Engaging Graduate Students in Advocacy

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UNC-Chapel Hill Profile

• About 8,000 graduate students enrolled
  • Approximately 60% master’s and 40% doctoral students
• An active graduate and professional student governance body – GPSF senate
• Students actively participate in national and local advocacy groups
• Federal and state legislative offices on campus
  • Willing to engage with students
Student Groups Engaged in Advocacy

• Graduate and Professional Student Federation
  • Separate from undergraduate student governance
  • An effective voice on campus – meetings with Chancellor and Board of Trustees
  • Effectively mobilizes students for advocacy campaigns

• Science and Policy Advocacy Group (SPAG)
  • Educates students regarding advocacy
  • Interacts with state and federal legislative liaisons
  • Members participate in CASE workshops each spring
Student Advocates for Graduate Education

• A national coalition of graduate student organizations from public universities
  • Many of your institutions are members
  • Previous GPSF president is the current chair of SAGE

• Biannual meetings, Fall Summit and Days on the Hill

• Sharing of best practices

• Research funding, immigration reform, campus safety and student debt
Catalyzing Advocacy in Science & Engineering

• AAAS sponsored workshop on advocacy
• Institutions can send up to four students each year
• Opportunity to learn about policy making
• Opportunity for meetings on The Hill
• Many of you already participate
Graduate Education Day in Raleigh

• Annual event held in May
• Gubernatorial proclamation
• Students from graduate schools across the state attend
  • The ‘stars’ of the day
  • Meet with legislators
• Promotes importance of graduate education in state
• Educational for students
Advisory Committee on Advocacy and Public Policy

• Council of Graduate Schools committee focused on advocacy and public policy
• Evolved over the last several years
• Significant relationship with lobbyist for a few years
• Rich resource of materials for advocacy
Resources Available at CGS

• State snapshots
• General advocacy tools
  • Sample letters, sample handouts
• Federal policy issues including issue briefs
  • HEA reauthorization
  • Immigration policy
  • Science policy
  • Tax policy
• Graduate education statistics
  • Debt information
A Success Story

- Graduate and Professional Student Federation mobilized students
  - Letter writing campaign to legislators representing NC
  - Phone campaign to legislators
- Worked closely with federal liaison and The Graduate School
- Clear demonstration that student advocacy can be effective
Thank You