

Iman Sylvain

External Affairs Vice President's Report
September 8, 2014

Hiring

The first objective of the EAVP was to hire the City and State Legislative Directors. Interviews were held in July. Jane Pomeroy from the Department of Social Welfare was hired as the State Legislative Director. She was also voted Vice Chair of the UCSA Graduate/Professional Student Committee. Kristin Hunziker will be starting in the Law school this fall, and is taking the position of City Legislative Director. Erin Coghlan will continue her role as the Federal Legislative Director.

UCSA

Board Retreat: The University of California Student Association held its Board of Directors Retreat in June at UC Riverside. At this meeting I met other External Vice Presidents from graduate and undergraduate UC student associations, as well as the UCSA staff, Legislative Liaisons, and Community Organizer Directors. At this four-day meeting we did team building exercises, learned about the history and structure of the UC, and how UCSA functions as a non-profit organization. On the final day of the retreat we held the first UCSA board meeting of the year. During the community comment a student from UC Riverside raised concerns about the designation of Avi Oved (UCLA undergrad) as the new Student Regent. Her issues centered on rumors of Avi receiving external campaign funding from Pro-Israeli organizations with interests in the conversation of UC divestment from Israeli businesses.

Congress: UCSA Congress took place at the Oakland Marriot August 14-17. UC Berkeley GA sent a delegation of five students. The conference included workshops and networking, as well as the proposal and vote on the official campaigns to be adopted for the year. In the Grad/Prof Committee space I was elected Chair of the Committee, and the committee voted to adopt a campaign focused on increasing faculty diversity, establishing a method to evaluate faculty mentorship, and institutionalize grad student representation in the process of faculty hiring and retention. The undergrads have voted to adopt a sexual assault prevention campaign called UConsent.

Other grad/prof campaigns that were proposed included worker's compensation for grad students funded from external sources. Unless grad students (particularly in STEM fields who work in potentially hazardous laboratories) are hired through the university, either as a GSI or GSR, they are not guaranteed worker's compensation if they are hurt/injured on campus. This is pertinent for students on NSF, NIH, or other outside fellowships. We also discussed the importance of providing new students with guaranteed funding till normative time. In certain fields such as the arts and humanities, many students are accepted into graduate programs with no guarantee that they will be provided any fellowships or GSI/TA positions. This creates unnecessary financial hardship from semester to semester due to uncertainty. The final campaign proposed would address the lack of the summer funding for many grad students who are hired for nine months out of the year, not twelve. We discussed including this into the second year of the JOBS! Campaign.

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September UCSA Board Meeting: UCSA voted to support sending a statement to the Federal Communications Commission to support regulating the Internet under Title II to ensure net neutrality. We also heard updates from each campus regarding the UCweVOTE! Campaigns. Each campus has agreed to work with its local CALPIRG chapter to structure/hosts events to increase voter registration and voter turnout. We heard updates from student representatives of Fossil Fuel UC about the final verdict of the Fossil Free Divestment Task Force convened by Janet Napolitano. The ASUC has proposed a bill pledging 'no confidence' in the task force, which host representatives from the coal industry and climate-change deniers. We also heard from Mary Virginia about the AFSCME3299 union and their concerns about the hiring of non-union/contracted staff at the new Richmond research campus.

Campaign Updates

JOBS! We plan to present our professional development survey findings widely and inform key administration about the need for grad-specific career services. We will also provide campus-specific results to each school that we surveyed in the upcoming months.

GrADE After a workshop on community organizing with Claudia Albano, a professor from the UC Berkeley Department of Social Welfare, we realized we needed to further focus our campaign on an issue that is concrete, concise, and winnable. Student representatives from the Berkeley Diversity In The University campaign showed continued support and participation in this conversation and the planning of the campaign. Immediate actions steps will focus on gaining information on faculty hiring, promotion, and retention processes. Each member has been charged with conducting informational interviews with either their department chair or college dean to learn about these opaque processes.

UCweVOTE! We have set a goal to register 1000 voters in time for the November general election. We attended the New Graduate Student Orientation and New Graduate Minority Student Orientation to register new students. In the upcoming months we will partner with CALPIRG and The Berkeley Graduate to host events and get the word out about the importance of voting.