Rackham Student Government
Board Meeting: February 18, 2015

Agenda

I. Call To Order
II. Approval of Agenda
III. Approval of Previous Minutes
   a. February 11, 2015
IV. Officer Reports
   a. Graduate Student Body President, Phil
   b. Graduate Student Body Vice President, Chuky
   c. Graduate Student Body Treasurer, Abneris
V. Special Guest: Shelia Tillman Nicholas, Rackham Development Office
VI. Approve SAGE delegation
VII. Slate Elections Committee
VIII. Committee Reports
    a. Academic Affairs
    b. Budgetary
    c. Legislative Affairs
    d. Student Life
IX. Open Discussion
X. Adjourn

Included in packet:
RSG Board Minutes February 11, 2015 (p. 2)
SAGE White Paper 2014 (p. 5)
I. CALL TO ORDER: 7:16pm
   b. Absent: 
   c. Excused: 

II. APPROVAL OF THE AGENDA
    Motion to approve by Abneris, seconded by David M. Approved with 1 abstention.

III. APPROVAL OF THE PREVIOUS MINUTES
     Motion to approve by Kyle, seconded by David M. Approved unanimously.

IV. OFFICER REPORTS
    a. President Phillip Saccone
       Sheila Nichols will be visiting the Board next week regarding student philanthropy, etc. Later in this meeting we’ll be setting election.
    b. Vice President Chuky Mbagwu
       -new newsletter format
       -informal graduate student org
    c. Treasurer
       Current balance of our account is ~$35,000. A few new applications are forthcoming, will be sent out to the BC next week. Looking forward to more apps!

V. Preparing for President’s Visit
   Phil: We are happy to have the UM President visiting us this evening. Let’s engage him and forge relationships with his office for the future.

VI. Set Election Date
    Phil: The election date for CSG has been set, March 25-26th. We normally coincide with CSG’s elections and simply extend our voting windows.

    Motion by Kyle to set election for March 25-27th at midnight. Seconded by David M. Approved unanimously.
Phil: Now we need to appoint an elections director. The only caveat is that the director cannot be up for re-election (or their term is now up). I’d like to urge Nate, Buke or Brandon to take this up if they are willing. You will receive a lot of help.

Motion to nominate Buke H for elections director, seconded by Kyle L. Roll call vote: 10-0-1.

VII. COMMITTEE UPDATES

a. Academic Affairs Committee
Phil: Rackham building stuff is getting underway. We’ve received more concerns/complaints from constituents. Have a few solutions, including stationing people to check IDs and/or setting up the card swipe/lock system (could require infrastructure or door replacement). Before this large undertaking, we need to get a better idea of the problem, please have some reps monitor the reading room over the next few weeks to scope it out.

Katie: Which rooms are we looking at specifically?

Phil: Primarily the central reading room. It could be some of the peripheral rooms as well.

David M: Isn’t there a way that we can put placards around the rooms that say “Quiet Zone” or even “grad students only”? I feel like that could easily solve some issues.

Buke H: I would have to disagree because I personally witnessed last fall during finals where ample signs were posted, however they were completely disregarded etc.

Brandon: Another thing we can do is post more signage for who people can contact if there is a disturbance or a problem.

Phil: I’m not sure someone there exists now; one of the main complaints was that after 5pm there was no person of authority to handle things.

Buke H: What was the issue with the card reader?

Phil: The Dean’s concern was that there wasn’t a clear demarcation between undergrad and graduate students.

b. Budgetary Committee
Motion to approve minutes by Abneris, seconded by Kyle. Approved unanimously.

c. Elections Committee
d. **Legislative Affairs Committee**

Phil: SAGE is around the corner and preparations are being made. If you would like to come to SAGE please send the execs an email expressing your interest, etc.

Chuky: I’m spearheading the Taxation and Indebtedness white paper and have been in contact with some of the administrators here at UM and UTA for updates on applicable bills etc.

David M: SAGE is also overlapping for some of the days of the RSG election, will need to manage those closely.

Katie: Also, we are making a newsletter for the Michigan delegation that informs them on our stance on current grad issues that we can relay. Please forward any of these to myself or Myra.

e. **Student Life Committee**

- Event for Janet Weiss
- Event for the new Dean

Kyle: We have minutes and discussed some of the happy hour events and survey.

Motion to approve minutes by Kyle, seconded by Abneris. Approved unanimously.

i. **Community Outreach & Social Action subcommittee**

VIII. **OPEN DISCUSSION**

Jingcheng: I have an international student in Aero that is interested in Co-op. There is a course (ENG 430) that has a co-op component. However grad students cannot do this, while the undergrads can. He went to the international center to get help but no solution. Wondering if we can get RSG help with that.

Phil: We can definitely take that up.

IX. **ADJOURNMENT** at 6:43pm.
April 4-9, 2014

WWW.SAGECOALITION.ORG
EBOARD@SAGECOALITION.ORG
SAGE Federal Legislative Priorities

Student Debt and Taxation

**Student Debt: A Growing Obstacle for Attaining a Graduate Education:** The outstanding student loan balance—$1 trillion according to the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau—surpasses credit card debt.¹ 69.6% of graduate students hold student loans with an average cumulative debt of $47,503.² The reduction in many student aid programs in addition to the increase in the cost of education is making the financial burden of an advanced education overwhelming.

**SAGE Recommends:**
- Amend the new Income Based Repayment rules to apply to all outstanding federal student loans, make Income Based Repayment installments regionally sensitive to cost of living, and exclude forgiven student loan debt from taxable income.

**“Qualified Higher Education Expenses” Not Defined as Originally Intended:** The Higher Education Act of 1965 (HEA) defines the cost of attendance for higher education as the total cost of education, including tuition, fees, books, supplies, housing, etc. In 1986, changes in tax law uniquely disadvantaged graduate students, making portions of fellowship and student aid, such as room and board, taxable income.

**SAGE Recommends:**
- Amend the tax code to define “Qualified Higher Education Expenses” and “Qualified Tuition and Related Expenses” to match the definition of “Cost of Attendance” in section 472 of the HEA.

Research Funding

**Funding Federal Research is Crucial to Our Country’s Economy:** The U.S. economy is dependent on groundbreaking research at leading research universities. If the U.S. is to remain a global leader in innovation and technology development, Congress should maintain or increase federal funding of graduate research, which produces cures to diseases, new technology, and a more powerful workforce.

**SAGE Recommends:**
- Congress should maintain, if not increase, federal funding of research.

Immigration

**Visa Reform: Allow World’s Brightest to Create American Jobs:** Domestic universities are global leaders that attract the best and brightest international students in pursuit of graduate and professional degrees. SAGE believes that changes to our visa system should be enacted to lower the barriers to permanent residency and incentivize international graduate students to stay in the United States permanently.

**SAGE Recommends:**
- Reforms to establish a moving cap based on demand for H1-B visas, grant work permits for spouses of visa holders, exempt students earning a masters or higher degree in a STEM field in the U.S. from the numerical limits on EB visas.
- F-1 visa reforms to include the lifting of work restrictions and authorization of dual intent.

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Student Debt and Taxation Policies

How to Support the Next Generation of Innovators and Educators

Education Taxation Policy and Student Debt: An obstacle for graduate education

Graduate students become the innovators, job creators, and leaders who provide the basis for the economic and intellectual advantage that the United States maintains across the globe. The continued decline in graduate student aid programs coupled with an increase in the cost of education makes the financial burden of graduate education overwhelming. The Budget Control Act of 2011 eliminated direct subsidized loans for graduate students; a critical resource that affords over $10 billion in 2010 to students to pursue their graduate degrees. Students are required to finance a large share of their education, resulting in over $1 trillion of outstanding student loan debt. The regulatory and tax infrastructure that supports education has not kept pace with the increasing financial stress encountered by students.

SAGE Recommends:

- Support the American Opportunity Tax Credit Act of 2013 (HR 1738)
- Make permanent expiring and keep existing Higher Education Tax Provisions
  - American Opportunity Tax Credit (AOTC), IRC Sec. 25A
  - Student Loan Interest Rate Deductions, IRC Sec. 221
- Support Income Dependent Educational Assistance
  - Modifications to existing IBR programs to allow for regional sensitivity
  - ExCEL Act, HR 1716.
- Support legislation that limits the debt liability for struggling students
  - Student Loan Fairness Act, HR 1330
  - Student Loan Borrowers Bill of Rights Act, HR 3892
- Support the Public Service Loan Forgiveness Program in its existing form

Optimizing the tax code to address affordability in higher education

Support the AOTC Act of 2013. The AOTC Act of 2013 modifies the current deduction to include a cost of living adjustment, allows a lifetime limit on such credit to $15,000, and makes permanent this simplified education related tax provision that will allow students and families to gain better access to higher education. Additionally, the AOTC Act of 2013 will correct a conflict in the current tax code by allowing the AOTC to count toward expenses that Pell Grants do not cover.

Make permanent the Student Loan Interest Rate Deduction. This allows students to reduce the amount of income that is subject to tax by up to $2,500 for qualified education expenses. This deduction is particularly important as students’ transition to the workforce and making ends meet is most challenging.

Amend the tax code to define “Qualified Higher Education Expenses” and “Qualified Tuition and Related Expenses” to match the definition of “Cost of Attendance” in section 472 of the Higher Education Act of 1965 (HEA). In 1986, changes in tax law limited this definition making portions of fellowship and student aid ineligible for higher education tax incentives. These include the lifetime learning credit and tax deductions on scholarship and fellowship monies. Current tax law limits “qualified higher education expenses” to tuition and registration fees only. By excluding income used for basic living expenses such as room and board from a qualified educational deduction, this limitation has a direct impact on the affordability of graduate education.
Improving student loan programs and protecting struggling students

Modify current IBR programs to include regional sensitivity and account for cost of living. Evidence suggests that the high amount of student loan debt incurred by many individuals does not exceed the value of their education, and yet the default rate on student loans is at an all time high.1 This has led some to conclude that the nation faces a repayment crisis rather than a debt crisis in terms of student loans. One mechanism to make student debt and repayment more manageable is Income Based Repayment (IBR).2 However, the success of this program has been limited as a result of low student enrollment, the lack of regional sensitivity in calculating payment plans, and limitations on which loans are eligible.

Support the ExCEL Act. The ExCEL Act combines all existing federal student loans into a single Income Based Educational Assistance (IDEA) Loan program. This will greatly reduce the complexity of the current program, afford greater protection to borrowers, and streamline payments by linking them to federal withholding. Enrollment is automatic and everyone is required to participate. It is estimated that this program will save the federal government money by reducing the number of defaults and fees associated with debt collection.

Support for students suffering from financial hardship.

Support the Student Loan Borrower’s Bill of Rights Act. This act removes educational loans from the list of debts that are non-dischargeable in bankruptcy.

Support the Student Loan Fairness Act. This law will limit repayment for qualified borrowers to 10% of their discretionary income and limit the interest capitalization to 10% of the principle. After 120 eligible months, the loan is forgiven tax-free. Under current loan forgiveness programs, those who qualify are left with an unreasonable tax burden when the loan is discharged which is exactly the type of financial burden these individuals cannot afford. Loan forgiveness would also be capped under this new legislation to encourage borrowers and colleges to utilize loans more judiciously.

Support the Public Service Loan Forgiveness Program. The PSLF is designed to encourage and support students to work in public service. Under the PSLF individuals with a graduate degree who go on to work in government, in a non-for profit organization, or as a teacher, receive loan forgiveness on Direct Loans after making 120 consecutive payments. SAGE supports the PSLF as is, and believes any effort to place a cap on the amount of debt that can be forgiven, or to limit the availability of this program, will discourage those with an graduate degree from entering public service.

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1 Susan Dynarski and Daniel Kreisman, Loans for Educational Opportunity: Making Borrowing Work for Today’s Students (Brookings Institute, 2013)
2 We use “Income Based Repayment” (IBR) as the general term for all income based programs including the 2009 and 2014 versions of IBR, Income Contingent Repayment (ICR), and Pay as You Earn.
Cuts to Research Funding Put America’s Future at Risk

With the deferment of sequestration for two years, the U.S. has been able to continue to fund groundbreaking research. However, if the lack of emphasis on research continues, the U.S. may lose their global lead in R&D investment. Congress should expand federal funding of basic research, which leads to cures for diseases, new technology, a more powerful workforce and keeps the U.S. globally competitive.

Continued improvement for quality of life is directly and indirectly due to investment in R&D. The United States is currently one of the largest investors in R&D, but federal investment in R&D has remained flat the last few years while other countries are steadily increasing their investment in R&D. While we appreciate that R&D has not been ravaged by spending cuts, investment stagnation inhibits economic growth. Halted economic growth is harmful to Americans and to the global community. We must increase our spending in R&D so to create jobs and continue to grow our economy.

Results of Federal Funding for Graduate Research

National Science Foundation (NSF)
SAGE Recommends: $7.5B
NSF funds research and supports science, math, and engineering education across the country, in all 50 states. NSF funded the graduate student-driven project that grew to be Google, currently worth an estimated $250 billion and employing 54,000 people.

National Institutes of Health (NIH)
SAGE Recommends: $32B
NIH is the nation’s primary agency for supporting cutting-edge biomedical research with the goals of improving health and saving lives through medical discovery and scientific leadership. The NIH-funded Human Genome Project has accrued over $796 billion since its inception, a 141:1 return on investment.

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1 2014 Global R&D Funding Forecast, December 2013, Battelle
National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) Science Mission Directorate

*SAGE Recommends: $5.25B*

The NASA Science Mission Directorate outlines specific, unanswered questions concerning the Earth, Solar System and Universe to be answered through the utilization of NASA resources and capabilities. NASA's Jet Propulsion Laboratory developed a Global Positioning System to track satellite positions in real time that is now utilized in our phones and navigation devices.

National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH)

*SAGE Recommends: $155M*

NEH is the lead federal agency focused on the dissemination of knowledge and how it relates to social, economic, and political challenges facing the world today. NEH funding supports important historical projects such as the publication of the papers of Martin Luther King, Jr. and an exhibit concerning the American Revolution on the Frontier.

Department of Energy (DOE) Office of Science

*SAGE Recommends: $5.22B*

The DOE Office of Science funds scientific research for energy production and supports the development and operation of open-access scientific facilities. Funding from the DOE Office of Science enabled the path of carbon in photosynthesis to be mapped, which has direct application in solar energy research.

National Oceanographic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA)

*SAGE Recommends: $462M*

NOAA conducts crucial research related to our oceans and atmosphere that provide federal and local decision-makers with important services that enhance the nation's economy, security, and environmental understanding. Particularly, the Sea Grant program is a nationwide network of 30 university-based programs that work with coastal communities on research and outreach to promote better understanding, conservation, and use of our coastal resources.

Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency (DARPA)

*SAGE Recommends: $2.91B*

Pentagon officials recognize and hail the importance of basic research to keep our military armed with cutting edge technology and to provide our soldiers with the tools necessary to succeed on the battlefield. DARPA has played an important role in funding high-risk, high-reward research, which has led to many significant defense technologies, such as air-force tactical fighters, as well as civilian technologies, such as the Internet and Siri voice-recognition system.

National Endowment for the Arts (NEA)

*SAGE Recommends: $146M*

Founded to bring art to the U.S. public, the NEA strives to educate the public through different forms of art media. Last year the NEA funded a dance series to bring awareness and start discussions about domestic violence.

Department of Education (DOEd) Institute of Education Sciences

*SAGE Recommends: $637M*

As the main source of scientifically based research for the department of education, funding from the IES supports research on advancing teaching and learning. Funding from DOEd resulted in better placement tests, ways to access proficiency in subjects, and education methodologies which creates a stronger education system.
Immigration Policy

Student Immigration Reform Will Keep World’s Best in the U.S.

Restrictive visa policies limit our ability to retain the level of high-skill workers and innovators that a global, high-tech economy demands. SAGE supports highly-skilled occupation and student visas for U.S. economic advancement and intellectual property retention. The export of American educated and often federally funded students is a wasted investment and hampers our economy.

● More than half of PhD’s in many STEM fields are awarded to international students.
● In 2013 the number of H1-B visa applications exceeded the yearly limit of 65,000 in a single week.
● Immigrant-funded venture-backed companies have a total market capitalization of $900 billion as of June 2013.¹
● In 2010 more than 40% of the Fortune 500 companies were founded by immigrants.²

Highly-skilled visa reform: Allow world’s brightest to fill and create American jobs

Highly-skilled temporary H-1B visas are heavily dependent on the business cycle and their cap should be adjusted to meet demand. On the other hand, employment-based (EB) visas offer permanent residency and provide a long term solution to knowledge retention. Employment-based immigrant visas should be the route of choice for international students by exempting them from numerical limits.

SAGE recommends:

● Non-immigrant visas:
  ○ Establish a moving cap for H-1B visas based on demand
  ○ Grant work permits to spouses of H-1B visa holders
● Employment-based immigrant visas:
  ● Eliminate per country numerical limits
  ● Reallocate unused visas since 1992
  ● For students earning a master’s or higher degree from an accredited institution in the U.S., exempt these individuals from numerical limitations and admit them for permanent residence, as supported by the STAPLE Act H.R. 1227.
  ● Extend conditional permanent resident status to immigrants with an advanced degree to broaden entrepreneurial opportunities, as included in the Startup Bill H.R. 714.

F-1 Visa Reform: Remove work restrictions and authorize dual intent

The F-1 visa is the primary visa for foreign, full-time students in the United States. To continue attracting the world’s best students in the face of rising tuition costs, it’s particularly important to allow

¹ National Venture Capitalist Association. 2014.
international students to hold jobs to help support themselves and their families. In an effort to retain these students, it is also important to allow dual intent status so that they may apply for immigrant visas upon graduation.

SAGE recommends:

- Authorize dual intent for F-1 student visas
- Remove off-campus work restrictions for F-1 visa holders
- Authorize employment for spouses of F-1 visa holders (F-2 visa holders)
MISSION—“Dedicated to creating a community of student leaders from the preeminent public research universities in the United States that is committed to bettering their own student bodies and promoting educational access, quality, and opportunity nationally.”