

The UW Graduate & Professional Student Senate represents the 12,000+ graduate/professional student body and consists of over 120 elected or appointed representatives from each of the graduate/professional degree granting schools, departments, or programs. GPSS's stated constitutional purpose is to "in every way possible, attempt to improve all aspects of graduate and professional student life at the University of Washington. It shall consider any matter that directly influences or affects the graduate and professional student body as a valid item for its interest and deliberation." Additionally, GPSS is committed to promoting respect for the rights and privileges of others, the understanding and appreciation of human differences, and the constructive expression of ideas.

2009 Session Top Priorities¹

Reasonable, Affordable, Predictable Tuition

** GPSS supports restrictions on graduate and professional tuition setting authority including a tuition rate cap, mandatory financial aid increases that are proportional to tuition increases, increases in spending for graduate and professional student services, and consideration of how tuition increases will impact recruitment and retention*

- Tuition is the greatest barrier to higher education degree completion and thus predictable tuition rates are crucial for recruitment and retention efforts.²
- Proportional financial aid increases are necessary to avoid a growing gap between tuition and financial aid. A dollar for dollar match is not achieved when financial aid support is increased by the same percentage as tuition rates because the principal of financial aid is lower than the principal of tuition.

Mental Health Care

** GPSS supports state funding that increases accessible and affordable mental health services*

- College students utilize mental health services at higher levels than ever before.³
- Timely access to these services is essential for campus safety and student wellness.
- UW currently has a student/provider ratio well below national averages and clinical best practice recommendations.⁴
- In 2008, GPSS lobbied for \$472,000 of funding for additional mental health counselors at Washington four-year institutions. This funding passed both houses of the Washington State Legislature with strong support, but was vetoed by Governor Gregoire.

Child Care

** GPSS supports state funding for child care programs*

- Childcare affordability is the 3rd greatest barrier to higher education degree completion.²
- Demand for childcare continues to grow and many programs have extensive waiting lists.
- In 2008, HB2508 replaced the current competitive grant program administered by the HECB with a proportional matching program.
- In 2008, an additional \$1.1 million of funding for HB2508 passed both houses of the Washington Legislature, but was vetoed by Governor Gregoire.

¹ This Legislative Agenda was drafted by the GPSS Vice President after four meetings of the GPSS Legislative Steering Committee (six members) was presented to the full Senate at its December 3, 2008 and approved with overwhelming support.

² Workforce Board Report: http://www.wtb.wa.gov/Documents/WorkforceEdFinAid_AccessFinalReport.pdf.

³ American Psychiatric Association, College Student Mental Health, available at http://www.healthyminds.org/cmh_07.cfm.

⁴ Data gathered by the University of Washington Graduate and Professional Student Senate Health Care Data Group.

GPSS 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
- 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:

- 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
- 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
- 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 cost of living increases
- Access to retirement plans with employer contributions

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
- The creation of a Center for Human Rights at the University of Washington*

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*

*Additions to the Legislative Agenda approved by the GPSS Senate at its March 4, 2009 meeting