

*Why should the state invest in higher education?* Jobs. Innovation. A stronger economy. A better society. The Graduate and Professional Student Senate (GPSS), which represents the University of Washington's 12,000-plus graduate and professional students, urges the Legislature to make no additional cuts to the higher education budget in the 2011 session. Further cuts will result in reductions in enrollments, elimination of degree programs, larger class sizes, fewer class sections, increased time-to-degree, job losses, and the elimination of critical public services. **Cuts jeopardize the \$9.1 billion in total state economic impact generated by the UW, as every state dollar invested in UW returns \$22.56 to the state economy.**<sup>1</sup> Washington cannot remain competitive in the global economy unless the Legislature makes higher education a priority.

GPSS'S PRIORITIES FOR THE 2011 SESSION<sup>2</sup>

**An investment in a high-quality graduate education is an investment in jobs, innovation, and a better society.**

Washington is in the midst of an economic crisis and, because it relies on the sales tax as its primary revenue generator, the state is experiencing one of the most significant budget crises in Washington history. Higher education results in more jobs, a reduced strain on human services, less crime, and increased civic engagement.<sup>3</sup> And continued state funding allows UW to remain a national leader in acquiring research funding. In short, **investment in graduate education is the way out of this economic crisis**. GPSS urges the Legislature to make no new cuts to higher education. And any cuts to higher education should be proportional to cuts to other discretionary state programs.

**Expanding financial aid would help make a world-class education available to the best and brightest of your constituents.**

The 2010 State Legislature eliminated three of the four financial aid programs that benefit graduate students. It also cut funding to the fourth, the Washington State Work Study Program, which benefits a small fraction of graduate students at UW. In essence, **the state has almost completely divested in financial aid for graduate students, leaving essentially no fiscal incentives for Washingtonians to pursue advanced degrees**. GPSS urges the Legislature to expand financial aid funding and to support policies that ensure access for low- and middle-income students.

**Reasonable and predictable tuition results in a diverse and qualified student body.**

Predictable and stable tuition incentivizes the people of Washington to pursue higher education. Policies supporting low and stable tuition ensure access, diversity and quality; aid in degree completion and degree production rates; and allow prospective students to have an accurate understanding of the debt they will incur upon graduation. GPSS urges legislators to support a tuition policy that takes students' ability to pay into account.

---

<sup>1</sup> "The Economic and Societal Impact of the University of Washington, Executive Report," TrippUmbach, July 7, 2010. [www.washington.edu/externalaffairs/eir/pdfs/fullreport.pdf](http://www.washington.edu/externalaffairs/eir/pdfs/fullreport.pdf)

<sup>2</sup> This Legislative Agenda was drafted by the GPSS Vice President and staff after a series of meetings of the GPSS Legislative Steering Committee and Executive Committee, and was approved by the Senate on Dec. 1, 2010.

<sup>3</sup> "Key Facts about Higher Education in Washington, Chapter VI: Public Benefits of Higher Education," Higher Education Coordinating Board, 2009-10, [www.hecb.wa.gov/keyfacts](http://www.hecb.wa.gov/keyfacts).

*GPSS 2011 Priorities*

**State Funding.** *GPSS supports:*

- No additional cuts to higher education in the 2011-13 biennial budget.
- Funding of graduate and professional degree production no lower than the 50th percentile of Global Challenge States (GCS), in line with the HECB's Strategic Master Plan goals. (Washington currently ranks last in the GCS in graduate degree production.) This will require an increase of 8,600 higher-level degrees by 2018.
- Increased graduate and professional degree production in high-demand fields, specifically in Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM), to better meet the needs of Washington employers and to stimulate economic growth.

**Financial Aid.** *GPSS supports:*

- An expansion of financial aid funding and support of policies that ensure access for low- and middle-income students.
- Restoration of programs that have been cut or eliminated in recent years, including the State Need Grant, Washington State Work Study Program, Future Teachers Conditional Scholarship and Loan Repayment, Health Professions Scholarship, Child Care Matching Grants, and the Graduate Fellowship Trust Account.
- Fully funding the Higher Education Loan Program (aka "HELP," HB 2854, 2009-10).
- Proportional increase in financial aid funding tied to any increases in tuition.
- A student loan interest rate buy-back program.
- A loan forgiveness program for those who commit to staying in the state.
- A student loan program in conjunction with the establishment of a state bank.

**Tuition.** *GPSS supports:*

- GPSS urges legislators to support a tuition policy that takes students' ability to pay into account.
- The establishment of restrictions on tuition-setting authority for graduate and professional students by establishing a tuition rate cap that does not exceed the median tuition of the Higher Education Coordinating Board (HECB) 24.<sup>4</sup>
- Mandatory financial aid increases that are proportional to tuition increases.
- Policies supporting reasonable and predictable tuition rates, which is crucial for student retention and degree completion.<sup>5</sup>
- All proposed increases to graduate and professional tuition presented in a transparent manner for student input and compliance with the appropriate administrative and legislative process.

---

<sup>4</sup> Among the HECB 24 ([www.washington.edu/admin/factbook/OisAcrobat/peers.html#anchor1](http://www.washington.edu/admin/factbook/OisAcrobat/peers.html#anchor1)), UW does not currently exceed the median tuition for both graduate and profession student tuition.

<sup>5</sup> Workforce Board Report: [www.wtb.wa.gov/Documents/WorkforceEdFinAid\\_AccessFinalReport.pdf](http://www.wtb.wa.gov/Documents/WorkforceEdFinAid_AccessFinalReport.pdf).

*GPSS State Lobbying Position Statements*

**ACCESS** – GPSS supports:

- Increases in financial aid, tuition waivers, fellowships, and grants for both domestic and international graduate and professional (G&P) students
- Maintain access to in-state tuition waivers
- Financing new full-time enrollment positions for G&P students especially for degrees in high demand fields
- Comprehensive efforts to recruit, retain, and support underrepresented students, faculty, and staff in G&P programs, and the removal of policies hindering these efforts
- Policies reducing the financial burden of non-tuition education costs (textbooks, software, lab fees, etc.)
- Financial aid parity for all students including eligibility for financial aid regardless of drug convictions
- Policies easing student transportation burdens including mass transit options and affordable parking

**FUNDING** – GPSS supports:

- Reinstatement of funding for the Graduate Fellowship Trust Account
- Restoration of the non-resident graduate student subsidy
- Residency rules and tuition waivers facilitating out-of-state and international student recruitment
- Public funding of higher education at levels comparable to peer institutions in the Global Challenge States
- Maintain funding for the State Need Grant
- Removing higher education from the I-601 spending limitations
- Increasing funding of G&P student services and creating support services for students in interdisciplinary, multidisciplinary, and concurrent degree programs
- State funding of capital projects and renovations that are energy and cost efficient meeting LEED standards
- Efforts to increase environmental stewardship and sustainability on campus
- Fewer public works and procurement restraints on capital projects that do not have state appropriated funds
- Complete student control of self-imposed student fees
- Pay increases for all student employees matching at least the cost of living increases
- Access to robust retirement plans
- University effort to establish greater use and efficiency of the metro track

**ACADEMIC EXCELLENCE** – GPSS supports:

- The recruitment and retention of diverse world-class faculty and globally competitive students
- Private/public partnerships to engage the public and improve G&P education
- Lowering student/professor ratios and increasing opportunities for professional mentorship
- Policies and funding for university libraries to secure access to more materials to support research
- Policies and funding supporting G&P student travel for professional development and research

**STUDENT WELLNESS & SAFETY** – GPSS supports:

- Affordable, accessible, and comprehensive healthcare, insurance (including dental/vision), and benefits that meet the needs of the diverse G&P student population, their families, and domestic partners
- Healthcare and insurance that includes mental health care and preventive care measures such as STI screenings
- Funding for policies that promote student safety
- The expansion of hate crime laws to include both sexual orientation and gender identity
- A maternal/paternal leave policy where student employees receive compensation and preservation of health insurance for the adoption or birth of a child
- Legislative safeguards that ensure adequate and safe rental housing for students

**GOVERNANCE & ADVOCACY** – GPSS supports:

- Explicit policies for shared governance of higher education between institutions, faculty, and the Legislature
- A consistent and transparent appointment process for student regents and the HECB student member
- Increased student voting accessibility including ballot drop boxes on or near college campuses
- Collective bargaining and political organizing for G&P students
- Incorporation of G&P student interests in the HECB Strategic Master Plan
- The P-20 Council long-term goals of improving student transitions through the educational pipeline
- Voting faculty representation on the Board of Regents so long as proper safeguards exist with regards to conflict of interests

*GPSS Federal Lobbying Position Statements*

The University of Washington (UW) Graduate & Professional Student Senate (GPSS) represents the 12,000+ graduate/professional student body and consists of over 120 elected or appointed representatives from UW's graduate/professional degree granting programs. As a current leader in research for emerging global economic industries, our institution is uniquely positioned to partner with the federal government to transition into the new global economy. The investment by the federal government in graduate programs will be a key component to maintaining and improving the next generation of leaders.

**ACCESS** – GPSS supports:

- Increase federal financial aid, tuition waivers, fellowships, and grants for both domestic and international graduate and professional (G&P) students
- Policies reducing the financial burden of non-tuition education costs (textbooks, software, lab fees, etc.)
- Visa reform aimed at increasing access to foreign students seeking to complete their degrees and obtain employment in the U.S, including provisions for part- time employment while attending school to decrease the financial burden on foreign students and funding agencies
- The consideration of the Federal Research and Public Access Act as a means to increased information access. Any bill must preserve essential protections to the peer review process and academic integrity

**FUNDING** – GPSS supports:

- Continued funding support for federal research projects connected to the University of Washington
- Maintaining and increasing federal loans and loan forgiveness programs
- Tax exemptions for fellowships and graduate student assistantships
- The Student Aid and Fiscal Responsibility Act (SAFRA), which expands the Perkins Loan and absorbs the Family Education Loan Program (FELP) into the Direct Loan Program
- Continuing support to the UW Consortium Training program increasing nursing faculty within the UW institutions
- The RISE act of 2009, which repeals the Higher Education Act of 1965 to permit students with drug offenses access to financial aid
- The increase of borrowing limits for federal student loans, as well as loan adjustments for inflation
- The increase in tax deductibility of student loan interest and adjustments to loan grace periods for graduate students taking justifiable interruptions in their degree completions
- Federal support for childcare and other services for student parents
- Federal education programs in financial literacy
- Legislation that discourages predatory lending practices

**ACADEMIC EXCELLENCE** – GPSS supports:

- Federal programs that provide graduate specific educational scholarships.
- Federal policies that promote increased diversity in graduate school programs
- Increased support for federally funded projects that increase Washington's global competitiveness, specifically in the fields of Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM)

**STUDENT WELLNESS & SAFETY**– GPSS supports:

- Maintaining access to short-term health insurance plans for graduate and professional students
- The enactment of responsible and affordable comprehensive health care reform
- Access to affordable and accessible childcare for graduate and professional students

**GOVERNANCE & ADVOCACY** – GPSS supports:

- The appointment of a federal graduate student advisory committee within the US Department of Education.
- The appointment of a graduate policy coordinator within the US Department of Education