

NAGPS LAD SUMMIT FALL 2014- REPORT



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NAGPS & GSO

A report on the NAGPS conference – Fall 2014 as attended by
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ABOUT NAGPS

NAGPS is the student run, volunteer organization for the graduate and professional students at private and public universities all over the USA. It has advocated for the graduate and professional students and has provided the resources for the legislative leaders about the importance of graduate education

ADVOCACY

At LAD this fall, we focused on four main issues:

Graduate Student Loans/Debt

We urged our members of Congress to support legislation that would:

1. Reunify the undergraduate and graduate rates to reverse the current inequalities
2. Reinstate graduate-professional students' eligibility for subsidized loans

Issues: The bill on simplification of tuition as proposed by the HELP committee(Tom Harkin-D, Lamar Alexander-R) focuses on limiting debt to students in order to decrease debt

Graduate students are perceived as professionals and therefore need less support than undergrads. This means grad students are easy targets for cuts in funding.

Federal government unfairly makes money from student loans.

Higher Education Funding

We urged our members of Congress to support legislation that:

1. Increases and sustains research funding to the NSF, NIH, national labs, and other federal research agencies to account for budget caps and sequestration cuts

2. Reinstates and ensures future NSF funding for all types of political science research
3. Restores funding for the Javits and GAANN fellowship programs to \$39 million

Issues: Government looking at taxing tuition waiver and remission.

Voice of students in DC matter a lot for science funding. We have to share our personal stories and show how our research matters.

Open Access

We urged our members of Congress to support legislation that ensures public access to research that has been funded through taxpayer dollars. Specifically, we asked that they support and co-sponsor:

1. H.R. 708 – Fair Access to Science and Technology Research Act (FASTR) [bipartisan]
2. S. 350 – Fair Access to Science and Technology Research Act (FASTR) [bipartisan]

We also urged them to support legislation that makes textbooks more affordable for students.

Specifically, we asked that they support and co-sponsor:

1. H.R. 3538 – Affordable College Textbook Act

Issues: Academic research is disseminated by academics for free, yet the publishers markup the prices, getting up to 40% profit margins.

Open access improves rate of development in the sciences.

Make research freely available after 6 months of publication.

Student Visas

We urged our members of Congress to support a bipartisan approach to immigration reform.

Specifically, we ask that they support legislation that:

1. Allow for domestic re-validation of F-type student visas
2. Increases the number of visas and green cards available to non-US born graduate and professional students

Issues: International students having to revalidate visas cause delays to teaching assignments, delays in completing the degree. In turn affecting the education system as a whole.

Large percentage of international students in graduate studies makes it a grad student issue.

WHAT WE DID

1. We went with an intention to learn the way the issues are raised and brought to the forefront of advocacy. The sessions were organized for over 2 days with the experts brought from pan USA associations such as NAICU (National Association of Independent colleges and Universities), AAAS (American Association for the Advancement of Science).
2. Rehearsals for talking with the congressional staff were organized. The participation in these rehearsals was eye opening as it showed us how we come across as individuals, as an entity while presenting our views on the issues. These rehearsals were moderated and feedback was shared as well.
3. Grads Have Debt 2 campaigns was set in motion and we took it from there and advocated for it back in Syracuse and participated in the social media campaign on October 15th.
4. We sought ways to engage the international student Diaspora in SU and networked with other members of NAGPS to share their best practices.