Student Advocates for Graduate Education
Fall Summit 2019, Tucson, AZ

Michigan State University
Rutgers
Texas A&M University
University of Arizona
University of California – Davis
University of California – Irvine
University of California – San Diego

University of Maryland
University of Michigan
University of North Carolina – Chapel Hill
University of Pittsburgh
University of Texas – Austin
University of Washington

2019-20 Working Groups Formed

- **Sexual Misconduct**
  Co-chairs Kathryn Abercrombie (UT Austin) and Matt McKeown (UNC)
- **Immigration**
  Co-Chairs Yashar Aucie (Pitt) and Carlos Patino Descovich (UNC)
- **Federal Research Funding**
  Co-chairs Annie Rappeport (Maryland) and Rachel Lamb (Maryland)
- **Student Finance**
  Co-chairs Gwen Chodur (UC Davis) and Eric Barraza (UC Irvine)
- **Mental Health**
  Co-chairs Sarah Bork (UMich) and Nathaniel Flores (Rutgers)
- **Internal Research**
  Internal Affairs Director Cody Love
  (internalaffairs.sage@gmail.com)

Major Legislative Focus of the Year: **Higher Education Act Reauthorization**
Senate Bill: ‘**Student Aid Improvement Act**’ – Sen. Alexander (R-TN) - Focusing on simplification of FAFSA and expansion of Pell Grants. More of a piece-wise approach to reauthorization due to partisan arguments over Title IX
House Bill: ‘**College Affordability Act**’ – Rep. Scott (D-VA-03) - A full reauthorization. Increases and permanently authorizes funding for HBCUs, MSIs, and TBIs, simplifies FAFSA, increases Pell grants, expands Public Service Loan Forgiveness, reviews accreditation, blocks recent proposed Title IX changes, and more.
Fall Summit Discussion Highlights

Chair – Working to reactivate institutions, successfully having MSU and Maryland with us!
Communication Director – Social Media is up and coming. We’re sharing relevant legislation on Facebook and Twitter. We have a description of each Democratic Presidential Candidate’s statements on higher education to get an idea of what they’ll do for graduate education.
Internal Affairs Director – Research on our internal structures is ongoing. We have budgets, cohort sizes, and graduate student organization sizes for direct comparison! Here are a few key charts with almost all active schools providing data.

Who We Represent

![Graph showing the number of graduate students and professors represented by GSO across active institutions.]

GSO Budgets Across Active Institutions

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<th>Institution</th>
<th>Budget Range</th>
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<tr>
<td>UC Irvine*</td>
<td>$1,000,000.00</td>
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<tr>
<td>UC Davis</td>
<td>$800,000.00</td>
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<tr>
<td>UC San Diego</td>
<td>$600,000.00</td>
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<tr>
<td>U of Pittsburgh</td>
<td>$400,000.00</td>
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<tr>
<td>U of Arizona</td>
<td>$200,000.00</td>
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<td>The Ohio State*</td>
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<td>Texas A&amp;M</td>
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<td>Rutgers</td>
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* Denotes institutions with asterisk.
Fall Summit Discussion Highlights

Session 1: What’s going on in Higher Education?
Experts: Dr. Maggie Pitts, Associate Dean of the Graduate College, University of Arizona
        Art Lee, Deputy General Counsel for the University of Arizona
        Ellyn Perrone, Senior Associate Vice President for Research and Federal Relations, University of Texas at Austin

Key points:
- What’s going on? Should be What ISN’T going on
- Major focus is on updates to Title IX from the Department of Education which have not officially been rolled out due to large public comment
- Demographics of graduate school are changing due to complicated decisions like financial burdens, families, and mental health. Institutions are changing to respond to student needs
- Congress has just unrolled plans for Higher Education Act (HEA) Reauthorization, which will be a point of major discussion through December 2020. There will be discussions of finances, loans, mental health, Title IX, and more
- The Federal gov’t is concerned about intellectual property theft and espionage

Session 2: How to be an effective advocate, with focus on data!
Experts: Michelle Sogge, Senior Coordinator of Assessment for Thrive Center, University of Arizona
        Dr. Emily Earl, GPSC Institute Director, University of Arizona
        Tom Rhodes, Director of Graduate Research Data, University of Arizona

Key points:
- Qualitative vs. Quantitative. It’s about the balance. It’s essential to have good data, but it must be framed within a story to have impact
- Understand your audience to know to frame your argument as a social justice issue, efficiency issue, cost issue, etc. – Ask yourself, ‘Why should they care?’
- Strive to find common ground. It’s not a transaction, it’s a partnership to fix an issue. Develop a foundation to build from
- Be appreciative of efforts they have done that you approve of
- Avoid partisan words by spinning your message to get the desired effect
- If you don’t have data, use other aids to advocate. Use direct stories, images, or analogous data from similar but not your exact problem

Coalition for the Promotion of American Graduate Education (CPAGE),
Mark Derdzinski, Policy Advisor

- CPAGE is a 501(c)3 alumni organization that manages SAGE finances
- We operate by a Memorandum of Understanding, renewed every two years
- Revenue comes from membership dues to fund SAGE initiatives for travel, mileage programs, and GSO advocacy events at individual institutions
Institutional concerns fell under three broad categories that we discussed within the group at large. Everyone has challenges, but every one of these problems came with Best Practices suggestions from fellow schools! In most cases, make use of comparative practices and data from other schools to state your case.

### Financial

1) **Student fees**
Seek methods of student input on setting and making use of fees using comparative data from other schools

2) **Cost of living/homelessness**
Food pantry - UC Davis experts! Encourage awareness of SNAP benefits, emergency grants. Campaign overall for stipend increases with cost of living increases.

3) **Childcare/Child Resources**
Seek administrative support for family resources and lounges, marked changing stations, and family leave policies

4) **GSO Budget**
Campaign to your administration to increase budgets without raising fees by showing gaps in student support that your GSO can provide

### Social

1) **Sexual Assault/Title IX**
Encourage creation of trained positions for coordinators and councillors with specialty graduate-focused resources. Everyone is in limbo together waiting for Department of Ed

2) **Mental Health**
Use surveys and statistics from your school or peer schools to argue needs for specialty graduate student services

3) **Mentorship and professional development**
Try to pair with existing programs by providing limited funding from your GSO to hold workshops/seminars. Try to develop a graduate student Bill of Rights

4) **Attrition of students and faculty**
Complicated financial and mental reasons. Seek better compensation and support

### Administrative

1) **Unionization**
Align with a preexisting union for basic support and legal understanding. Even in a right-to-work state, a union still has power. UW is a great leader.

2) **Community Notification**
Special text, email, and optional calls/apps can be used to get better emergency response from campus police

3) **Institutional Silos**
Use list serves for newsletters and social media to have cross-disciplinary events. Get email lists of graduate coordinators to reach out

4) **Freedom of Speech**
Teach careful counter-protesting strategies. Hold alternate events

5) **Administrative Response and Respect**
Create student advisory councils. Start with low power administrators with time and work your way up