ll be emailing you, if you haven’t heard from us already.
Pitt: Is there a schedule for Fall Summit?
UA: Friday will begin at 9, lunch at noon, day will end at 4:30, then we’ll have an excursion from 6-8pm. Saturday, beginning at 9, lunch at noon, ending at 4. Still trying to juggle the availability of the speakers.
VC: E-board reports on Friday morning, Best Practices discussion on Friday afternoon. Saturday morning more depth on last year’s white papers and current federal legislation, then afternoon voting and selection of working group topics and working group Chairs.

**Old Business**

1. HR1044/S86 letter

Pol: Summary of last call. There is an immigration bill that puts country caps on high skill immigrant visa. No more than 85% of a single country can go to a single type of visa(?)}. It has passed the House and 36 senators have signed off on it, which means it is likely to be signed. Last DoH, we were against this bill because of the implementation phase makes the process more difficult to apply for the high-skilled visa, particularly for the large number of students from India and China. We have a couple of SAGE members who are in opposition to this bill who want us to write a letter in opposition. However, it was contentious last year and it is not actually opposed by the executive board this year. A, Do you want us to maintain consistency with previous platform and write a bill? B, or do you want us to not do anything? C, Do we want to
write a bill, like that of NAGPS, which supports the bill but requests an amendment to have it not apply to graduate student researchers?

UA: Where can I find the white paper?
Pol: It’s on the website.

UW: What is your opinion? I’m uncomfortable with the discussion and confusion of last year, but I also don’t want to backtrack.
Pol: I do not think we should oppose. There are going to be problems with implementation, but that’s not a reason to go against a bill with overwhelming bipartisan support. But, we did oppose it. I think it would be best to support the spirit of the law and propose an amendment.

UCSD: Even with an amendment, I am opposed to this bill. It feels discriminatory.

UCI: I agree with UCSD. Bipartisan support was 303 House members in support, but many of them had signing statements that showed their concerns. We have a constituency that would be strongly affected by this.

UCD: I think we should be consistent, and I do think we need to raise the concern of our constituency, that this would negatively affect us.

Pol: Would you like us to write an additional letter? Or would you like us to not write a letter in support but amended?

UCD: I think to be consistent with our talking points, we were in favor in principle but were against issues of implementation but recommend modifications.

Pol: The amendment being what NAGPS proposed? Or something else?

UCD: Needs more discussion. NAGPS was unclear, whether it was graduate students currently, or ones who had graduated and wish to stay.

Pol: This is about employment, about those who have already graduated. Student/research visas are a different category. That said, it will affect students from India and China as they try to get jobs post-graduation.

UT: What is the speed that this bill is moving?
Pol: It’s currently in committee, so it won’t be voted on immediately. If we wait until Fall Summit, which is fine, but then the letter writing turnaround time would be pretty immediate.

UT: What sort of time do we have in Fall Summit? And hour and a half?
VC: Oh no, definitely not.

UT: Yes, understood. The conversation at Day on the Hill was difficult. I don’t think it’s good to flip our stance, but also we’ll have to be strategic and firm and any sort of amendment we put forth. In order to be heard.

Chair: On the other hand, if we wait until Fall Summit, it may have advanced to a point that they wouldn’t be accepting amendments. Also at Fall Summit, we’ll be discussing updates of last year’s topics. There is a risk if we wait.

UNC (Karson): Going on Manny’s point, we never know when the bill will get action. It would probably be good to start making draft letters soon. I do think there are good parts to this bill and we could write a letter that recognizes and celebrates the spirit of the bill, but that based on our concerns, these concerns remain and our proposed solutions. It would include more research, whether it’s like NAGPS of this.

UA: I’m ignorant of the bill and white paper and writing now, I think either we do nothing or we do go against last year’s white paper. It seems like we oppose the bill because it capped education visas, which it doesn’t. So our last white paper missed the mark? If we were wrong, we have a responsibility to say that. We can change and articulate our new position, which shows us worthwhile and honest. We don’t need to just stick to our guns because we are unwilling to change.

UNS (Karson): Agree. We could clarify that it is employment based visas which does affect graduate students.

Pol: One of the primary arguments made by the white paper authors was - that this bill is about employment visas, but that it is more appealing for students to come to the US for graduate
education when they have a chance to get an employment visa post-graduation. The point of having an ideological conversation and not being consistent for the sake of consistency. I think we made a mistake opposing the bill outright, but that is my opinion. Whatever we decide to do is something the coalition has to decide.

Chair: For the sake of time, we are having great conversation, but we will have E-board do more research - give us two weeks to delve back in. We'll put it out for a vote over an online poll.

**New Business**

1. University of Maryland seeking Re-Activation

Chair: We are excited to welcome Maryland back.

Maryland: We represent 10,500 graduate students. We are robust and active. We do letter writing days, lobby days, we sponsor bills. We are not allowed to have even a discussion about collective bargaining, so we are still arguing that. We are very interested in conversations about student fees and graduate student support.

Irvine: Motions to activate
UCD Seconds
Michigan State: Yes
Arizona: Yes
Davis: Yes
Irvine: Yes
SD: Yes
Michigan: Yes
UNC: Yes
Pitt: Yes
UT: Yes
UW: Yes

10/0/0 - University of Maryland is reactivated! We are excited to welcome you back!

**Announcements**

1. None.

**Events**

1. Next Coalition call Oct 14th, 9pm EDT
2. Fall Summit will be October 18th-19th in Tucson, Arizona
   a. Deadline to register is Sept 27th

**Open Forum**

UCSD: What is going to be the content of the Oct meeting?
VC: We still want to have a call. Not everyone can make it to fall summit, so it will be broad and include other issues. It may be short.
UCSD: It just seemed like it’s so close to Fall Summit that we don’t need it.
Chair: Fall Summit has a life of its own, with more detail and face-to-face discussion.

UCD: Over the weekend, there were 9 students from Iran (3 different institutions) who were denied return to the US from Tehran, despite having valid student visas.
Pitt: I am originally from Iran. We had this issue a few years ago with the travel ban. These are current students?
UCD: Yes
Pitt: This is very surprising to me. I will contact our administration.
Chair: Let us know how we could support.
Motion to adjourn: UCD motions, UNC seconds.
Adjourned 10:08 PM EDT