Fall Summit Friday Minutes, 10/18/2019

Attendance:
[X] MSU - Megan Abel
[] The Ohio State
[X] Rutgers - Nate Flores
[X] Texas A&M - Anna David
[X] Arizona - Marie Teemant, Dylan Barton, Patrick O’Brien
[X] UC Davis - Gwen Chodur
[X] UC Irvine - Connor Strobel, Eric Hernandez Barraza
[X] UC San Diego - Quynh Nguyen
[X] U Maryland - Annie Rappeport, Rachel Lamb, and Ashley Clark (virtual)
[X] UNC - Manny Hernandez, Cody Love, Yael, Carlos Patino, Chastan Swain, Hallee Haygood
[X] U Pittsburgh - Yashar Aucie, Stephanie Rose, Amanda Leifson
[X] UT Austin - Samantha Fuchs, Christina Baze, Kathryn Abercrombie
[X] U Washington - Abbie Shew, Matt McKeown, Maggie Dunham Jordahl
UC Santa Cruz - Rebecca Ora
Ellyn Perrone, SAGE Advisor

Schedule:
Friday morning: (https://unc.zoom.us/j/228032701)
9:00-10:00am: Breakfast and introductions
10:00-10:30am: Welcome/About UA
10:30-12:00pm: SAGE Updates
12:00-12:45pm: Lunch

Friday afternoon: (https://unc.zoom.us/j/407506254)
12:45-2:00pm: Session 1: “What’s Going in Higher Education?” Dr. Maggie Pitts, Associate Dean of the Graduate College; Art Lee, Deputy General Counsel for the UofA
2:00-2:30pm Best Practices topic selections
2:30-4:00pm: Break-out sessions for groups
4:00-4:30pm: Regroup/Summarize
4:30-5:15pm: Break
5:15: Departure to Biosphere 2/Dinner
6:00-8:00pm: Biosphere 2/Dinner

Minutes:
C: We are going to get started with a quick round of introductions. Here is an overview for the schedule today. Today’s focus is on the institutional level, with best practices. We have great speakers coming. But first! We’re going to get to know each other.
(Introductions)
Introduction
Marie, U Arizona - Reminders for Biosphere tonight - there’s a big roundabout at the center of the Student Union, that’s where we’ll get picked up for Biosphere 2. Graduate and Professional Student Council began in 1991. Have 5 executive board members, at least one rep from each of 18 colleges. Have 8 graduate assistants and an elections director. Funded through permanent funding, student fees, board, and partnerships,
have a budget of $850,000. More than half of that is from grant programs. Moved into Graduate College instead of student affairs. Programs and impact: grants, events, and advocacy. Run graduate student orientation every august, run a large student showcase, and of course, socials. Advocacy work is focused on tuition and fee conversations. Board of regents - have 2 student regents.

Dylan, U Arizona - Talk briefly about what makes this university unique. Here is a video: (arial views of of the campus, location, athletics, surrounding desert). We have a lot of interesting features. Water comes from the central Arizona project. We are Arizona’s first land graduates university, in 1885. Graduates the highest number of Native American students in the country, 2nd largest hispanic serving institution in the country. Biosphere 2 is the largest materially closed ecosystem in the world. Arizona has an international hub for astronomy and the Space Watch Project - monitors small bodies in space that could result in impact. Make mirrors for telescopes under the football stadium!

Marie - U Arizona - Arts and Archives. Large 20th Century American Collection, have the first photographic archive, and houses the largest collection of Native artifacts in the state of Arizona. Instrumental in getting legislation for repatriation of artifacts to their original culture.

Patrick, U Arizona - Focus on the sciences here at UA. Renowned astronomy program with two observatories and creating mirrors for the Giant Magellan Telescope. Get the 5th most funding from NASA. Also do a lot of work with climate and sustainability, particularly with the monsoon season here in the Sonoran desert. Biosphere 2 has 3 acres of environmental research. Bought by UA in 2011. There’s a rainforest, savannah, grassland, and ocean with coral reef. Currently shutting off the rain in the rainforest for 6 weeks.

Marie, U Arizona - We’re very excited to have you all here and learn about your schools. Questions?

Sam, VC - If you’re the wildcats, why is your phrase ‘bear down?’

Marie - it comes from a story of a student with an injury who had a rallying cry. We all have our quirks.

U Arizona, Christina - First dark sky city is Flagstaff, even though they’re not this university.

Manny, Chair - We had one missing introduction. And Maryland is on the Zoom call.

10:30-12 SAGE Updates

Chair: We are a coalition of graduate and professional students from across the United States. We advocate for our peers. We are entirely student run. We engage with policymakers to make positive change on the decisions that affect us. We were founded in 2008 at UT Austin. Our focus, motto, is Access, Affordability, Opportunity. We advocate at the federal level but also work on our peer level for changes at our individual institutions. We have our monthly calls, presidential round tables, and two meetings. Fall Summit is to discuss federal policy and what issues we want to tackle for the year. We produce white papers, a short report on an issue with suggestions for what we want to see. Day on the Hill is a four day conference in the spring where we advocate. Day 1 and 2 is for speakers, training and selecting our research to present. Day 3 is for SAGE initiatives and Day 4 is for school-state matching. CPAGE - Council
for the Promotion of American Graduate Education. It was founded by SAGE Alumni last year, 2018. It’s open to everyone, but particularly aimed to SAGE alumni.

Santa Cruz - We are not a 501(c)3?
Chair: No, we are a 501(c)10 so that we could continue to do our work.
Santa Cruz - How is CPAGE funded?
Chair: CPAGE members pay dues. This is still ongoing.
Chair: Here is our Executive Board structure - Chair, Vice Chair, Communications Director, Internal Affairs, Political Director. Our working groups do the primary research and are led by working group chairs, who coordinate with our Political Director. Our new position is Internal Affairs, formed last year, which focuses on institutional collaboration. There is a lot of data gathering on student fees and governing documents. That is available on our drive. Communications manages our external communications - press releases, social media. Vice Chair manages events, organized fall summit. Chair is the face, the leader of the organization, communicates with new organizations. We are an organization by students, for students. Our students are the voice for SAGE. If you have new ideas, new initiatives, that’s a choice for us to vote on. Make sure you have a voting member, and a secondary chair.
Chair: What do you want to accomplish? What do you want to get out of Fall Summit?
UT Austin, Christina: Literally? I want to be prepared for Day on the Hill. Be ready to lay it down.
Arizona, Marie: I want to see where institutional needs line up nationally.
Pitt: We want to know what other schools do so we have strength against administration.
UT Austin, Kathryn: Getting prepared and having a game plan and milestones for working groups.
Chair: We’ve touched upon it. We want to know our topics to take to Day on the Hill (DoH). We want working group chairs to lead topics. We want to know the best practices of other universities, what’s going best for them. And we want to engage on different position on different bills going ahead of congress. I want everyone to think about our membership. These are our members, who are currently active.
Vice Chair: What are our qualifications?
Chair; You have to participate on monthly calls. You have to be an R1, public university. It used to be on a list of the American Association of Universities.
Ellyn: AAU is a presidential, national higher education. It’s the top 60 universities, both public and private. It is invitation only. Each university is reviewed every 5 years. It’s a prestigious honor. If you are in trouble, they get 5 years to correct deficiencies. They had never kicked anyone out, until two years ago, when Nebraska failed to meet criteria. Another school knew they were going to fail, so they left.
Michigan: Why does it have to be R1?
Ellyn: The purpose of this organization is to have a graduate student voice in public policy making. There was a huge void for graduate student voices. Initially, 10 AAU institutions were invited in 2008 to advance policy making. Policy Makers things very poorly of graduate students, of only international students. We focused on top research. It is intended to be a select group, the leaders of research and education quality.
Pitt: Public or Private?
Ellyn: We have a lot of wanna-bes in Texas, schools who want to be UT Austin and Texas A&M to have emerging schools that want to be R1. SAGE is public only. There is a gap between AAU and R1s, specifically with government funding. There will be different opinions on what needs to be done.

Internal Affairs, Cody: I have uploaded a list of AAU universities to check out at your leisure.

Chair: We want everyone to be represented with their perspective. You are welcome here. We have a diverse and inclusive environment. Be kind to your fellow attendees, presenters, and yourselves. Feel free to ask if you need anything!

U Arizona - We tried to accommodate all food options. If we didn’t get something covered, please let us know and we will get you something.

Vice Chair - Sorry Ashley is not here, I will be presenting for her. As comm director she manages the outward facing parts of SAGE including website. If you need anything updated you can email her and she will update things. We have a facebook page! Trying to keep aware of bills, news stories, Wisdom Wednesdays, will be highlighting people from different institutions. Please follow us! We also have Twitter and are live tweeting today! We want to feature you on our Wisdom Wednesday posts! You can answer questions about advocacy or share tips, we want to feature your voting members. There are a few people lined up already but you can be featured too. There are also lots of presidential candidates who are weak on graduate students. We are trying to tweet at them to show off as a coalition, and to get attention for graduate students in general. We are not endorsing but sharing available information. We can make apparel if you want it! We have lapel pins for DOH that will be here tomorrow. Let us know if you want other shirts or hats. Open to feedback on website or social media. Let Ashley know.

Internal Affairs, 11-11:30

Internal Affairs: I am Cody, I am the Internal Affairs Director for SAGE. I want to tell you about my responsibilities, the responsibilities of my working group, and the research we have done this Fall. My responsibilities are on the money side of event organization, managing the event-brite registration, and coordinating with CPAGE for our finances. I also lead internal research. Our funding comes from registration for conferences. We don’t charge dues. Member institutions fund their own costs. We are a small budget operation. I also run the Zoom meetings, so if you have technical issues, email me.

The Internal Affairs working group goal has been to collect information within our institutions, 14 active, and more inactive. There’s a lot of information that can be useful for self-advocacy and also federal advocacy. We sent out surveys asking about demographics, structure, and budget. We’re trying to figure out the best ways to share that info, preventing the bubble effect of thinking one way is the only way we do things. This is also a way to recruit new members.

Michigan: How do we do surveys? Is there a systematic way?

Internal Affairs: We are in early stages, so we’ve only done a limited survey. They were a series of basic questions. Demographic and budget information with qualitative and quantitative information, with 12/14 responses.

(slides) Here are the charts of our demographics, with the total graduate and professional students, and our representatives, for those who don’t represent
professional students. That’s 122,000 students so far, missing 2 schools. There are a few schools that don’t represent professional students, with their own legal or medical student governments. Is it feasible to get them involved?

(slides) Size of GSO - by number of representatives. There is a huge variance, from 21 to 215 representatives. UC Davis has 215 despite a small constituency. What challenges do those sorts of representatives provide? We can show a ratio of representatives to constituents.

(slides) Organizational Structure - Some schools show theirs on a website. GSA of UT Austin - purely legislative, with an executive board. They have agencies, which are open to everyone, not only elected reps. Another is UNC - which has three branches of legislative, executive, and judicial. There are a number of committees in the senate. The executive has the president and appointees, and finally a judicial with an honor court and honor system. Academic dishonesty is resolved in the student courts. Rutgers (no chart) has a council of GSO heads, and then an executive board.

(slides) Budget. Huge variation in terms of budget, regardless of constituents. Arizona at $850,000, Texas at $35,000. Most get student fees, either in whole or in part. Some get outside funding. Michigan, Davis get supplemented funding. A&M gets its funding from the graduate school.

A&M - It’s coupled with tuition. We’re working on it.
Arizona - Arizona gets its budget from Student Affairs budget - half of income is student fee money, that goes to various places.
Internal Affairs: Where do you direct your funding? Grants and awards, external funding and programming, advocacy and representative. Hosting research conferences is amazing! Professional development, and social and cultural events. Some great differences across the schools.

(slides) Budgetary goals - ambitions are for childcare grants, undocumented grants, reducing student fee burden - with various paths. Increasing low-cost programming, increasing student advocacy. Challenges are issues to the process, whether it’s not understood, or it requires a referendum or cooperation with administration to increase allocations.

(slides) Unionized? - Very fuzzy across the board.
UC San Diego: All UC’s are TA only - there is one union, UAW 2865.
Rutgers: Only our GA and TAs.
Internal Affairs: There is some issues across the board here.
MSU: There are state laws as an issue as well.
Internal Affairs: Yes, most of our ‘no’ responses are because of the state law. UNC can unionize, but is very limited in power.
Vice Chair: This afternoon, we’ll split up for best practices discussions, so we can decide which topics we’ll decide on.
Pitt: We’re having issues with the legality.
UNC: Our union was not recognized, so has been disbanded.
Internal: Yes, there are a lot of questions to go on.
Internal Affairs: Where we’re going: We’re trying to get a five year history of budgets. As much analysis as possible is helpful. This gives us a line-by-line analysis of how money is spent and how it changes (or doesn’t change) from year to year. Also unionization and the potential benefits and challenges. Finally, I am personally interested in student
finances for cost of living, awards and stipends, loans, and student fees. This will be coming out of the working group.
MSU: Will this be in the drive?
Internal: Yes, this is already on the drive, and we'll be trying to have more graphics out on our website and elsewhere.
Chair: Our next President's call will likely be on unionization and getting a speaker to talk about how to unionize and the processes involved.

Legislator of the Year:
Political Director: The legislator of the Year Award is a way of recognizing a member of congress who does work specifically for graduate education, not higher education in general. Last year, it went to Rep. Bobby Scott, Chair of the House Labor and Education committee. We are not voting here yet, since it's early in the year and we're hoping that before session we'll have more work done. Also, House and Senate just released their bills about Higher Education Reauthorization Act. We are hoping that there will be a champion for graduate students in that work. But, the bills are brand new. We did have two nominations. Rep Scott Peters (D-CA) and Jimmy Gomez (D-Ca) UC San Diego -Quynh: Scott Peters has been an advocate for us, talked with his staffer a lot. He introduced HR 1043, which we advocated for last year. Employer Participation and Repayment Act. He's come to campus repeatedly to do Q&As. He has done a graduate student specific town Hall. His big push right now is affordable housing for graduate students in San Diego. This award would give him that push to keep graduate students in mind. He runs a personal twitter.
Political director: Ther other was Jimmy Gomez.
UC Irvine: A lot of the same points for Peters are true for Gomez. They are both junior members. Gomez has only put out a few bills. His most recent would allow students to apply hours to food stamp eligibility. He is not in a district that doesn't have a UC campus, but he still puts a lot of capitol behind these bills anyway.
Political director: We are accepting other nominations, or even just someone to keep an eye on for the next few months. Vote on December and January coalition call to get a plaque ready and schedule a meeting for an official hand off.
Ellyn: They should prioritize it. If they can't be there to receive the award, then they're not making a priority. It should be the member or the legislative director.
Political Director; Any others?
UW, Maggie: Patty Murray - ranking member, strong proponent of HEA Reauthorization. Her priorities - affordability, reducing student debt, providing access to historically underrepresented students.
Ellyn: We all know how bad the PROSPER act - Murray made sure it would be dead on arrival in the Senate.
Political Director: Senator Lamar Alexander’s bill is already controversial, so we expect Senator Murray to be active against that as well.
MSU, Megan: Not necessary for the award, but should we make a statement about the passing of Congressman Elijah Cumming?
UC Davis, Gwen: He was very active at my undergrad school.
Political Director: That sounds like a good idea and a relatively easy draft to do.
UT Austin motion to issue a statement in response to the passing of Rep Cummings, Second by UC Davis, motion carries. Unanimous approval.

Lunch.

12:45-2:00 Panel: “What’s going on in Higher Education?” Dr. Maggie Pitts, Associate Dean of the Graduate College; Art Lee, Deputy General Counsel for the UofA; Ellyn Perrone, Federal Relations, UT Austin

Introductions by Dylan Barton: Dr. Maggie Pitts is an Associate Dean of the Graduate College and associate Professor of Communications. Past President of Language and Social Psychology. She is also the official advisor for the Arizona GPSC. Art Lee is a lawyer at the Biomedical campus and came down just to speak with us. He has practiced in higher education law on a range of issues. Ellyn Perrone has served on government relations for 3 decades. She is the Senior Associate Vice President for Governmental Relations at UT Austin.

Art: The broad question of ‘what is going on’ - more ‘what isn’t going on?’ on a legal perspective. In speaking to colleagues, the office of general counsel for universities are aware of what’s going on in the entire university. We deal with everything. It’s an interesting perspective to bring. Title IX continues to be a hot topic. Department of Education issued new guidance significantly different from the Dear Colleague letter under the Obama era. There are <120,000 public comments, which is a great deal for a regulatory issue. We’re still waiting on DOE to come out with final guidance. We expected it a month ago, but there’s nothing. There are a lot of legal challenges being brought against university and colleges. A lot of them from individuals accused of title IX violations, and that the university deprived them of due process. The trend lately is to have them managed in a university process, and then a judicial process, does a second review of everything, and university administrators are caught in the middle. In the 5th circuit, I believe, there are accusations of universities not following procedures properly, which makes university have to go and redo their practices. It’s a major concern. Other concerns are Reauthorization of Higher Education - just had the House release a bill for that. The new legislation does a lot, but imposes certain mandates on universities that could be viewed as unwanted intrusions, such as hiring folks to report to DOE, as well as accreditation. Senate has its own. Another legal concern is the freedom of speech and expression issues arising on campuses. It was particularly strong last year. It has not necessarily been worked out in a satisfactory manner for everyone. Other issues - mental health, race in admission decisions. There’s many diverse legal issues. They all touch on the higher ed experience.

Dr. Margaret Pitts- Thank you, that broad perspective is a wonderful way to start. I’m going to narrow it because I’m new. I became associate dean in July. It’s been a very eye-opening experience to see what’s going on here and what’s going on nation-wide. What are some of the national trends: who are the people who are pursuing graduate degrees, and why? Is there a cultural shift that we need to address and accommodate? To ensure not just survival, but thriving. The demographics involve complicated life
decisions with families, with debt and financial burdens, with mental health challenges that we are more aware of. We have the means now to make education accessible to those it was not accessible to before. What are some of the cultural shifts? Do they want to work with me, work in Tucson? Will the environment and the groups allow them to thrive? There’s a gap between faculty expectations and graduate students expectations for job placement after graduate school. Think of a lifespan approach to graduate education. What is our moral compass to see everyone through graduate school? Giving them support through postdoc placement or professional placement. Support from before they start to when they’re finished, including transitional support. Biggest issues are mental health and wellbeing, work life balance. Having meaningful pursuits for what they do. Want to have the facts and training to shape graduate programs to fit the needs of the word and the graduate students.

Ellyn: Mine is going to come from the political spectrum. The biggest issue right now and most scrutiny is science and security. It is a concern of espionage by Chinese students and recruited Americans being targeted for vulnerabilities or offered a lot of money. Being poached to go to China, Singapore, etc, because there’s not a new frontier of science money in the United States. We’re getting a lot of scrutiny of universities that are “under investigation” by the FBI for cases of Chinese espionage. There was a Confucius Institute fellows, which are no longer allowed by the Department of Defense because of China exercising ‘soft power.’ Appropriations: We are on a continuing resolution, and we are likely going to be on another continuing resolution. Impeachment, Syria, Ukraine are taking up time. House has passed 10/12 appropriations bills. Senate has passed none on the floor. McConnel says there’s going to be a minibus next week that are likely going to be partisan - transportation, science, VA - not going to be unanimous, despite what he claims. Then the second mini bus will be labor and HHS. Border wall is keeping Homeland Security from going forward. We want the House bills - all have major increases in research accounts to support the faculty. Miss Lowe (sp) just deemed her own budget caps. House has to cut a lot of money. Defense and non-Defense have to be equal, so they have to cut $15 billion out of the non-discretionary funding. It’s a challenge. If we go to conference on the bills, we’ll do well. But if we stay on a continuing resolution, we won’t get those increases. HEA - Mr Scott introduced his bill Tuesday - it’s over 1000 pages. We are looking at it from a high level. He wants to have it passed out of the House by the end of the year. We are not going to get it out by the end of the year. In the Senate, Mr. Alexander has filed 6 mini bills - it’s not a comprehensive reauthorization. The issues that has Alexander and Murray stuck is Title IX. There’s a huge clamp-down and a standstill for three months over Title IX. I believe we’ll pass something by Christmas of 2020. Mr. Alexander is retiring, and he’s making it his legacy. It took 10 years last time, it’ll take 10 years this time.

DACA - there is a bipartisan agreement on high-skilled immigration, and a bipartisan agreement on low-skilled immigration. It’s the middle where it gets nasty. Both chambers have gotten stuck on saying ‘comprehensive or nothing.’ DACA doesn’t just include dreamers, it also includes families. In higher education we can argue for a fix for Dreamers, a subset of DACA.

Dylan: Let’s start with Higher Education Reauthorization.
Ellyn: HEA in the house would allow full Pell grant use for graduate students. Allows one fixed repayment plan, and one income-based repayment plan. It forgives remaining debt after 20 years. One issue SAGE has had for years is that bill does not address taxation after 20 years. IDR program (or ICR) you pay 20% of discretionary income for 20-25 years. BUT - the income that is forgiven the year it is forgiven becomes ‘income’ and is taxable. Example - social worker makes $45,000 a year. Suddenly have $25,000 forgiven - income taxes now owed on $70,000. We’ve been advocating to spread that taxable income spread out over 5 years to prevent going into another kind of debt. This bill does prohibit the Secretary of Education from doing any new regulations or enforcement.

Art: We’ll see if that passes. Another issue that is more recent view is ‘graduate students as employees.’ It’s a big reversal, with a big impact.

Dylan: Title IX changes - how will they affect graduate students?

Art: The scope of title IX changes affects all students, both undergraduate and graduate. One main challenge is the emotional charge, the fact that it greatly changes the lives of those impacted, within the adjudicatory system and of course beyond. It is an area that is very difficult to find common ground, to come up with a process that is fair for alleged victims and accused perpetrators with due process. Increasingly because there has been no final guidance from DOE, courts have been stepping in, even though those decisions are not very clear. Institutions have to balance between preventing liability and protecting the safety of the students and protecting accused students to have the appropriate level of disciplinary sanctions. It’s a big mess. From a legal perspective, it’s a difficult balance. Athletics is its own scope of issues. It is a really challenging area from the legal area right now, and I don’t see that resolving itself any time soon, even with DOE issuing guidance any time soon. A lot of these issues have been cases of undergraduate students, so more graduate student perspectives would be helpful.

MSU, Megan - I’m Michigan State, we’ve got a lot going on in that area. One issue is mandatory reporters, and all graduate students for being mandatory reporters. In particular, we have gotten a lot more strict about mandatory reporting. Is this going to be more federal focused, or do you think it will be university-by-university decisions?

Art: I anticipate DOE will give some guidance on this, but I imagine each institution will define their categories of mandatory reporting. But, there’s still so much uncertainty that it may veer. We have not gotten any guidance from the judiciary, which defers to institutional practice. So long as the institutions guidelines are clear and consistent, then the judiciary defers. That’s a long winded way of saying ‘it depends.’

Dr. Pitts: This is where having an active graduate student body is very important. You are in an intermediate power position, both being mentored and mentoring. Learning how to navigate those relationships and the expectations, as well as being put in a power position, is difficult for graduate students. Here, I want people to come to me with their perspectives, and ask if they are in a point of violation of title ix regulations. We want you to know how the chain of supervising goes. It’s necessary to have peers an advocates in your graduate students, and in your advisors and administrators. How we talk about these violations and the victims is to create the environment to where they can be heard.
Ellyn: Universities, regardless of what DOE is doing, are looking within their own systems of reporting and the consequences are for reporters who have not done what they should. As everything is, the pendulum swings far one way and swings far another way. SAGE does present the different power positions graduate student have, that a single professor can 86 your career if you report. Congress has not addressed that, and in my opinion it should not be addressed by Congress but by the institution. I know it’s a very different situation you are engaged in on your campus that you need to bring up with your campus.

Dylan: I would like to solicit more feedback from our attendees. Either to the entire panel, or one individual.

Arizona, Torbet: Releasing student data - completion rates, mentoring rates, but then to mental health data. Thoughts from a legal perspective, and from an administrative data?

Art: I am not as familiar with the provisions of that. I do not think institutions should release data, even with it so scrubbed and de-identified. With the caveat of not knowing transparency act information. Just from a legal perspective, I think that creates liability. There’s other information with ADA. More broadly, with student mental health concerns, with a high stress stage of professional and academic careers, recently Stanford entered a settlement agreement where they changed their policy on mental health and housing. This is being touted as a more national standard, but I can foresee some issues on that in terms of administering that, and legal challenges. The stanford settlement came recently, so this is a 50,000ft level. Making resources available to undergraduate and graduate students, and graduate student families, is a significant issue on the horizon that will potentially pose some legal issues and considerations.

Arizona - what about the attrition rates, or placement rates? Things that could hurt the standing of the school?

Art: from a legal perspective, that’s not an issue. Maybe reputational issues, but not legal.

Dr. Pitts: One thing we’re working on is wording on citizenship for to collect data, and aggregate data, but there are implications of ‘why do we need to know that, are we protecting students.’ We want to identify programs that are great, diverse and inclusive, good time to degree, students getting jobs and feeling successful. There’s data there to help. Creating some of these surveys gets that data. Where it becomes a problem is when programs are small. We don’t want to collect deidentified data on 5 students, because you can still identify them. Larger institutional data and programs is still a relatively small world. A particular field that isn’t doing well can be increasingly problematic. It’s a tough question, but we need that data to identify needed support, or identify bad actors. Graduate student mental health is part of the national issue.

Ellyn: College Transparency Act was for finances - average student debt, median salary, time to graduation - help prospective students and family decide degree area and compare across schools. University of Texas System has a dashboard app that has majors across the schools, see how many are enrolled, what’s the median debt, years to graduate debt, median salary (US Census Bureau). That’s how it got its beginning. The aggregate data is there. I’m not sure about the mental health data. Universities are so committed to FERPA, to not violating FERPA, that any data would be aggregated to such a high level that you would never be able to identify a student.
Pol Director: Mental Health question. How do we talk about mental health on a federal level? It is an institutional issue, and state by state. That said, it’s a common concern of all graduate students and on every level. How do we talk about it on a federal level, and should that be our goal?

Art: From my perspective, that one way to start - let me rewind. Mental health issues are significantly challenging, even with a taboo about discussing it. One complicated factor of tackling that issue up front is the privacy and ADA elements. From my perspective, elevating the conversation to recognition that mental health issues are across the country. Nuances for each institution does not preclude the fundamental recognition that it’s an issue that’s not going away. Recognizing that and starting the narrative from there is helpful, even with privacy and sensitivity.

Dr. Pitts: I would add that we are starting from a problematic perspective, of mental health as an ‘asset,’ instead of overall wellbeing. Also, that graduate students are in a unique position. People not in academia don’t know much about graduate school, and think of them as out of touch elitists. Connecting these discourses about health and wellbeing with what graduate students do and provide for their communities and field. It’s a unique relationship between graduate students and their faculty and their university. The isolation and power dynamics crates an environmental when health gets damaged. So we need to increase resilience and increase information.

Ellyn: I would assume few, if any dollars, come from federal sources for mental health resources. It is not an issue that is coming out as an education issue. If you want to take it to feds, you have to find the Labor HHS bill to find mental health programs to target. A mental health issue is a mental health issue, regardless of what caused it. It’s less about the cause of being a graduate student, than the general mental health services coming from the federal government. Funding campus counselling centers is separate.

Art: Another issue is the insurance coverage that includes mental health benefits.

UT Austin, Kathryn: Anecdotally, when we talk about mental health and wellbeing, there is a correlation between mental health and economic wellbeing - has there been an anecdotal conversation about financing graduate students, that if they're paid more, they'll be less stressed?

Dr. Pitts: At the national conversation, a big part is reducing workload, increasing stipend, and increasing insurance coverage. On a micro level, I go to a Graduate Council Meeting is where I'm talking about how graduate students are not ‘required’ to bring food and drink for their faculty at thesis and dissertation proposals. There needs to be food pantries on campus. These multiple stressors add to the stress of graduate students. One conversation is capping graduate enrollment to increase the stipends of the students who are present.

Ellyn: Has the department of labor done anything, with the ruling about increasing PhD stipends?

Art: I read a bit about that, I'm trying to remember. On a more anecdotal level, to dovetail on that, on financial support, I remember seeing University of Chicago rolling out a proposal, as I understand it, they would cap the number of students in certain programs but guarantee funding for an indefinite time. I know that’s getting some conversations. I don’t know if that program will gain traction with other institutions, but it is a big issue on the horizon.
Ellyn: We don’t quite recall specifics, but department of labor had guidelines that would have raised compensation for students, and it was a significant increase. There was a pushback. UT Austin’s administration did do it, but Department of Labor pulled back. I think something similar is coming out, so do some research on department of labor. If you cap the number of students, think how that affects the pipeline, how many fewer students can join.

Dylan: Thank you very much for your great responses. We have their emails for further questions.

Best Practices Group Topic Selections 2:00-2:30
Chair: This is a chance for institutions to think about where you’re succeeding and where you want to improve, or have concerns. Questionnaire included many concerns, some major issues were mental health, sexual misconduct, GS funding, housing, health insurance, and more. Take 15 minutes to talk in your institution.

Reconvene:
UNC - Issues Sexual Assault + Community Notification, Debt Repayment and Financial Literacy, Institutional Silos and information, Freedom of Speech and inequities (confederate monument on campus, police protecting neo nazi groups), split from undergraduate student government but not Equally Recognition by the Administration
U Arizona - Mental Health, Lack of Child-friendly spaces/resources, Administrator support of Graduate students, successes in marginal changes that lead to big changes
UCSD - Housing (issues with only building undergraduate housing, raising pricing of graduate housing), Mental Health
UC Davis - Payroll System failure, successes with comparison to other institutions
UC Santa Cruz - Student Homelessness (pay by state average, charge by cost of living), Attrition of students and faculty, success in small things that are convenient :) library access for students on leave, voter registration
UC Irvine - Disability centers focused on undergraduates
UCW - Health insurance, housing and food affordability, mental health decentralization, miscellaneous fees, silos - no overall orientation for grad students, childcare
UT Austin - cost of living, budget is small and executive board is minimally compensated and not enough time for more stuff, Budget to get dedicated people to have the time to do work
Pitt - Professional development and mentorship, institutional support, communication and support
MSU - we have all of these normal problems, but we also have an existential crisis that is difficult to relate
Texas A&M - Budget, Elections, mental health resources
Rutgers - mental health, completion rate, complex university structure and divisions
UMich - Fee structure, mental health resources. No connections to board of regents, no student regent
UMaryland: Rachel - Financial Resources that we need for programs, Labor Rights (and state’s rights against collective bargaining), advisor and advisee conflict, especially for international students who have visas tied to a project, multiple layers of advisory councils that are ignored by the administration, international student issues - fees
List:
Unionization - UW, UT Austin
Sexual Assault, UNC
Community Notification, UMich
Institutional Silos/Community silos - UMich, Irvine (orientation), UT Austin (grad-undergrad)
Freedom of Speech - UC Santa Cruz
Administration Response to Graduate Students/respect - UT Austin, UW, Davis
Mental Health - UT Austin, UNC
Cost of Living/Housing/Homelessness - Arizona, Irvine (homelessness), UMich
Attrition of students and faculty/completion rate, - UMich
ADA support for graduate students
Childcare/child resources - Arizona, UMich
GSO Budget - Pitt, Arizona, UW, Maryland
Professional development and mentorship - Ut Austin, UCDavis, UMich
Election Procedures - Pitt, Irvine, UW
Fee structure/creation of new fees/international student fees - UNC
Advisor-power dynamics/relationship to faculty - (some attempts and failures)

Large group:
Unionization:
UT: Austin is part of the larger Texas State Employees Union including staff, faculty, and student employees, also lumped in with all state employees. Grad students sometimes feel underrepresented due to the diverse constituency, but the graduate student arm is very active in advocacy with the state legislature. We do face challenges of being in a right to work state, which forbids striking. But it shows that unionization can be done in a right to work state.
UW: only open to academic student employees. Very strong. Have gone on strike repeatedly. Contracts are renewed every three years, and we go on strike. Have won health insurance, health insurance for dependents. Make $23,000 a year, before made $16,000 a year. Union has done a lot for graduate students. Already planning the 2020 strike.
Arizona: Does the union match with GSO?
UW: Only about 30% of our constituents are academic employees, have separate goals.
Vice Chair: Formed when?
UW: Formed in the 1980s.
Irvine: What is the process for deciding to strike?
UW: I wasn’t present, but it’s a regular part of the process so they are used to doing it and campaigning for it.

Sexual Assault:
UNC: Coordinates with our police officers for investigations. We have gender violence coordinators. We have access to campus health for free rape kits and 14 day medication. Survey response being organized by the Chancellor.
MSU: Is there anything specific for graduate students? Don’t want to have a graduate student go to see an undergraduate, one of their students.
UNC: Counselling goes through counselling services, staffers. Free services. Funded by state funds and student health fees, $480 a year
UW: How many victim advocates do you have?
UNC: About 10?
UW: What does training look like for reporting?
UNC: Title IX comes in during orientation to give a 30 minutes talk. One module every employee has to take online.
Santa Cruz: What about the hearing process, lawyers needed for cross?
MSU: MSU is hiring two full time staff to be advisors. They are not independent of the university. Before, we had advisors who were mandatory reporters and we got fined under Cleary Act, so hiring social workers.
UT Austin: A lot of these issues aren’t in place yet, and House HEA proposal would keep those from being in place, but we’re in limbo now. Does anyone have mandatory in person training? UT has bystander intervention training
Irvine: We do, MSU is considering doing it

Emergency Notification
UMich: Emails, phone call, apps. Really stepped it up.
UNC: Do you get the same level of notification for threats?
UMich: It’s focused on danger - weather, gas leaks, sexual assault. Get texts and email, can sign up for a phone call.
UArizona: We have something almost the exact same. I don’t know if that’s helpful to not freak people out.
UMich: We do have complaints about something taking too long.
UC San Diego: Police have emails out within 3-4 hours - goes everywhere. Natural disaster is texts. It can be overwhelming with too much information being distributed.
Santa Cruz: Alert system is sort of a scare tactic against strikes.- bobcats on campus at 3am. Union strikes - we don’t know if there will be ‘violence from students’ and ‘won’t be able to get health services on campus because of strike’
UC Davis - We had a shooter of a police officer with a 6 hour delay.
Michigan - There was serious heterogeneity in who recieved which information and it led to confusion.
UT Austin - 2 murders in the past three years - we have stepped up communication for violence.
Maryland: We have a text and email system of nearby community or campus. We get updates as it’s happening. ‘If you see something, say something’ have had folks get notifications.

Institutional Silos/Community silos:
UMich - Graduate school emails and biweekly newsletter, with lots of social events and community buy in. We need large event venues, and therefore we partner with the community. Facebook events. Fall welcome, happy hours, seminar things, debate watch parties.
Pittsburgh: Do you have direct access to student emails?
Michigan: We get updated list from the administration as long as we do it from the right reasons.
Arizona: we also have access to all the emails - do other institutions have global calendars for events?
Michigan: we’ve reached a critical mass where it’s become a central part of people’s social circles. Our newsletter also advertises events from other organizations.
Pittsburgh: Instagram, website, newsletter. Not access to all emails. We are having a hard time reaching students via social media. We are trying to offer advertising for other organizations.
UT Austin: We have a monthly newsletter, it is filtered through the administration, but outside organizations can advertise social and academic things.
MSU: We post on out calendar that other GSOs ask us to, and our sponsored events.
UNC: Sending things to graduate coordinator
Maryland: Successfully showed that peer institutions have list serves, and got their own.

Freedom of Speech
UC Santa Cruz: Our campus is really active. We’ve had lots of protests with students arrested. Not so great with Milo Younadoifsndif. We are really active though. Academically, I’m not sure about publishing anything.
UW: Pretty open free speech policy. Notable one last year, college republicans had an affirmative action bake sale and police protected it and nothing was shut down. We often have protests that are protected.
MSU: In terms of what we can do: Richard Spencer came to MSU and the graduate council and a lot of partners had an alternative event at the same about unity and celebrating the community. Trying to encourage alternate way to not give attention while still expressing disapproval.
UNC: Incongruous responses to freedom of speech is an issue. It’s that certain groups are given more leeway, like groups outside of student protests. That students are treated more harshly. There’s a lot of distrust between students and police. :(

Administration Response to Graduate Students/respect
UT Austin: We have positive interactions. We have a President’s student advisory council that meets monthly with undergraduate and senate (undergraduate and graduate), with chief of staff and provost office. Things move slowly, but we have the sense that they support us. Ask loudly, and repeatedly, and often. But professionally. Our administration does not respond well to loud student protests, but with legislation and by the book. There are some issues that warrant loud, banging on the table, but with safe it. It’s respectability politics.
UW: We have a lot of representation on various university committees. We appoint representatives for all these matters. We collaborate with undergraduates as well to have our voices heard. Provost advisory committee, etc.
Michigan: We have similar situations, sit on lots of committees. Board of reagants limiting step.
UT Austin: Case study: graduate education task force was in creation - stipends, cost of living, positions available. There were going to be no graduate students - we met with our dean and got two positions on that taskforce.

**Mental Health**

UT Austin: the main thing that we want to point out for UT austin is a new infusion of cash from board of regents ($7m) on campus for particular programs. Unknown what that will be used for. Our mental health services group has long wait times. We have an agency that is under our GSA that is devoted to mental health and responsible for being a liaison with mental health services. He represents graduate student interests. Working on a campus wide survey to get data to present to university administrators. UNC: We did a survey on mental health - brought the numbers to back it up. UC SD: How many universities have graduate student specific mental health person? Counselors, service, etc. UNC Does, MSU does

MSU: we sent out a survey to our graduate students asking for their experiences with mental health. We passed legislation that we presented to our dean and health services to ask for joint appointment - right now we have an official grad liaison. Students with mental health issues are being sent to this person or two other counselors (mental health is better served by peer-to-peer than counselors) UNC: a survey was done by different graduate programs, and each department hired different counselors. Engineering, health sciences, etc. As long as you have health insurance, you have guaranteed 7hrs / semester with a counselor. There was a taskforce started to implement these - we have a 24h hotline to help students and follow up with campus health. Professors / PI’s can take a first-aid training for mental health to also serve as a liaison. This training costs money (and it’s optional).

Pittsburgh: were these surveys mostly done by university official or by the GSA? Everyone: a mix of both. GSA did own work, and university collected information after student pressure to do so.

Maryland: We are considering requiring graduate students to have health insurance as a condition for admission. Undergrads required but not grad students (at this time). They look to refer people off campus because they lack capacity.

MSU: Every student will be required to have health insurance. Had previous issues with students going abroad without coverage.

Arizona: Ditto.

UW: no health insurance offered unless you are an employee of the university. Does any other institution not have health insurance able for purchase? One of our biggest issues.

Everyone: yes, but it’s expensive

UNC: Internal affairs committee should look into this.

Ellyn: It’s expensive but it could have been worse. Previous legislation destroyed the ability for universities to offer health insurance.

Arizona: Campus climate surveys are increasing in frequency. Need to standardize for meta-analysis. Back to confidentiality of data, it’s controversial, but there’s room for growth.

Ellen: AAU survey is standardized. Sexual Assault survey.
UC Davis: Copays issues - you get repaid in your paycheck. Telehealth is a new opinion, making an appointment online. Had some issues with prescriptions. On campus health insurance pharmacy will now accept them.

Cost of Living/Housing/Homelessness
UC Davis: We have a basic needs committee - we got $15m and $1.5m for homelessness to guarantee housing. Campus is buying property and installing high density short term housing.
UCSD: Our housing/dining had $500k excess, so they gave it to basic needs committee. They’re using it for grad student emergency rent funding. This semester we are giving 300 students rent payments.
UNC: how many institutions have food pantry? Answer: everyone
Arizona: there are two big things in works 1) mandatory minimums for funding of graduate assistantships 2) if your students are doing a certain type of work they are required to get a certain amount of funding (targeting departments/programs that strategically hire people for cheap). Help to increase time to degree and retention
UCD: Aside from food pantries, how do your universities deal with food scarcity? Arizona: Issues of food pantries being poorly managed - not working with a food bank.
Buying fresh food from safeway is not efficient, cost wise
Maryland: We have a few different things. We have a campus pantry that is successful. One movement is to work with our city to attract more grocery stores. In this past year we have built one grocery store within walking distance of campus. Two more within biking/busing distance. Our emergency fund is managed through public health but they give out money for medical issues or rent. We have another group on campus that serves faculty and staff (includes graduate students). You have to repay the money back over a period of time.
Pittsburgh: “Pitt food share” helps left over food be found by other students.
UT Austin: undergrads can donate unused meal swipes.
UC Davis: come talk to me, we are experts
UC Santa Cruz: we have vouchers for grocery stores. This is a problem of the university’s devising, because they are the ones not paying us enough to afford to eat

Attrition of students and faculty/completion rate
Michigan: PhD students have 5 year guaranteed funding. Recruitment focuses on 5 years completion rather than forcibly removing people. Rackham has a publicly available database with all available attrition and degree placement statistics. Available at: https://secure.rackham.umich.edu/academic_information/program_statistics/
UW: Is it regulated by how it’s funded by funding sources?
Michigan: Yes, different sources pay into it differently
Arizona: College transparency act could make this data publicly available. This could be valuable information but administrators are not on board since it might affect recruitment. “FARM” - trying to give federal research funding to people gathering this valuable data.
Rutgers: Did you play a role in publishing this data?
Michigan: Our graduate school was always interested in sharing this data. We are a national leader in this area. The information being provided is helpful.
ADA support for graduate students
UT Austin: Two years we made a student advisory council for our ADA office procedures. We have a representation from undergraduates and graduates.
UW: Anyone teaching a class gets confidential notifications about necessary accommodations. They are required to provide these services.
Maryland: Three years in a row we have had a disability summit on campus (started in grad student government). Elevate issues by people with disabilities and get addressed by administrators.
UW: Caregivers pay full price for sports games (when they’re there to support) - does anyone have a waiver? Everyone: (silence)

Childcare/child resources
Arizona: standardizing graduate student employment has led to accessibility of spouses/ dependents for health care access. We are opening more child-friendly centers on campus. We have a fund on campus that is first come first serve that is open to any graduate student and gives you emergency child care and $1000 child care stipend.
Michigan: Our child care resources are based on your income, but most on fellowship are eligible. $3000 / term / child, up to 2 children. Built into our health care for grad student package, we have great maternal care - in vitro fertilization, egg frozen subsidies. Very strong women’s wellness.
UCSD: How did you get this fund?
Michigan: no idea.
MSU: Child care grant that helps pay for daycare. We also support undocumented students. We also cover premiums for dependent medical care.
UC Davis: Last year we got dependent care premium. Health care council had graduate student representation that was impactful.

GSO Budget
Pittsburgh: Each of the graduate schools are split - shared governance works well. Some of the actions are taken by the other schools and focus on only specific things for graduate students. Graduate Student Orientation was ours, but then Provost kept asking for more things, so Provost took over paying for it.
UT Austin: Is you executive board paid?
Pitt: They get stipends. Once a semester.
Irvine: Has a pub on campus that graduate students used to run and staff. We license that out and get 40-50% of our budget comes from the shared profits. Look for secondary sources of revenue. Other non-university grants.
UC Davis: passed a student fee referendum through office of president. 30% voting outcome and 15% yes - $54 fee / quarter / student. We provide services like grad mentorship, food, etc
Arizona: We’ve had a standing budget for a long time - not in proportion to number of students or growth. If our population increases it won’t match that. Should be based on per student fee.
MSU: we assess a student fee/tax - $11/semester. Has to be renewed every three years (grad students make this appeal). Budget is itemized and makes us accountable for this fee.

Professional development and mentorship
UT Austin: 1) not brought about by graduate students but we opened a career and professional services for graduate students. TBD on what they will do exactly but it will be solely focused on graduate students. 2) Undergraduate mentoring agency where students can opt to be mentored to graduate students.
UC Davis: We have a position on campus that works with chancellor and graduate school dean. It’s a full time employment and fully paid and gets fellowship covered for next year. Grad pathways has things like mentorship opportunities, writing groups.
UC Irvine: Students give advisor mentee relationships. We’ve launched a climate survey to gauge advisor-advisee relationship.
Maryland: Student government representatives must go through a training with PhD services offices.

Election Procedures
Action Item: Email your electron procedures to Texas A&M rep, david.anna@tamu.edu

Fee structure/creation of new fees/international student fees
UNC: Fees are covered for masters students and graduate assistants (TA/RA). It is being covered by provost discretionary fund. Whenever there is a new fee introduced, it is sent through two things: student board, and then a mixed board (students/faculty, provost). Had success dropping a student fee from $42 to $17 pending student referendum.
UT Austin: Legal bounds on our student fees. Maximum student fee per semester is $250 (currently $140). We’d have to lobby at the state level if we want it to increase.
UMich: Just found out we’re getting a new international student fee. How do you fight fees?
UNC: Each committee makes a recommendation, goes up to board of directors. It could be picked up at a later date. Almost like a white paper of our recommendation.
Chair: When there’s push back, we inform students, and the students will push back.
UMich: If you don’t have a voting or power structure?
UNC: Social media, rally students
Maryland: we had an international student fee that circumnavigated our traditional process and we fought it at the regents level. They deferred to the president’s judgement and we are still fighting. If international students cost more money, show us where the money is going. We haven’t seen any evidence that it’s being used for the right purposes.
Arizona: Opting out of athletic fee. We worked with undergraduate student government and were supportive of our efforts.
UC Santa Cruz: the board kept adding it to the ballot until it passed. Graduate students do not benefit from this fee. When you TA you are exempt from the fee (or taking qualifying exam). We need to put a red flag on fees grad students pay that only effect graduate students.
Advisor-power dynamics/relationship to faculty
Try to develop graduate student bill of rights.

End of Day:
Meet for the shuttle, 5:15 sharp - canyony area. There’s a roundabout, that’s where we’ll meet. Corner of James Rogers Way