Dear Graduate Students,

We hope you have all had a wonderful spring semester! As the school year ends, we, the Graduate Student Assembly, would like to share our advocacy work from the 2022-2023 academic year. We would also first like to thank our outgoing department representatives and wish all graduating students the best in your future endeavors!

As we reflect on our year as an assembly, we want to highlight one of our key meetings we have every year: our meeting with the Yale Board of Trustees members. You can find a link to the report we presented to these trustees here. During this meeting, the executive board of the GSA expressed student concerns and proposed actionable measures to the Yale Board of Trustees, fostering a constructive dialogue towards a better future for all graduate students.

Advocacy in the GSA is led by committees made up of departmental representatives, elected from every department in the Yale Graduate School of Arts and Sciences. Each of the GSA committees works to improve a different aspect of graduate student life, and highlights from each committee’s year of advocacy can be read below.

The Academic and Professional Development Committee’s priorities included assessing the current state of department-specific advising guidelines and expanding these GSAS advising resources online, advertising professional development opportunities to the graduate student body, and advocating for standardized DGS services and outcomes. This past year the Academic and Professional Development Committee worked with the Deans’ Mentoring Working Group to enforce publishing updated department specific advising guidelines for the new GSAS website in Fall 2023. They also partnered with Dean Insley to work on the GSAS Advising and Mentoring Toolkit for the website, and advocated to the Board of Trustees and Provost’s office to get standardized compensation and training for DGSs.

The Conference Travel Fellowship Committee’s priorities for this year included enhancing communication regarding the CTF and increasing the budget and award to meet graduate student needs. The CTF committee has worked diligently to assess over 200 applications, distributing approximately $200,000 in awards. The CTF committee also answered questions and hosted their first Conference Travel Fellowship Information Session in the Spring in order to review the application and reimbursement processes.

The Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Committee’s priorities for this year included assessing what DEI efforts are being conducted in each department, analyzing data on exit surveys for graduate students who have left Yale to determine what reasons students may be exiting Yale.

The Facilities and Healthcare Committee’s priorities for this year included obtaining full dental and vision coverage for all GSAS students, decreasing barriers to accessing mental health and counseling, improving understanding of leave policies across GSAS departments, addressing challenges with care through Yale Health, including using Yale Health insurance outside of New Haven and Connecticut, advocating for inclusive health care, and improving health care literacy.
With dental and vision coverage now transitioned under Local 33’s purview, GSA and GPSS will continue to administer the existing plans until negotiations are finalized. We look forward to working in partnership with the many advisory committees and organizations advocating for our shared vision of a more accessible, inclusive, and healthy graduate school community.

The **International Students Ad-Hoc Committee**’s priorities were focused on advocating for increased funding and staffing for the Office of International Students and Scholars (OISS). This committee is also creating brochures for registrars concerning visa regulations and limitations and advocating for a fellowship established to support undocumented, asylum-seeking, or refugee students. Look out for an incoming survey, which will help the GSA better understand the needs of the international graduate students on campus.

The **Service Committee**’s priorities were to help increase quality of life for graduate students and help students navigate difficulties specific to graduate student life at Yale and New Haven. These goals were accomplished by organizing events and provide resources targeted at reducing the burden of legal help, tax advice, food insecurity, and personal finance. This committee facilitated Tax Facts information sessions during the Spring 2023 semester, helping domestic and international students prepare taxes from a graduate student perspective. In addition, this committee piloted a food pantry in the McDougal center to help reduce food insecurity. The food pantry is not a permanent solution, so a survey was distributed to gather information about food insecurity on campus to help the GSA advocate to the GSAS administration for permanent solutions to food insecurity.

The **Transit and Security Committee**’s priorities were focused on finding multiple approaches to improving graduate student transit. U-Pass is a state-wide Connecticut program that provides free transit on CT transit for students at universities enrolled in the program. The GSA Transit and Security Committee has advocated for Yale to enroll in the program for several years, including lobbying for changes to CT legislation, and Yale administration is now currently working diligently towards bringing Yale into the program. The Yale shuttle system has also recently undergone significant changes to the system, including a new website, timetables, and routes, in response to continued advocacy by this committee’s members.

The **Public Relations Committee**’s priorities have been to increase communication with the graduate student body about GSA events, information, and resources. Mainly, this communication has been through emails about resources, as well as two biannual email reports regarding all GSA projects. In order to further communicate, we established collaborations with GPSS and the McDougal Center to take advantage of their pre-established weekly newsletters. In addition, we have made updates to the Compass, a document distributed to new graduate students with resources for adjusting to Yale and New Haven, and our website in order to keep our resources up to date.

The **Unionization Ad-Hoc Committee** was established with the primary objective of addressing student queries pertaining to the process of unionization at Yale. In Fall 2022 this committee formed a panel of experts to address students' concerns and questions concerning the
unionization process, particularly the voting procedure on the matter prior to the union vote. The Unionization Ad-Hoc Committee also strove to provide regular updates on the bargaining process in collaboration with union representatives, as well as serving as a point of contact for student concerns and relaying relevant information to the bargaining committee members following the successful union vote and the commencement of contract negotiations.

The **Steering Committee**’s priority over the past year was to communicate to the Yale Graduate School of Arts and Sciences Deans (Deans Lynn Cooley, Matthew Tanico and Allegra di Bonaventura) the requests and needs of the graduate student body. The Steering Committee also served as a liaison to other parts of the administration, including Yale’s Board of Trustees, President Peter Salovey, and Vice-President Kimberly Goff-Crews. Advocacy during these meetings concerned a wide variety of topics, including addressing food insecurity on campus, increasing funding for conference travel and the dean’s emergency fund, forming a fellowship to support undocumented or asylum-seeking students, improving and expanding Yale Housing, and so much more.

Thank you for taking the time to read this message. Finally, we want to mention that the Yale GSA has elected our new Graduate Student Assembly representatives for the 2023-24 academic year and are excited to pursue continuing and new projects with them. Leading this effort will be our newly-elected Chair, Christopher Lindsay and Vice-Chair, John Gonzalez, who themselves have both served in the GSA for multiple years.

Sincerely,
Jo Machesky, *Outgoing Graduate Student Assembly Chair*
Roxanne Morris, *Outgoing Graduate Student Assembly Vice-Chair*