GPSS believes there is an opportunity and a need for the state to provide lower-interest graduate loans. We recommend conducting a study on the feasibility of this new program through the Washington State Institute for Public Policy (WSIPP). Graduate and professional students have very few options for financial aid from the state and federal governments. The maximum amount of unsubsidized Stafford loan aid barely covers tuition for many programs. The next best option is PLUS loans, which can match the cost of attendance for tuition, but have dangerously high and fluctuating interest rates. Lower and more predictable interest rates will help alleviate potential burdens for graduate students whose future financial security is largely unknown.

To maintain the UW's status as an exemplary public university, GPSS advocates for an increase in funding to the UW's state-supported budget to ensure continued affordability for graduate students and to maintain the UW's contributions to the Washington State economy. State support of the UW is essential in preventing drastic graduate tuition and fee increases, as well as providing economic opportunities to the people of Washington State.

GPSS supports combined inter-university and state efforts addressing issues surrounding mental health treatment, including need and access. GPSS advocates for mental health awareness and ending the stigma associated with mental health discussions, and recognizes an increasing number of mental health challenges within graduate student populations nationwide. GPSS commends the UW for sustaining and improving reforms to mental health resources 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 UW reduce barriers to reporting, discussing, and responding to sexual assault in order to provide a broad spectrum of physical and mental health assistance to victims/survivors, while still protecting individual rights and privacy. GPSS recognizes the severe impacts of sexual assault and harassment on campus and acknowledges that current preventative and response efforts for sexual assault are insufficient.

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.
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 UW and beyond.

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

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

Open Access and Open Data
Free access to all scholarly peer-reviewed articles and research data to increase public knowledge of scholarly work, better support reproducibility, and promote higher quality scholarship through access to negative results.

Student Representation
Student representation, consisting of one undergraduate and one graduate student, on all state task forces, committees, commissions, and other advisory boards or councils.

Voting Accessibility
Increased student voting accessibility, extended deadlines for online voter registration, free postage for all ballots, and same-day and automatic voter registration.

STATE SUPPORT

GPSS supports:

Keep the Pipeline Open by Funding the State Need Grant
Full funding of the State Need Grant to attract, retain, and develop diverse, globally-competitive students and faculty who contribute to the UW's state, federal, and worldwide impacts. Support for the State Need Grant gives students greater ability to achieve their full academic potential, many of whom attend graduate school at the UW.

Financial Aid Resources for Self-Supported Program Students
Financial aid resources be established to ease the debt burden of self-supported program students and provide longer-term financial stability. As of the 2016-2017 academic year, 32.5% of all graduate students at the UW were enrolled in self-supported programs, some with debt as high as $100,000. Resources for these students are integral to the sustained success of graduate students at the UW.

Resources for Student Caregivers
Initiatives that contribute to more equitable support for student caregivers and their dependents. GPSS recognizes these resources at the UW are insufficient. Limited availability, long wait lists, and high costs prevent student parents from getting daycare for their children, and housing opportunities on campus are also limited.

Support for Expanded UW Health Science Programs to Serve Underserved Populations
Continued funding and expansion of cost-effective, top-ranked training programs that build regional healthcare networks. This contributes to high healthcare provider retention throughout Washington in rural and underserved areas through the health science graduate programs offered at the UW.