

# November Edition

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# Monthly State Student Association Newsletter

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## University of California Student Association

UCSA just finished an amazing campaign to pass the CA DREAM Act, which would provide access to financial aid for undocumented students in California. After a long campaign, the Governor vetoed the legislation. UCSA was a big part of the California coalition, which included other state organizations working to pass the Act through the legislature. They had over 6500 letters, petitions, and calls to the governor.

Now UCSA is running voter registration & institutionalization campaigns on their member campuses while gearing up for a state budget fight in the early spring. After their voter registration week of action they collected over 6,000 voter registration forms so far!

### *Projects/New Initiatives*

- Currently working on a Strategic Planning process
- Currently working on a logo & organization redesign done (beginning of the year- new look)
- Currently working on a website redesign
- Finally, planning a statewide budget Summit: UCSA and CSSA hosting it

### *Dates/ Events*

- SOCC Nov. 10-12: 700-800 projected students with over 600 registered
  - They will be having their next board meeting at the conference
  - Also, on Nov. 14 UCSA will be asking for fee freeze: BIG ACTION at their system wide Board of Regents meeting
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## Oregon Student Association

OSA is mainly working to survey students across the state on the issues they care about and want OSA to prioritize for next year's legislative session. Oregon breaks up their organization into a 2-year cycle between an issue choosing year and a legislative/advocacy year.

They are aggressively talking to students face to face on the Oregon campuses to engage them in articulating the issues they most care about with the work the organization does. The Oregon Student of Color Coalition as well as the Oregon Student Equal Rights Association (two affiliate advisory boards to OSA) are also working on similar efforts.

OSA has also been working on a committee with system wide administrators they created to work outside the legislative process to address the issue of programmatic resource fees. With the overall problem of student debt and college affordability extra fees like these create unnecessary burdens for students and they are working to reduce them outside the legislative process.

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Also, OSA is working on a statewide differential initiative that will work to give students more choices in their fees and provide a higher level of transparency around the costs they are facing.

## *Projects/New Initiatives*

-OSA is hiring a Legislative Director & an Organizing Director!!!!!!!!!!

So if you know anyone who would be a strong candidate please let Tami know: [tamara@orstudents.org](mailto:tamara@orstudents.org)

## *Dates/Events*

-The Northwest Student Leadership Conference is coming up on the 9-11<sup>th</sup> of Novemeber at Portland State University: hundreds of students from across the Northwest will be gathering at PSU for an exciting weekend of leadership development opportunities

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## **Arizona Student Association**

ASA is mainly focusing on voter registration efforts on all of the campuses statewide now that the South West Student Leadership Conference they were hosting is over. Next week is their blitz week around voter engagement. They are planning to use this week of action around voter registration to work out the kinks in preparation for 2008. They are pressuring their administration to institutionalize voter registration access policies and using this week to see what is working and where they need to improve.

In addition, ASA is launching their tuition freeze campaign next Monday! ASA will be having a statewide press event (primarily on 3 major campuses) to kick off their opposition to fee increases campaign. This is a big campaign for ASA to take on because it has been a while since students in Arizona have run a statewide campaign against tuition increases.

## *Projects/New Initiatives*

-The South West Student Leadership Conference just ended and students were excited to be at the event and take skills and resources back to their campuses. The conference was even better than last year and the staff report it was totally worthwhile for everyone involved.

-ASA is currently helping the Arizona State University system select the next student regent to their system wide governing board of regents. ASA plays a vital role in this process every year and is hopeful that they will select a strong student representative for ASA.

## *Dates/Events*

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-Board Meeting on Nov. 16<sup>th</sup>: another interesting piece of information is that this board of directors for ASA has decided to move toward having monthly meetings!

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## **Minnesota State College Student Association**

### *Projects/New Initiatives*

-Just had their large Fall Leadership Conference & General Assembly this past month, which took a lot of work and energy to put on. Gabe & Bill from USSA were there and it was a huge success with several hundred students in attendance.

-MSCSA became members of USSA for the entire statewide! USSA & MSCSA are extremely excited that they are now officially part of the association and we will be working collaboratively with them in the coming months to strengthen the national movement!

-MSCSA is taking applications and promoting their leadership scholarship that they give out every year. Scholarships are awarded to students who demonstrate strong leadership skills, but a student's G.P.A. and credits will also be taken into consideration. Financial need is not part of the criteria. Graduate students are eligible, but undergraduate students will receive first consideration. At the fall GA, the staff raised several hundred dollars on the spot to contribute toward the cause.

## **United Council**

United Council has been incredibly busy in this past month. There has been a lot of movement on our campaigns, and we have had a lot of programming. The first week in October, we hired a new Multicultural Issues Director, Sheltreese McCoy. United Council is extremely pleased to be at full staff once again!

We held a Shared Governance Summit along with our October General Assembly at United Council. There we were able to bring in speakers and have students get together to talk about segregated fee issues, student participation in decision making processes within the UW System, and focus on strategizing on our Shared Governance related campaigns.

The Wisconsin State Budget has been our primary concern, campaign wise, but now that it is over with we have time to move on to other things. We have been working on the Wisconsin Needs H.E.R! (Higher Education Re-Investment) Campaign at United Council of UW students was long, yet successful. Wisconsin was the last state to pass a budget this year. Students not only felt the brunt of the bull, but were at the forefront of direct action against stubborn legislators. Working for a budget 115 days overdue is not fun, but Wisconsin students maintained victories as well as winning new ones.

Earlier this year, students secured a tuition freeze! The Board of Regents froze two-year University of Wisconsin system colleges based off student pressure. It is a United Council victory that creates access

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for the students whom needs it most. But what lay ahead was a battle with the state legislature for the budget simply to be passed. Although students' needs were not the focal point of the budget standoff, students were suffering more and more each day the budget was not passed. By the time the budget passed, over 5500 students were missing their Wisconsin Higher Education Grant (WHEG), the state need-based grant. Missing WHEGs became a large campaign point, especially as students were making difficult choices on if to stay in school or to leave. Students consistently made calls to their local legislators and key decision makers throughout the process. Near the end of the campaign, as the need for a state budget escalated, 80 students rallied at UW-La Crosse. The very day before the budget passed, an estimated 350 students were prepared to rally at the state Capitol. With state offices calling to see if students would still rally, we have to wonder if students had an impact in the passing of the budget.

The budget passed with victories in \$11 million dollar increases the WHEG grant, not to mention all students missing their grants finally receiving them. Moreover, there were increasing in the Lawton Minority retention grant for low income students and students of color. And also increases in the Advanced Opportunity Program for low income graduate students and students of color. We will continue to work for domestic partner benefits and in-state tuition for undocumented students here in Wisconsin as well as maintaining accessibility for all through lower tuition and even zero percent increases.

*Textbook- Yes, an Issue of Accessibility Campaign:* Accessibility in higher education does not stop at the state budget! At United Council, we know that student expenses such as textbooks hinder students' access to higher education. Coalition with other statewide organizations, we will be research a potential textbook campaign. Taking the lead from other USSA members such as University of Washington, we will be researching legislation to stop "bundling" of textbook with extras such as compact disc, extra books and info packets – supplies that professors often do not want. Moreover, we will be researching legislation that mandates textbook prices to be made available by the vendor ahead of time so the student is aware of the price, as well as the professor.

*% for Art Campaign:* Because United Council students are constantly fighting for the expansion and protection of the student voice in Wisconsin, they've elected to resolve an issue of Shared Governance regarding the purchase of artwork for UW campuses. The '% for Art' program, an offshoot of the statutorily recognized Wisconsin Arts Board, currently controls the selection of major works of art for all public buildings, including jails, libraries, and, most importantly, those found within our UW campuses. This procedure conflicts with ss36.09(5), the statute-granting students control over the disposition of their segregated fees, because many of these public buildings (student Unions, for example) are 100% funded by Segregated Fees. United Council students will lobby the Chair of the Wisconsin Arts Board, Lt. Gov. Barbara Lawton, for a student seat on the '% for Arts' purchasing committee. If Lt. Gov. Lawton does not grant us a seat, we will employ DAO tactics on the citizen-members of the Board. We have yet to meet with the Lt. Gov.

*Chapter 17/18 Campaign:* Since 1976, Wisconsin Administrative Code Chapters 17 and 18 have enforced proper academic and non-academic conduct within the UW System. Incidents ranging from parking violations to harassment, cheating and vandalism are all addressed in these chapters. On occasion, the codes have been revised to meet the needs of constantly changing state laws, policies, and campus environments. Most recently, a conflict at UW-Milwaukee has brought Chapters 17 and 18 to the forefront of campus policy debate. Surrounded largely by historic, non-student neighborhoods, UW-

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Milwaukee is a relatively small urban campus with a large student body. As of late, there has been an increase in reports of conflict between students and residents of the non-student neighborhoods. Led by a handful of well-organized neighborhood associations, residents have successfully lobbied the Board of Regents to consider revising the Chapters to include academic penalties for non-academic misconduct that occur off-campus. United Council students have elected this issue as a campaign for 2007-2008. Our initial organizing efforts will begin late November, when the revised Chapters are released for public comment.

## *Projects/New Initiatives*

A recent development that has just come up this week – and is good to let other SSA's around the country know about is the fact that there has really been a climate change in Wisconsin regarding student autonomy in shared governance. Just this week, a UW System representative has made a move in a Board of Regents committee to make several items ineligible for segregated fee funding including: money to pay staff members of student organizations, money for lobbyists or for money that would support a student organizations' lobby activities, and any money for off campus rent. This is a huge concern not only for United Council itself but also for any student organization that works to create social change, as it could be interpreted that no student organization can use their funding to print postcards, have call in days, or lobby people in power to get what we want. Keep your eyes open for updates on this one...\*\*\*

## *Dates/Events*

-October 19-20<sup>th</sup> we held an LGBTQ Empowerment Summit at UW Parkside. We had over 80 participants and various workshops over the course of the two-day Summit, and it turned out wonderfully! Much thanks is due to Erich Pitcher, our new LGBTQ Issues Director.

-November 9-11<sup>th</sup> we will host the 12<sup>th</sup> annual Women's Leadership Conference, being held at UW Oshkosh this year. We have over 50 workshops, and an estimated 300 participants. The Keynote speakers include Loretta Ross and Julia Serano.

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## **California State Student Association**

Voter Registration is big priority right now for CSSA. They are working to develop a plan for 2008 and lay the groundwork for a strong voter engagement campaign with the Cal State schools. The California legislative session just started so CSSA is continuing their work on in-state financial aid. Last year they introduced a piece of legislation titled Assembly Bill 302, which would add financial assistance for students in their first year of college, while currently the program only provides assistance in the last three years of college. They are working to have this legislation introduced again.

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In addition to financial aid and vote work, CSSA is working on reducing campus fees, a rapidly growing cost for students in the CSU. The administration has been passing the buck onto students on individual campuses through course based fees, technology fees, infrastructure fees, athletic fees, etc.

Finally, CSSA is also lobbying the university administration around their attempt to limit the number of courses a student can drop or withdrawal per academic cycle, which has been a vehicle to limit the options students have previously had when choosing classes.

## *Projects/New Initiatives*

-Working on a statewide Budget Summit with an attempt to align the three segments of higher education in the state and to unify the student voice as they move into the legislative session

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## **Minnesota State University Student Association**

MSUSA is working on their Student Voice Campaign to gear up for the 2008 election, laying groundwork locally to get students engaged with local city councils and community organizations. They have been successful in having city council members attend student government meetings and attending events that students have been hosting.

They are also working to prioritize which voting laws they are trying to change in the legislative session to expand voter access.

MSUSA is also running a financial aid campaign; currently they are collecting profiles on students-getting stories to present to legislators on how students are dealing with affordability issues. Their state grant program takes away the increases in federal pell grant so they are working to eliminate the “pell pass through” which limits eligibility to full access grant in state and federal- might be a surplus in program and working to change the program to benefit more students

## *Projects/New Initiatives*

-Recently hosted their 3<sup>rd</sup> annual Women’s Leadership Conference: attendance was higher than ever been in recent years

-Beginning long range planning process after lots of changes over the past couple years: looking into the next 3-5 years

## *Dates/Events*

-Next board meeting is November 30- December 2: setting legislative agenda (state & federal agenda)

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## **Washington Student Lobby**

Washington Student Lobby (WSL) has been working to adopt a legislative agenda for the advocacy WSL will be doing on behalf of Washington students in the coming year.

It is a supplemental year in legislature, which means not a lot of funding or budgetary issues occurring but this past weekend at their general assembly they passed their legislative agenda. They have been working on childcare issues, generally trying to increase the grant money available that augments the fees toward childcare issues that students receive.

### *Projects/New Initiatives*

-In September, WSL started a strategic planning process for the statewide and after last months meeting they have decided to formulate an action plan (a matrix with tasks and people) over the coming year or two.

-Endorsed formally NWSLC, and hosting a statewide Electoral Action Training to help start the planning and organizing for 2008

-For the first time in WSL's history, Bellevue community college (\*the largest in the state with 30,000 students) made a presentation to join and have joined the statewide.

-Currently they are working to best figure out where the place of community and technical colleges are in the larger structure of WSL.

### *Dates/Events*

-Next board meeting November 3<sup>rd</sup>, General Assembly

-Electoral Action Training- Sunday November 4<sup>th</sup>

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## **Florida Student Association**

Could not reach- will report more next month.

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## **Massachusetts Students Uniting**

Earlier this month, about 25 students from 6-8 public colleges came together to start a new statewide student association named, Massachusetts Students Uniting. MSU had its first statewide meeting in person at the University of Massachusetts Boston. They are forming a statewide student association and they aim for it to include all public higher education institutions in Massachusetts (which would be about 30 college campuses). After representatives from university, state and community colleges met, they decided on a campaign to increase their state based financial assistance grant program, Mass Grant. They

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are having monthly meetings on rotating campuses and will be developing a structure and leadership for the organization later this month.

MSU came out of a larger coalition in the state called the Public Higher Education Network of Massachusetts (PHENOM). PHENOM is working to represent the 500,000 students, staff and faculty that make up higher education in Massachusetts. As MSU continues to grow it plans to work in coalition with PHENOM with the aim to prioritize student issues in state politics.

## *Dates/Events*

Next statewide meeting is November 29, 2007

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## **Student Association of Michigan**

SAM held a large Press Conference/Rally in Lansing calling on the state to invest in higher education and to stop balancing the budget on the backs of students. There were around 400 students at the event and the press that was received from this was incredible. The rally was publicized statewide in Michigan as well as in other states and students are still seeing the impact from the campaign. The legislature just passed the Michigan state budget to include *67 million* or so in additional funding to higher education system.

\*\* Here are some links to the rally: \*\*\*

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=k0YzZhFJnuM>

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PyYtCdy8Gi4>

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=k0HT3b6bgqY>

## Projects/New Initiatives

SAM is working to develop the statewide organization and start preparing to do vote work for 2008. They are setting ambitious goals for 2008 to register 20,000 students in Michigan! Through this process they are also hoping to grow the organization's financial resources and representation of community colleges as well.

## Dates/Events

SAM had their second Board meeting of the year this past Saturday at Central Michigan University. At the board meeting they elected their new leadership for the coming year and the students are:

President: Mohammad Dar, UM Ann Arbor

Vice President: Chris Praedel, Western

Treasurer: Mike Haynes, Eastern

Secretary: Jameelah Muhammad, Oakland

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## Associated Students of Colorado

ASC has been working on a statewide grassroots campaign around textbooks that started in August. So far they have collected 1,000 letters across the state and working to collect 3,000 by the end of the drive.

Right now ASC is also working to engage all of the campuses in the campaign by winter. In a few weeks they will have a legislative week of action in where every campus will be meeting with legislators and asking for their endorsement on the issue. In addition to the letters and lobby visits, they are hosting a large statewide press event around textbooks in the coming month. They have already been getting a lot of press around the issue.

In addition to textbooks, they are running an affordability campaign, which deals with a unique budget situation in CO that has made higher education bankrupt over the years. The short term goals of the campaign is to increase funding from general fund for higher education, similar to other state budget battles and the long term goal is to make structural changes to state in order to make higher education more viable to receive constant state dollars for students.

ASC is also working on rolling out their plan for the 2008 election this November. They are working to include institutionalization and voter registration, and getting the SSA committed to this over the years in the future.

### *Projects/New Initiatives*

-ASC wants to join with the statewide in Minnesota to raise visibility for students going into the Democratic National Convention & the Republican National Convention events in CO & MN.

-Also looking at how to put a student fee in place for the statewide, hiring staff, developing process of functioning.

-The Secretary of Department of Education in Colorado has invited ASC to participate in a committee to look at how to fix the budget in Colorado and to see what more the legislature can do to secure more money in Colorado for higher education.

### *Dates/Events*

-Statewide meeting this weekend in Denver, CO

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## United States Student Association

### *Budget & Appropriations*

This week the Senate passed their version of the FY 2008 Labor, Health, Human Services, and Education Appropriations bill (S. 1710) by a vote of 75-19. The bill provides a total of \$605.5 billion for Labor HHS

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programs and agencies, with \$60.1 billion in discretionary funding for education programs. The legislation now moves onto conference committee where the House and Senate will work out the differences between the two bills. Senate conferees for USSA targets states include Senator Kohl (D-WI), Senator Murray (D-WA), and Senator Specter (R-IL). House conferees should be names by the Appropriations committee soon.

Highlights of the bill include increases for TRIO and GEAR UP of \$30 million and \$10 million respectively. While the legislation restores all of the programs targeted for elimination in the President's FY 2008 budget, it level funds them. The President has threatened to veto any spending bills that are beyond his budget requests. The Senate may have enough votes to override a veto, but the House may not. This is the 7<sup>th</sup> of 12 spending bills that have to be passed by the Senate. Congress may wrap the remaining bills into an omnibus bill later this year. We have been working with our national coalition partners such as the Committee for Education Funding to circulate letters to Capitol Hill supporting the bill. So far, we have generated the support of over 1,000 organizations in the labor, health, human services, and education communities. We will keep you informed on any activity pertaining to the bill and how you can get involved soon.

## *Higher Education Act*

The Senate passed the Higher Education Act just before Labor Day. Their bill includes provisions to simplify the FAFSA application, combat unethical relationships between lenders and financial aid offices, and to strengthen early intervention & outreach programs such as GEAR UP and TRIO. The House has yet to introduce their version of the bill, but we have just learned that markup of the bill will take place on November 7<sup>th</sup> and that the bill will be voted on by the full House on November 12<sup>th</sup>. Our demands include strengthening higher education access programs, increasing grant aid, and making private student loans more manageable. We will need your support to ensure that the legislation makes its way to conference and to the President's desk this year. We will keep you posted on the latest movement of this critical legislation.

## *DREAM Act*

This week the Senate rejected the motion to end debate on the DREAM Act (S. 2205) by a vote of 52-44. Sixty votes were needed to move the legislation forward. This vote essentially tables the bill for this legislative session. While this is disappointing news, this is the farthest that the bill has made it in Congress. Also, while the Senate fell short of the votes needed, several allies for the bill were unavailable for votes, such as Senator Kennedy who was out having surgery. We will not give up the fight for DREAM and will continue to advocate for the legislation until every qualified student has access to higher education.

## *Dates/ Events*

- State Student Association Summit in Washington DC- March 14<sup>th</sup>, 2008
- USSA 39<sup>th</sup> Annual Legislative Conference in Washington DC- March 15-18<sup>th</sup>, 2008