NAGPS Fall Legislative Actions Days (LADs)
Fall 2015

Objectives:

1. To be at the forefront of the legislative discussions and proposals that affect graduate students at WMU and the nation, more broadly.

2. To be able to effectively inform graduate students of pertinent legislation affecting graduate education and to advocate on their behalf and with their best interests in mind, at the local, regional, and national level.

Why should we care?

- Decrease in federal funding of research due to sequestration cuts.
- Increasing cost of graduate education
  - Textbooks
  - Journal Articles
  - Tuition
- No domestic revalidation of international student visas
- Unfair structure of graduate student loans

Fall LADs Report:

This fall represented challenging times at the Hill. The visit of the pope made for tighter schedules and less work days. Shortly after, the Speaker of the House announced his resignation to the speakership as well as his seat in Congress. This reverberated across Congress in both Republican and Democratic camps, making for a more uncertain environment. Lastly, all of this was occurring in the midst of congressional negotiations and hearings to approve a budget before an impending government shutdown. Concerning discussions with regards to taxing tuition awards were being held with the goal of retrieving more resources for the federal government at the expense of graduate students.
Western Michigan University served as a representative of its graduate students as well as those across Michigan. We were the only institution representing a total of eight other universities in the region. As such, Western Michigan University served as the leader in taking the concerns of graduate students to Congress. We were able to accomplish this by:

- Informing the offices of Senators Stabenow and Peters as well as Rep.’s Dingell, Upton, and Bishop of concerns of graduate students.
- Meeting with Rep. Debbie Dingell’s and Sen. Stabenow’s offices to discuss graduate student concerns.
- Urged legislators to support pertinent bills that advance graduate student interests:
  - Advocating for Fair Access to Science and Technology Research Act (FASTR)
  - Affordable College Textbook Act
  - Domestic Revalidation of Student F-Type Visas (pending endorsement of US Dept. of Homeland Security)
- Maintaining legislators’ aides and staff informed about the status of bills and upcoming legislation.
- Informing legislators of a bill introduced by Mike Bishop (R-MI)
    - Goal: To extend temporarily the Federal Perkins Loan program which was allowed to lapse Sept. 30, 2015

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