

University USSA delegates leave for Washington, D.C.

By Jeff Morgan
Emerald Reporter

Two University students leave for Washington, D.C., today to help decide which issues will be lobbied for by the United States Student Association.

Katy Howard and ASUO Vice President Karen Gaffney, both members of the USSA national board of directors, will attend a weekend board meeting to prioritize their lobbying efforts and to discuss the location of the association's next Summer Congress.

USSA is a Washington-based student-run lobbying group.

The executive office of USSA released a list of 17 possible lobbying issues, which Gaffney and Howard said will be narrowed down to the ten most important. These ten will constitute the majority of the lobbyists efforts. They include financial aid, education reform, unionization of students, recruitment and retention of students, tax reform, control of student fees, racism and violence on campus, sexual harassment on campus, AIDS, and racial and cultural diversity of faculty.

Howard, a law student and former vice chairwoman of the Incidental Fee Committee, said that the board prioritizes the issues based on three criteria: what issues most strongly affect students, on which issues will lobbying efforts have the strongest impact and on which issues should USSA make its voice heard, regardless of potential for impact.

Howard said that financial aid always tops the list, because other student-related topics are irrelevant if students cannot afford to pay tuition.

Gaffney and Howard were elected to their one-year seats at the USSA Summer Congress in Madison, Wis., last August. There are 42 members on the national board.

Gaffney and Howard will have three more national board meetings to attend before their term expires next August.

The association has two levels of representation: by geographic region, and by issue-related caucus. Gaffney represents the Northwest Pacific Region; Howard is chairwoman of the Gay, Lesbian and Bisexual Student Caucus. Therefore, Gaffney represents a geographical region while Howard represents the gay student community.

The Northwest Pacific Region includes Oregon, Washington, Idaho, Montana, Hawaii, Alaska and Guam. There are 13 regions. The Gay, Lesbian and

Bisexual Student Caucus is one of 12 caucuses. Others caucuses are for graduate students, women, students of color, handicapped students, community college students and environmental issues.

The University has been a member of USSA for nine years, according to Gaffney. Because of the University's influence in the national organization, Gaffney said that it is possible that the regional conference will be held in Eugene in February or March.

"The University has traditionally been very involved in USSA," Gaffney said. "There's probably a very high chance that the regional conference will be here."

However, Gaffney added that the plans for the conference have not yet been made final. The University hosted the national Summer Conference in

1984.

In addition to USSA's lobbying on national issues, Gaffney said that the ASUO benefits from membership by "networking" with other universities.

Gaffney said that if the ASUO is interested in a certain issue — improvement of childcare or campus safety, for example — she could call the USSA office or contact other USSA-member student governments to see what has been done on other campuses.

Gaffney added that the ASUO also relies on the USSA Legislative Updates that inform about legislative action in Washington.

"It alerts us to any issues that we would be concerned about and would need to take action on before an actual vote takes place," Gaffney said. "Those are real important."



Photo by Bobbie Lo

USSA delegates Karen Gaffney and Katy Howard will leave for Washington, D.C. for the organization's national board meeting. The board will prioritize lobbying issues for the year.

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