

USMSC met Sunday September 18<sup>th</sup> at Hidden Waters for their first meeting of the year. This meeting was an orientation, training, and meet and greet.

The Council is making several internal changes that it believes will increase the impact USMSC has when representing USM students. These internal changes will be officially voted upon at the October 15<sup>th</sup> meeting and include the amendment of the Constitution to reduce multiple standing committees into a simpler and more efficient structure, which consists of only two committees – (1) graduate and (2) undergraduate. The council is also in favor of reducing the executive board size to remove deputies and several executive positions the council no longer feels are relevant. This effort reflects the council's desire to lower the ratio of voting to non-voting council members and empower the elected student representative voice. Student Regent Brandon Enriquez was in attendance and USMSC is excited to work with him to create long lasting, impactful processes for advocacy.

The USMSC seeks to have its processes be reflective of its purpose- to be the official voice of USM students because it is comprised of official student body representatives and directly associated with each University's Student Government or similar governing body. USMSC is now accepting applications to fill the remaining executive board positions.

USMSC representatives have been appointed to the system wide diversity and inclusion committee and the council has been active in the planning process of November's joint council meeting as well as the planning of February's Lobby Day with CUSS & CUSF.

The following summarizes the initiatives brought forth in our first council meeting by each committee. We expect these issues to be relatable to most USM institutions for the remainder of the academic year and wish to alert the Chancellor, the Board of Regents, as well as the public to the anticipated student priorities.

### **GRADUATE CONCERNS:**

- **Health insurance uniformity** - a desire for graduate health insurance to become more uniform and at least offered on all USM campuses. Across the USM student health insurance is rising in cost and decreasing in quality. Concerns range from uniformity to affordability.
- **Tuition and equity issues** - discussion about inequitable tuition increase burdens on graduate and law students
- **Inclusion**- inclusion of international students. Concerns international students are underrepresented and insufficiently included in campus events and activities.
- **Graduate Employment** - trends on many campuses to cut graduate assistantships and a general lack of transparency when hiring graduate

students – including issues with handbooks being outdated and faculty student relationship power dynamic concerns

- **Student loan debt and diversity issues** – the financial burden of graduate school presents a challenge in having a diverse student body and creating a workforce that mirrors the population it serves. For these same reasons the graduates are in support of the creation of graduate scholarships.
- **Student loan debt** generally - Graduate students have a desire to see an increase in advocacy at the federal level
- **Meet and confer** - the importance and mandatory nature of meet and confer

#### **UNDERGRADUATE CONCERNS:**

- **Transportation issues** – Increased need for parking, safety and reliability concerns for students who rely on campus shuttles because of a lack of parking and are traveling further from campus than before
- **Title IX** – concerns that title XI offices are understaffed and under funded and not proportionate to student population. (For example UMCP and FSU have the same number of title XI staff)
- **Town –Gown interactions & Student –Police relationships** – students are seeking better relationships with the towns and local government including law enforcement agencies. Students want best practices to be shared across institutions for how to improve and grow these relationships.
- **Diversity Equity and Inclusion** – Does every campus in the USM have gender-neutral bathrooms available to the campus community? Is there a system wide policy on gender- inclusive restrooms? Is there system wide hate-bias reporting?
- **University Governance issues** – concerns that students are not equal in university shared governance processes. The student governments wish to improve their role in shared governance at their individual institutions.
- **Bereavement policy** – Students have a desire to see each campus adopt a student bereavement policy.