



## 2010 SESSION LEGISLATIVE AGENDA

The University of Washington Graduate & Professional Student Senate (GPSS) 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 programs. Unfortunately, the University of Washington received a 26% cut to its operating budget for the 2009-2011 biennium. This significant decrease in state funding may impede the graduate schools' ability to attract top students, engage in cutting edge research, and remain competitive in the global economy. The funding decrease may result in cuts to Research Assistant (RA) and Teaching Assistant (TA) positions and increase student/teacher ratios for undergraduates. GPSS urges the legislature to make no additional cuts to the higher education budget in the 2010 session. GPSS supports additional revenue for graduate and professional education to ensure that Washington remains competitive in the new global economy and meets the recommended goals of the Higher Education Coordination Board (HECB).

### 2010 Session Top Priorities<sup>1</sup>

#### Fund Graduate and Professional Degree Production at Levels Competitive with our Global Peers

*\*GPSS supports state funding for graduate and professional degree production to meet the HECB's Strategic Master Plan goals*

- Washington currently ranks last out of all of the Global Challenge States (GCS) in graduate degree production.
- Increase graduate and professional degree production to meet the 50 percentile of the GCS states in accordance with the HECB Master Plan. This will require an increase of 8,600 higher-level degrees by 2018.
- Increase 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.

#### Sustain or Expand Current Levels of State Support for Graduate and Professional Student Aid Programs

*\* GPSS supports increasing access to financial aid, in-state and non-resident tuition waivers, work study, and fellowships and grants for both domestic and international graduate and professional students*

- In-state and non-resident tuition waivers are vital to maintain access to graduate and professional education for students of all income levels.
- The state should reinstate funding for the Graduate Fellowship Trust Account, which was cut in the 2009 Legislative Session.

#### Reasonable, Predictable, Tuition

*\* GPSS supports 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 HECB 24<sup>2</sup>, mandatory financial aid increases that are proportional to tuition increases, and consideration of how tuition increases will impact recruitment and retention*

- Tuition is the greatest barrier to higher education degree completion. Therefore, reasonable and predictable tuition rates are crucial for student retention and degree completion.<sup>3</sup>
- All proposed increases to graduate and professional tuition should be presented in a transparent manner for student input and comply with the appropriate administrative and legislative process.

<sup>1</sup> This Legislative Agenda was drafted by the GPSS Vice President and staff after three meetings of the GPSS Legislative Steering Committee (LSC)

<sup>2</sup> The HECB 24, please see <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>3</sup> Workforce Board Report: [http://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:

- Comprehensive efforts to recruit, retain, and support underrepresented students, faculty, and staff in graduate and professional (G&P) programs, and the removal of policies hindering these efforts
- Financing new full-time enrollment positions for G&P students, especially for degrees in high demand fields
- Policies that reduce 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:

- State funding and institutional support for child care and mental health
- 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 GCS
- Sustaining current levels of funding of the state need grant
- Removing higher education from the I-601 spending limitations
- Sustaining current levels of funding for G&P student services and 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 efforts 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 2009-10 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 each of the graduate/professional degree granting programs. As a current leader in research for emerging global economic industries, the UW 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 instrumental in creating 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 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:

- Increasing federal loans and loan forgiveness programs
- Tax exemptions for fellowships and graduate student assistantships
- Continued funding support for federal research projects connected to the University of Washington
- 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 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
- Increasing borrowing limits for federal student loans, as well as loan adjustments for inflation
- Increasing the tax deductibility of student loan interest and adjustments to loan grace periods for graduate students with justifiable interruptions to their degree completion
- Federal support for child care 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 boost 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 child care 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