

Office of the President

**TO MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT AND DEVELOPMENT
COMMITTEE:**

DISCUSSION ITEM

For Meeting of November 13, 2024

**PARTNERSHIP IN ADVOCACY: A COLLABORATION BETWEEN UC STUDENT
ASSOCIATION, UC GRADUATE AND PROFESSIONAL COUNCIL, AND UC STATE
AND FEDERAL GOVERNMENTAL RELATIONS**

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Associate Vice President for State Governmental Relations (SGR) Kathleen Fullerton and Associate Vice President for Federal Governmental Relations (FGR) Chris Harrington will provide the Committee with a brief legislative and 2024 election update.

Following the brief update, the UC Student Association (UCSA) and UC Graduate and Professional Council (UCGPC) will present their priorities for the coming academic year. Representatives of UCSA, UCGPC, SGR and FGR will then briefly discuss opportunities and efforts to collaborate on advocacy goals in Sacramento and Washington, D.C.

BACKGROUND

UC Graduate and Professional Council (UCGPC)

Founded in 2017, UCGPC is a student-led and State-recognized organization that represents the more than 60,000 UC graduate and professional students at the University, state, and federal levels. Under the direction of the UCGPC Board of Directors, the UCGPC President and the UCGPC Director of Government Relations and Legislative Affairs, the Council engages with State and federal legislators, as well as agencies, to advocate for policies, legislation, and funding that support graduate and professional students. UCGPC works closely with local policymakers, Sacramento legislators, and federal officials in Washington, D.C., to elevate and amplify the student voice.

In July 2021, the Regents approved the UCGPC Systemwide Fee that went into effect in fall 2023. This is an annual opt-out fee of \$7 per graduate and professional student used to support the UCGPC. UCGPC has a current budget of approximately \$200,000 and employs two staff, a full-time Executive Director and a part-time Director of Government Relations and Legislative Affairs.

Each November, UCGPC holds its annual Grad Summit, which serves as an opportunity for graduate and professional students from across the system to come together to discuss key issues, including UCGPC's State and federal priorities and advocacy for the 2023–24 academic year.

UCGPC is committed to advocating for the needs of UC graduate students, ensuring they have the resources and support to thrive. In 2023–24, following a vote by the External Vice Presidents from the UC campus graduate student associations, UCGPC identified three key advocacy priorities: affordable housing, improved mental health services, and stronger mentorship standards. UCGPC will soon vote on 2024–25 priorities, which will be included in the presentation to the Board. Alongside these campaigns, UCGPC continues to champion permanent priorities focused on basic needs and civic engagement, aiming to build a robust, supportive environment for graduate students.

Top Three Advocacy Priorities (2023–24)

1. Affordable Housing

Advocating for increased housing availability, reduced costs, and addressing housing insecurity as a central issue for graduate students.

2. Improved Mental Health Services

Pushing for expanded access to counselors, better mental health resources, and stronger support systems.

3. Enhanced Mentorship Standards

Strengthening mentorship programs with clearer guidelines and accountability measures for effective student support.

Permanent Advocacy Priorities

• Basic Needs

Focused on supporting students with dependents, addressing food insecurity, and improving transportation access across all UC campuses.

• Civic Engagement

Providing advocacy training, promoting voter participation, and fostering student involvement in state and national politics.

Legislative Advocacy

• State-Level Advocacy

In light of the State budget shortfall, UCGPC is actively urging the California legislature for robust funding for UC graduate students, the UC budget, and its multi-year funding Compact, emphasizing the need for affordable housing, enhanced support for graduate education, graduate student basic needs, and urgent support for students with dependents. UCGPC's partnership with the Office of State Governmental Relations (SGR) has been instrumental in

driving its advocacy efforts forward.

- **Federal-Level Advocacy**

At the federal level, UCGPC is advocating for increased funding for key research agencies, including the National Institutes of Health, National Endowment for the Humanities, and the National Science Foundation. These agencies provide essential grants and fellowships that support the groundbreaking research and academic progress of UC graduate students. Additionally, UCGPC is strongly opposing proposed cuts to the Child Care Access Means Parents in School (CCAMPIS) program, which provides crucial childcare support for low-income students with dependents. The collaboration and unwavering support from the Office of Federal Governmental Relations (FGR) has been vital to amplifying UCGPC's advocacy efforts in Washington, D.C., ensuring that UCGPC's voices are heard and its priorities are addressed.

UC Student Association (UCSA)

UCSA is a coalition of students and student governments that aims to provide a collective voice for all students through advocacy and direct action. UCSA seeks to advance higher education by empowering current and future students to advocate on their own behalf for the accessibility, affordability, and quality of the UC system. UCSA works to advance its goals through University advocacy, legislative advocacy, and direct engagement. UCSA actively promotes legislation in Sacramento and Washington, D.C. that benefits current students, prospective students, and UC alumni. Under the direction of the UCSA Government Relations Committee and UCSA Board of Directors, the Association takes official legislative positions on behalf of the students of UC. The office works with elected officials, staff, and decision makers to ensure that the student perspective and voice is represented in all relevant public policy discussions. The UCSA Government Relations Office serves to connect students directly with elected and administration officials in Sacramento and Washington D.C.

UCSA celebrated its 50th Anniversary in 2022.

In July 2021, the Regents approved the UCSA Systemwide Fee, which went into effect in Fall 2022. This is an annual opt-out fee of \$7 per undergraduate student that is used to support UCSA. UCSA has a current budget of approximately \$1.3 million and employs five staff.

During UCSA's 2024 Student Organizing Summit, UCSA elected representatives from across the system and voted on new issues for which UCSA would organize during the coming academic year. Campaign priorities voted on for the 2024–25 academic year include the following:

- Expand food security programs for undocumented and international students. According to the 2020 report from the Regents' Special Committee on Basic Needs, one of the University's goals was to "establish programs on all campuses to ensure that CalFresh-eligible students can access nutritious food, such as another program equivalent to

CalFresh benefits or student aid awards.” 2022 was the target year to meet this goal.

- Work with higher education coalition partners to implement the Cal Grant Equity Framework through a multi-year phase-in approach with the aim of ultimately securing full funding.
- Provide education on the “Yes on Prop 6” and “No on Prop 36” State ballot proposition campaigns.
- Strengthen the relationship and engagement between the Native and Indigenous Council and chancellors at all campuses.
- Establish a minimum of six ballot boxes per campus, increase polling stations, and establish voting center(s) with more language accessibility.

On the legislative front, UCSA aims to continue working to find solutions to ensure that students are not barred from obtaining their diploma or reenrolling in courses due to having institutional debt, as well as ensuring that undocumented students are afforded equitable access to campus employment opportunities given that Assembly Bill (AB) 1160 (Pacheco) and AB 2586 (Alvarez) did not pass.

UC State and Federal Government Relations Partnership with UCSA and UCGPC

UC State Governmental Relations

SGR has a strong and productive relationship with UCSA and UCGPC. Examples include:

- Monthly virtual meetings to discuss budgetary and legislative priorities and positions, share the detailed rationale for formal policy positions, and share other Capitol-related information.
- Support for SGR priorities. UCSA and UCGPC have promoted UC Advocacy Network (UCAN) digital campaigns for State budget funding.
- Support for student advocacy. SGR has hosted lunches to discuss its work, identify ways SGR can provide support, and discuss student priorities. SGR has provided guidance and resources on engaging members of the Legislature and attended both virtual and in-person meetings to provide legislative and budgetary updates.
- Participation in UCAN Get Out The Vote (GOVT) efforts. In September and October 2024, UCGPC and UCSA leadership authored emails to the UCAN community encouraging UC students to make a plan to vote in November 2024.

SGR’s partnership with both organizations is based on a mutual desire for the University of California to thrive so that it can continue to improve the lives of Californians and those around the world. SGR, UCGPC, and UCSA acknowledge they do not always agree on policy but

commit to a working relationship rooted in respect, transparent and honest communication, and a commitment to partner when possible. SGR, UCGPC, and UCSA are renewing these conversations for the 2025–26 State legislative session.

UC Federal Governmental Relations

FGR has an active partnership with both UCSA and UCGPC in advancing UC systemwide priorities as well as those of each student association. . Examples of this partnership include:

- Bi-weekly meetings with both UCSA and UCGPC to discuss federal advocacy issues and opportunities for support and engagement.
- Support for federal advocacy, both virtually and in-person in Washington, D.C. In April 2024, the Board of Regents and FGR provided both financial and in-kind support for the first-ever UCSA and UCGPC Joint Federal Advocacy Day in Washington, D.C. This event brought more than 160 UCSA and UCGPC representatives to the nation’s capital for advocacy training, leadership development, and congressional and agency meetings aligned with UCSA and UCGPC priorities. (UC FGR partnered with both UCSA and UCGPC in prior years to support their in-person federal advocacy events.)
- Development of tailored communications and advocacy materials, including factsheets, talking points, and other collateral, for use by both UCSA and UCGPC.
- Development of letters to the California congressional delegation focused on the advancement of shared systemwide priorities.
- Assistance in holding briefings, meetings, and other advocacy-related events virtually and on the ground in Washington, D.C.
- Partnership opportunities for participation and engagement through UCAN.
In 2021, FGR was given the “Ally of the Year” Award by UCSA.

In preparation for the new administration and the 119th Congress, UC FGR met with both UCSA and UCGPC to discuss their federal advocacy priorities and begin to develop a strategic plan for engagement and advancement. As part of this strategy, FGR is exploring opportunities for the leadership of each association to meet virtually with members of the incoming Presidential Transition Team. In addition, UC FGR is already working with both student associations as they plan their Washington, D.C. in-person advocacy events for 2025. FGR will continue to identify opportunities to partner with both associations across its advocacy platforms.