

news

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Officers

Michael Benson
Chairperson
chairperson@sagecoalition.org

Katie Lavoie
Vice Chairperson
vicechairperson@sagecoalition.org

Manny Gonzalez
Political Director
politicaldirector@sagecoalition.org

Michael Bertucci &
Alexis Toulouse
Communication Directors
commdirector@sagecoalition.org

Email

eboard@sagecoalition.org

Website

www.sagecoalition.org

Facebook

http://www.facebook.com/
sagecoalition

Twitter

@SAGECoalition

2012 Fall Coalition Meeting

From November 30th to December 2nd, SAGE delegates traveled to beautiful Ann Arbor for the 4th annual SAGE Fall Coalition Meeting. Over 15 coalition members from 8 large, public research institutions gathered at the University of Michigan for the conference. The weekend was a collaborative, critical look at the role of SAGE and the future of higher education. Student leaders discussed the biggest issues affecting graduate education today and formulated strategies to address these topics during the 2013 SAGE Day on the Hill. From interfacing with University administration to hours of breakout discussions to a tour of the Big House, the coalition meeting was one of our most productive and exciting yet!



Coalition Meeting Highlights

Day 1	Day 2	Day 3
Meeting with Assist. Vice Provost Haskins on University of Michigan's budget	Selection of 2013 SAGE advocacy items	Discussion on increasing engagement of SAGE membership
Discussion of new and proposed legislature effecting higher education	Meeting with Rep. Jeff Irwin on the role of government in higher education	Future of SAGE discussion
GSA sharing of best practices round table discussion	GSA sharing of best practices case studies and small group discussion	Coalition meeting review and improvements

Upcoming Events

SAGE Day on the Hill

April 2013

Washington D.C.

Collaborators

Association of American Universities (AAU)

Association of Public & Lang-Grant Universities (APLU)

National Association of Independent Colleges & Universities (NAICU)

American Council on Education (ACE)

Member Institutions

University of Texas, Austin

University of Washington

University of California, San Diego

University of California, Berkeley

University of California, Los Angeles

University of California, Irvine

University of Michigan, Ann Arbor

University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill

University of Minnesota, Twin Cities

Michigan State University

The Ohio State University

Rutgers, State University of New Jersey

Enhancing Sharing of Best Practices



Starting at the Fall Coalition Meeting, members of SAGE have been placing an increasing focus on discussing best practices of their Graduate Student Associations. Sharing successful and failed strategies to address university issues has led to discourse on graduate student mental health, conflict resolution, student fees, and more. Coalition members plan to continue such discussions monthly on President's Roundtable conference calls in an effort to improve student life on their campuses.

Welcome Katie, our new SAGE Vice Chairperson!

In her first year as a SAGE delegate, Katie Lavoie of UNC Chapel Hill has been elected the coalition's new Vice Chairperson. "I wanted to be involved because I truly believe in what SAGE stands for, just as the other members do," Lavoie stated. As Vice Chairperson, she will be responsible for connecting graduate student leaders, like GSA Presidents, across the country to discuss university issues. "I hope to facilitate open communication between the schools and members. Not just in the monthly presidents talk, but to have people reach out...on their own accord." Welcome to the team, Katie!



2013 SAGE Day on the Hill Preview

In preparation for their annual trip to Washington D.C., the Student Advocates for Graduate Education have selected the 2013 SAGE advocacy items. As in previous years, the coalition has chosen student indebtedness & taxation, federal research funding, and immigration reform as the preeminent issues to be addressed. However, as the ever-changing the federal legislature itself, these issues present new challenges for graduate student in the coming year.

Indebtedness & Taxation— The recent taxation modifications with the fiscal cliff and BCA implore that taxation of graduate students be reviewed. Student debt is above \$1 trillion and growing policies, such as the 1965 Higher Education Act must be revisited.

Federal Research Funding— With the threat of sequestration at the end of February, SAGE is strongly advocating for preservation of the current levels of funding to federal research agencies such as the NIH and NSF. These funding agencies are critical to the perpetuation of graduate education.

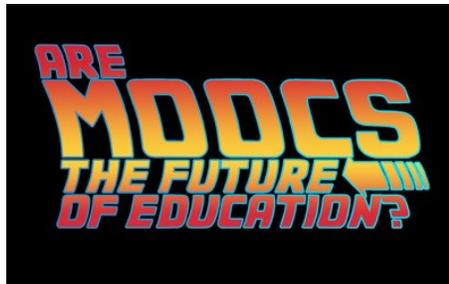
Immigration Reform— Current immigration policy prevents some of America's best and brightest students from utilizing their skills to improve our nation. SAGE strongly encourages F-1 and H-1B visa reform to support international students educated in the United States, such as in the STEM Jobs Act.

Graduate Education Policy Update

A Fee-Based Approach to Cost Cutting

With state funding for higher education dwindling in recent years, public universities around the country have been searching for creative ways to cut costs and maximize their resources. In general, this trend has led to larger class sizes and increases in tuition at most schools. However, individual universities have been affected to varying degrees and have responded with a variety of strategies. At the University of Michigan, much of the cost containment strategy has been focused on the institutional reorganization, maximization of space and resources, and efficient uses of energy and technology. At the University of Washington on the other hand, one of the approaches to cut costs has been to change a number of programs to fee-based programs with no financial support from public funds. These programs must support themselves independently, primarily through increases in the cost of the degree. In particular, the change to fee-based can result in a dramatic increase in the tuition from one year to the next, with some programs seeing increases of up to 50 percent. These changes have resulted in close to a third of UW graduate students being enrolled in fee-based programs. With the incredible financial burden such a change can incur, this issue has become a very serious concern for UW students and issue all students should be aware of as their universities consider cost cutting measures. For more information on this issue please see: http://seattletimes.com/html/localnews/2020133934_graduates15m.html.

The State of MOOCs



Courtesy of edudemic.com/2012/10/moocs-past-present-future

Universities all across the country have been having discussions about online education initiatives, with platforms being developed to offer what have become known as massive open online courses or “MOOCs”. Last year, the University of Washington became the first American university to announce it would begin offering MOOCs for which their students could receive credits towards a degree or a certificate. Their courses will be offered through a platform named Coursera, which currently has formed partnerships with 33 different universities. While many are still skeptical of the potential of online education and unsure of the best way to implement the courses, MOOCs have steadily been gaining attention as well as users over the past few years, with millions having signed up for courses already. Most recently, Governor Jerry Brown of California spoke out about the importance of online education in cutting the current levels of student debt. San Jose State University just recently announced a pilot program to offer introductory undergraduate courses at a fraction of their normal cost through Udacity, another MOOC platform. The impact of MOOCs has yet to be felt at the graduate level, but in the future they have the potential to affect anything from course offerings to the roles of graduate student teaching assistants. For more information on this issue please see: <http://chronicle.com/article/California-State-U-Will/136677>.

The Sequester Delayed:

As part of the deal that was reached by Congress to avoid what has been called the fiscal cliff, lawmakers agreed to delay the sequester which was set to cut billions of dollars of federal funding across the board. Put in place by the Budget Control Act of 2011, the sequester was expected to have a severe impact on research universities with anticipated cuts of at least 7.8 percent to federal research grant funding agencies including NSF and NIH among others. The deal, which also extended income tax cuts for individual incomes less than \$400,000 per year, postponed the automatic spending cuts until March 1st, giving Congress more time to address the nation's deficit issues. This remains a critical issue for graduate students and their respective universities, as it is yet unclear whether or not these spending cuts will occur come March.

SAGE Alumni Spotlight:

Philip E. Wolgin

Phil is a recent SAGE alumnus who completed his doctoral studies in American History at the University of California, Berkeley. He is currently employed as a policy analysts for the Center for American Progress. Listed by ABC news as one of the 20 immigration experts to follow, he studies comparative immigration and refugee policies and has published peer-reviewed and online articles on major forums, such as the Huffington Post.

