

Graduate and Professional Student Senate 2019-2020 Legislative Agenda

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Expand State Grant and Loan Programs to Graduate and Professional Students

Current funding options are insufficient to cover the cost of graduate and professional education without burdening students with enormous post-graduation debt. To address the growing student debt crisis in Washington State, GPSS supports:

- Expanding the Washington College Grant and all other Washington State student finance programs to include graduate and professional students,
- Providing low-interest state loan, grant, and work study options for graduate and professional students.

Reinstate University Student Health Insurance Options

Many graduate and professional students cannot access affordable health insurance as they are often ineligible for state-sponsored programs, too old to remain on parents' plans, or lack options to purchase affordable private plans. Because of this, GPSS supports:

- Reinstating a university-based, affordable health insurance plan open to all students,
- Implementing a statewide task force to study the health insurance usage of all Washington State Universities in order to inform the expansion of healthcare options.

Improve Sexual Misconduct Prevention and Institutional Response

GPSS recognizes that existing sexual assault prevention and response measures and resources, including campus-affiliated advocates for survivors, are insufficient. Therefore, GPSS supports:

- Implementing mandatory training programs for all students, faculty, and staff to help provide necessary skills and resources to prevent and respond to sexual assault.
- Requiring all state campuses to issue an annual Title IX report of categorized allegations and findings in order to improve transparency.

Promote Graduate Student Mental Health and Wellness

The University of Washington counselor-to-student ratio is substantially lower than the national average, and student wait times to see a counselor often exceed six weeks. In order to address prevalent mental health concerns, GPSS supports:

- Pursuing legislation to increase the University of Washington mental health counselor-to-student ratio and provide an increase in mental health resources.
- Increasing access to mental health resources in Washington State to address the prevalence of mental health concerns among graduate and professional students.



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.

**This agenda has been approved by committee and is pending final Senate vote on 11.20.20*



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ADDITIONAL POSITION STATEMENTS



GPSS supports increased access for:

Underrepresented Communities

Expanding outreach, pipeline programs, and other resources will increase equitable access to higher education for underrepresented communities at the UW and beyond.

Students with Disabilities

Promotion of accessible physical and technological infrastructure will expand support and protections for students with disabilities.

Student Caregivers

Initiatives that increase availability and lower costs of student resources will contribute to more equitable support for student caregivers and their dependents. Limited availability, long wait lists, and high costs prevent student caregivers from obtaining care for their dependents or obtaining on-campus housing.

Student Voices

All state task forces, committees, commissions, and other advisory boards or councils should include at least one undergraduate and one graduate student to ensure student representation.

Open Science

Free access to all scholarly peer-reviewed articles, grey literature, and research data will increase public knowledge of scholarly work, better support reproducibility, and promote higher quality scholarship.

GPSS supports increased state investment in:

Climate Change Solutions

Climate change and the impacts on health, wellbeing, and environment are a concern for graduate students. Recognizing the success of UW-affiliated programs such as the Washington Ocean Acidification Center and the Clean Energy Institute in preparing our state for the challenge of mitigating and adapting, GPSS supports increases in funding and other resources for climate change related endeavors.

Predictable Tuition

State support is essential to prevent drastic graduate and professional tuition and fee increases. Increased funding to the UW's state-supported budget ensures continued affordability for graduate and professional students and maintains the UW's contributions to the Washington economy.

Financial Aid Resources for Fee-Based Program Students

Approximately one third of all graduate students at the UW are enrolled in fee-based programs, some with debt as high as \$100,000. Resources should be established to ease this debt burden on fee-based program students and provide long-term financial stability.

Expanding UW Health Science Programs for Underserved Populations

Increasing funding for these programs builds regional healthcare networks by improving healthcare provider recruitment and retention, as well as expanding resources for new healthcare providers to practice in rural and underserved communities.



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