Title:  A RESOLUTION IN SUPPORT OF A POLICY THAT PROMOTES REASONABLE, PREDICTABLE, AND AFFORDABLE TUITION FOR ALL STUDENTS AT THE UNIVERSITY OF WASHINGTON

Sponsored and Written by: Jake Faleschini (GPSS President) & David Iseminger (GPSS Vice President)

Co-sponsored by: Yutaka Juno (GPSS Secretary), Kris Anderson (Executive Senator), Anna Batie (Jackson School Senator), Noah Benson (GBLT Senator/Summer 2008 Executive Senator), Felecia Cerrato (Public Health Genetics Senator), Marc Jaffrey (Earth & Space Sciences Senator), Scott Mackenzie (Neurobiology & Behavior Senator), Shawn Mincer (Social Work Senator), Richard Nobles (Executive Senator), Charles Plummer (Executive Senator)

Resolution Number:  2.08-09

WHEREAS in its upcoming session the Legislature of the State of Washington will set tuition rates, debate whether tuition rates for students who are not resident undergraduate students should be controlled by the State Legislature or by the local governing boards for each of the public institutions in Washington, and approve a biennial budget; and

WHEREAS policies that lead to reasonable, predictable, and affordable tuition are critical for the University of Washington to fulfill its mandate to provide accessible education; and

WHEREAS high tuition and insufficient financial aid causes students to drop out of the University of Washington and prevents others from enrolling at all; and

WHEREAS the frequency and severity of these problems causes many students who are eligible for financial aid to incorrectly believe that they, too, would be unable to attend the University of Washington; and

WHEREAS these financial aid problems inflict the greatest harm on the communities that are most underrepresented at the University of Washington; and

WHEREAS all the aforementioned problems persist despite the historic fundraising efforts by the University of Washington administration; and

WHEREAS the attached memorandum, titled “Recommended Language for Reasonable, Predictable, and Affordable Tuition for Graduate & Professional Students in Public Universities” calls for insertion of language into upcoming legislation for graduate and professional student tuition setting authority that would mandate tuition caps, guarantee that financial aid increases match tuition increases, require consideration of recruitment and retention, and ensure that services are improved commensurately with tuition increases; and
WHEREAS graduate and professional students have expressed less interest in who has tuition setting authority than they have in ensuring reasonable, affordable, and predictable tuition; and

WHEREAS adequate funding is necessary for the University of Washington to be able to provide a world class education, but, despite exceptional financial responsibility and frugality, the University of Washington is enduring a financial crisis that increasingly threatens the ability to provide basic services; and

WHEREAS the State of Washington is facing an economic and budgetary downturn, causing the University of Washington community to face even more difficulty in the attempt to secure adequate funding; and

WHEREAS students' chances of success on this issue are maximized if the ASUW, GPSS, University of Washington administration, and other parties lobby a unified agenda; and

WHEREAS the attached memorandum has been fully endorsed by the Summer 2008 Executive Committee of the GPSS, the Leadership of the Washington State University Graduate and Professional Students Association (WSU-GPSA), and the President and the Executive Director of the Washington State Lobby (WSL); and

WHEREAS the attached memorandum details a policy that would benefit graduate and professional students if implemented.

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED BY THE GRADUATE & PROFESSIONAL STUDENT SENATE:

THAT the GPSS fully endorses the policy set forth in the attached memorandum, titled “Recommended Language for Reasonable, Predictable, and Affordable Tuition for Graduate & Professional Students in Public Universities;” and

THAT the GPSS supports continued efforts to collaborate with the ASUW, University of Washington administration, WSU-GPSA, WSL, and other parties to craft a lobbying agenda that can be supported by students and administrators at universities all across the State of Washington to ensure reasonable, affordable, and predictable tuition for graduate and professional students; and

THAT the GPSS neither endorses nor opposes Legislative or Local Governing Board control of tuition rates for graduate and professional students as long as legislation enacted includes language that will mandate tuition rate caps, guarantee that financial aid increases proportionally match tuition increases, require consideration of recruitment and retention, and ensure that services are improved commensurately with tuition increases; and
THAT a copy of this Resolution be sent to University of Washington President Mark Emmert, Provost Phyllis Wise, Chair of the University of Washington Board of Regents Craig Cole, University of Washington Student Regent Jean-Paul Willynck, Vice-Provost of Student Life Eric Godfrey, Interim Vice Provost for Planning and Budgeting Gary Quarforth, Office of State Relations Director Randy Hodgins, Executive Director of the Higher Education Coordinating Board Ann Daley, Chair of the Higher Education Coordinating Board Bill Grinstein, Higher Education Coordinating Board Student Member Sasha Sleiman, Washington Student Lobby President Jake Stillwell, Washington Student Lobby Executive Director Mike Bogatay, the President of the WSU-GPSA Jessica Moore, Vice President of the WSU-GPSA Kayla Simmons, ASUW President Anttimo Bennett, ASUW Office of Government Relations Director Richard Lum, and Chair of the ASUW Student Senate Jon Solomon.

Presented to GPSS for approval on November 5, 2008
Approved on November 5, 2008
MEMORANDUM

Date: September 24, 2008
To: Washington Higher Education Board
From: University of Washington Graduate & Professional Student Senate
       Washington State University Graduate & Professional Student Association Leadership
RE: 2009 Local Control Bill: Recommended Language for Reasonable, Predictable, and Affordable Tuition for Graduate & Professional Students in Public Universities

I. Introduction & Background

The Higher Education Coordinating Board’s Strategic Master Plan for Higher Education in Washington calls for an increase in advanced degree production by 8,600 degrees annually by 2018. In order to attract and retain graduate and professional students to our public universities in the State of Washington, we must ensure that tuition rates are reasonable, predictable, and affordable.

In the most recent decade there have been dramatic tuition increases for graduate and professional students at public universities in the state of Washington. In the last five years alone graduate and professional students at the University of Washington consistently saw tuition raised from 5.1% (nonresident Tier II degrees for 2007-2008) to an astounding 24.8% (resident Business Masters’ Program for 2004-2005).  At Washington State University graduate tuition increased between 2-7% each year for a total increase of $1,790 since the 2003-2004 school year representing a 129% increase over the five year period. Washington State University’s most expensive professional program, veterinary medicine, saw a 145% increase ($5,310) over the same five year period.

Beyond percent increases, the actual dollar increases show a substantial rise in tuition expectations for graduate and professional students. The following represent dollar increases in tuition operating fees for Washington residents in various programs at the University of Washington since the 2003-2004 school year.

Graduate Tier I: $3,089 (from $6,121 in ‘03-‘04 to $9,210 in ‘08-‘09)
Graduate Tier II: $3,331 (from $6,364 in ‘03-‘04 to $9,695 in ‘08-‘09)
Graduate Tier III: $3,574 (from $6,606 in ‘03-‘04 to $10,180 in ‘08-‘09)
Pharmacy: $5,008 (from $8,767 in ‘03-‘04 to $13,775 in ‘08-‘09)
Law: $5,852 (from $12,610 in ‘03-‘04 to $18,462 in ‘08-‘09)
Medical/Dental: $6,671 (from $11,341 in ‘03-‘04 to $18,012 in ‘08-‘09)
Business Masters (incoming): $11,281 (from $9,312 in ‘03-‘04 to $20,593 in ‘08-‘09)
Compounding the issue of an affordable, and therefore accessible, advanced degree is a lack of increased funding in financial aid for graduate and professional students. State and federal financial aid support for graduate and professional students has not increased at the same rate as tuition and fee increases. Even if it had, a growing gap between tuition and financial aid would still exist because a dollar for dollar match is not achieved by raising financial aid support by the same percentage as tuition rates. Additionally, while the federal government recently increased the maximum loan amounts for graduate and professional students in the 2008 Higher Education Authorization Act, the total cost of tuition alone for Washington residents is dangerously close to surpassing this federal loan maximum – forcing many graduate and professional students to take out large amounts of private loans simply to cover the remaining tuition costs, books, and living expenses.

II. Policy Position

It is the stance of the graduate and professional students of Washington that reasonable, predictable, and affordable tuition rates are imperative to attracting and retaining students to advanced degree programs at Washington Universities. The State of Washington should work to close the gap between advanced degree production and degree demand in the State. Affordable education will help Washington students obtain Washington jobs. Washington State needs to ensure that all students, particularly low-income students, are not precluded from obtaining advanced degrees due to tuition costs.

Financial aid offerings never keep pace with the cost of tuition. Graduate and professional students recognize that some tuition increase is inevitable in some years. Yet, diligence in funding of financial aid and maintaining reasonably low tuition is necessary to ensure that low-income students are not priced out of a graduate or professional education.

Finally, graduate and professional students find it imperative that they see a direct correlation between tuition and fee increases and student services for graduate and professional students. Only when a commensurate increase in services occurs will graduate and professional students accept continual increases in tuition.

III. Recommended Bill Language

Section 1 Reasonable, Predictable, and Affordable Tuition Mandates

(A) When making tuition increases for non-undergraduate students the governing boards of the state universities, the regional universities, The Evergreen State College, and the community colleges shall:

(1) Consider the impact the proposed dollar increase may have on the ability for the institution to recruit and retain students in the degree program for which tuition increases are proposed;
(2) Maintain a reasonable, predictable, and affordable tuition by raising tuition no more than the rate at which resident undergraduate tuition is raised as described in RCW 28B.15.068(1);

(3) Increase financial aid proportionally to the increases in tuition costs; and

(4) Utilize tuition increases to commensurately enhance graduate and professional student services including, but not limited, to technological innovations, student health insurance coverage, child care services, and mental health services.

(B) In the event any of the aforementioned governing boards violates any of the four mandates contained within clause (A) of this section, a private cause of action shall exist.

(****Author’s Note: References to “non-undergraduates” should more accurately be written as “graduate and professional students” to reflect the authority and scope of GPSS’s constituents. However, the original memo is preserved for authenticity. ~November 5, 2008)

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iv This is because the principle for financial aid is smaller than the principle for tuition.