



Left to Right: NAGPS Vice President Brandon Milonovich, Richard Carranza, Harold Valdes, Melody Shekari, NAGPS SJC Chair Dwayne A. Johnson, Yohey Tokumitsu, NAGPS President Neleen Leslie, and Gentre Adkins IV.

USC GSG Distinguishes Itself Among Graduate Student Organizations Across the Country

USC's Graduate Student Government (GSG) was awarded the 2014 National Member of the Year award as well as the 2014 Western Regional Member of the Year award by the National Association of Graduate-Professional Students (NAGPS).

Four current board members, President Yohey Tokumitsu, Director of Finance Harold Valdes, Director of Academic Affairs Gentre Adkins IV, and Director of Community Service Richard Carranza traveled to the University of Missouri in Columbia, MO to accept the award at the 28th Annual NAGPS National Conference. They were joined there by 2013-2014 GSG President Melody Shekari who has been an NAGPS board member for the past two years.

NAGPS is a national association comprised of member institutions with graduate-professional student governing organizations. Student leaders join NAGPS to share best practices with other schools, receive member benefits and resources and coordinate advocacy efforts. Advocacy efforts include visits to Congress and participation in national campaigns on issues such as graduate student debt, student grants and funding, and immigration. USC's GSG was not the only strong contender for the National Member of the Year award. The winners of all regions are considered for the national award; this year they included Carnegie Mellon University and Western

Michigan University. Each school is evaluated for Service, Leadership, Advocacy, and contribution to NAGPS.

This award is recognition for the cumulative efforts of current and previous GSG boards. The judges particularly noted the subsidized Metro TAP card as well as the large portion of the budget set aside for organization programming. In its interview for the national award, GSG also called attention to the size of GSG's graduate student population, possibly the largest in the nation, and the fact that GSG often handles emerging issues before other schools, such as a growing international student population. GSG has taken action to better reach international students, including kicking off graduate student orientation and starting a new Toastmasters chapter to help international and other graduate students work on public speaking. GSG's successes wouldn't have been possible without the collaboration of a number of students, administrators, and offices on campus, including Undergraduate Student Government, Student Affairs, Transportation, and the Graduate School. GSG looks forward to working together in the future on issues to better serve graduate students on campus.

In addition to on-campus efforts, GSG has been more involved in NAGPS as well. GSG board members have served on the national and regional board, as well as been active participants in regional conferences and Legislative Action Days (LADs) in Washington DC. This year, USC sent one of the largest groups of students at the event to spring LADs, including GSG board members as well as GSG senators from various programs. Despite a surprise snow day, participants, who spent the day on the Hill visiting Congressional representatives on education issues, found the experience rewarding. USC also hosted the 2013 NAGPS Western Regional Conference, bringing together student leaders from across the region, including Alaska, to discuss best practices to serve graduate students.

GSG continues to remain dedicated to improving graduate student life on campus. It is also looking to expand its presence in student advocacy- in California and nationwide-, and hopes that both undergraduate and graduate students join in the effort to ensure that this and future generations can afford to get an education and participate in amazing opportunities.