# *Steps for Graduate Student Achievement*

# 2016-2017 GPSS Legislative Agenda

## PRIORITIES

### State Support for Academic Excellence and Predictable Tuition

GPSS advocates for full funding of the University of Washington's operating budget in order to maintain the UW as an exemplary public university and an important economic driver. State support is also essential in preventing drastic graduate tuition and fee increases.

### Transparency and Equity for Self-Supported Programs

The massive growth in the amount of self-supported programs at UW has seen many graduate students suffer from financial instability and insecurity. As of the 2016-2017 academic year, 32.5% of all graduate students at UW were enrolled in self-supported programs. Supporting these essential members of our university as equal members is integral to sustained success of graduate students. As self-supported programs continue to grow in enrollment, these students must be supported through transparent and equitable practices that do not place undue burden on them financially.

GPSS suggests that departments be transparent about existing inequities for students in self-supported programs compared to students in state-supported programs, including limited funding assistance, decreased on-campus employment opportunities, and specific processes and requirements for class registration.

### Promotion of Graduate Student Mental Health and Wellness

GPSS commends the University of Washington for beginning to implement reforms to mental health resources on campus. GPSS also recognizes an increasing number of mental health challenges within graduate student populations nationwide. GPSS advocates for mental health awareness and ending the stigma associated with mental health discussions. GPSS supports combined inter-university and state efforts addressing issues surrounding mental health treatment, including need and access.

### Sexual Assault Prevention and Care

GPSS acknowledges that current preventative efforts for sexual assault are insufficient. Lack of support for victims/survivors has a direct impact on the safety of students on campus. GPSS supports initiatives that help combat sexual assault in order to significantly lower the number of incidents of sexual assault on campus. We also support policies that help the University reduce barriers of reporting and discussing sexual assault in order to provide victims/survivors with physical and mental health assistance.

*As the largest and most robust graduate and professional student body in the state of Washington actively advocating for graduate students, the Graduate and Professional Student Senate (GPSS) recognizes the importance of leading the charge for higher education access and affordability for all graduate and professional students, especially those at the University of Washington (UW).*
*GPSS advocates in partnership with the following state and member organizations: Associated Students of the University of Washington (ASUW), and the Washington Student Association (WSA), when appropriate and not in conflict with the goals of the GPSS legislative agenda.*

GPSS ADVOCACY

gpss

# *Steps for Graduate Student Achievement*

# 2016-2017 GPSS Legislative Agenda

## ADDITIONAL POSITION STATEMENTS

## ACCESS

### GPSS supports:

**Increased Access for Underrepresented Communities**
Equitable access to higher education by expanding outreach, pipeline programs, and other resources that support underrepresented communities at the University of Washington and beyond.

**Empowerment and Access for Students with Disabilities**
Expanded support and protections for students with disabilities, including promotion of accessible building and classroom infrastructure, and streamlining the application and transfer process for students with disabilities.

**Student Representation and Shared Governance**
In keeping with the commitment to shared governance at every level of higher education, GPSS advocates for student representation on all state task forces, committees, commissions, and other advisory boards or councils. We suggest this representation be in the form of one undergraduate and one graduate student from each public university.

**Open Educational Resources**
The adoption of policies that increase affordability of educational resources, such as the promotion and use of open access textbooks and ancillary course materials.

**Voting Accessibility**
GPSS applauds the legislature's work in the installation of a permanent ballot box on the UW campus and maintains support for increased student voting accessibility, extended deadlines for online voter registration, free postage for all ballots, and same-day voter registration.

## STATE SUPPORT

### GPSS supports:

**Higher Education Loan Program**
Graduate and professional students continue to be unfairly treated in the student loan market, being limited to amounts of unsubsidized Stafford loans and forced to take out PLUS loans with dangerously high interest rates. As graduate education becomes more of a necessity and Puget Sound requires an increase in highly specialized workers, GPSS asks the state to support studies and legislation that relieve this burden on the students who suffer from the most debt and support lowered interest rate programs.

**Keep the Pipeline Open by Funding the State Need Grant**
Attracting, retaining, and developing diverse, globally competitive students and faculty who are prepared to contribute to the University of Washington's current state, federal, and worldwide impacts. In doing so, **GPSS calls on the state to fully fund the State Need Grant**. Support for the State Need Grant gives students greater ability to achieve their full potential academically, many of whom go on to attend graduate school at UW.

**Support for Expanded UW Medicine Programs to Serve Underserved Populations**
Continued funding and expansion of cost-effective, top ranked training programs that build regional healthcare networks, contributing to high physician retention throughout Washington and dental practice in rural and underserved areas through UW Medicine Spokane and the Rural Initiatives in Dentistry Education (RIDE) program.

Graduate and Professional Student Senate
University of Washington
Box 352238, HUB 314
4100 East Stevens Way NE
Seattle, WA 98195-2238

206.543.8576
gpss.uw.edu
gpssvpex@uw.edu
facebook.com/uwgpss
twitter.com/gpss_advocacy