

Over the last six months, the representatives from graduate and professional student governments across the University of California system have engaged a series of discussions about the goals of UC graduate and professional students in system-wide advocacy efforts and the potential organizational means to achieve them. One primary long-term goal was to develop the “voice” of the graduate and professional students as a distinct and recognizable identity and constituency in all conversations of University decision making, which is essential to advocate for the unique concerns and needs of our students. On September 28th, 2017, these representatives voted to establish the UC Graduate-Professional Coalition to advocate for graduate and professional students at the system-wide and state-wide level. It will have one voting member from each campus, and will elect leadership positions that will interface with administrators and other external parties to advocate for the shared graduate student voice.

Previously, these representatives were members of the UC Student Association, a similar organization that advocates for all UC students. Though we remain partners and will continue to work together, graduate and professional student representatives decided that we could best serve our constituents in a new, independent organization centered around graduate and professional student concerns. UCSA has done exemplary advocacy in the past for both undergraduate and graduate students, but these representatives came to the decision that we needed a separate organization. All too often, in meetings with lawmakers, regents, or campus decision-makers, graduate and professional students are forgotten in the narrative of higher education, with the word “student” bringing up only the prototypical image of the undergraduate college student, without consideration of how policies or proposals would impact graduate students in a different way. We serve at the intersection of education and employment, navigating our roles as students, colleagues, employees, funding sources, and researchers, all while trying to live our lives under a decent standard of living. This new organization will be entirely dedicated to advocating for these issues, and will help make sure that people understand the graduate student identity and the unique concerns we face. Though we share many issues and concerns with undergraduate students, we have different needs and priorities in many areas such as tuition, employment policies, child care resources, career development, title IX policies, and many more, that merit an additional voice at the table.

Over the next month, we will finalize our charter, submit it to the graduate student associations on the ten UC campuses for approval, hold elections for long-term leadership, and seek formalized recognition by UCOP and the Regents of the University of California and the legal status of a non-profit corporation. There will certainly be a transition process, but we will continue to advocate strongly for graduate student concerns throughout this time. Our advocacy agenda for the year [can be found here](#), and we will be look forward to hearing working with students, administrators, and lawmakers to work for the needs and concerns of our graduate and professional students.

Respectfully,

Becky Hofstein Grady, Interim-President of UC Graduate-Professional Coalition