

GSA Priorities and Projects for 2022-2023

Overall Top Priorities

1. **Advocate to increase the minimum GSAS stipend for 2023-2024 to match increased cost of living and cover the cost of dental and vision insurance.**
2. **Incorporate and subsidize the graduate student dental and eye insurance plans into GSAS plans to provide more comprehensive and affordable coverage for graduate students.**
3. **Increase staffing and funding for OISS as well as advertising OISS support already in place to international graduate students.**
4. **Expand and publicize grievance procedures to help facilitate resolutions for issues not under the Title IX office, such as advisor-advisee issues which are in violation of GSAS advising guidelines.**

Financial Priorities and Projects

1. **Advocate to increase the minimum GSAS stipend for 2023-2024 to match increased cost of living and cover the cost of dental and vision insurance.** As of Oct. 2022, the current minimum living wage from the MIT living wage calculator is \$39,591, before tax, which is already higher than the minimum GSAS stipend for Sept 2022 - August 2023. In addition, the stipend should include a \$2,500 buffer between estimated cost of living and the net take home pay of graduate students after taxes to alleviate financial stress and create a buffer for mid-year increases to cost of living due to inflation.
2. To help combat food insecurity in the GSAS, which is especially felt by masters students, create a pilot food pantry in McDougal for graduate students which will provide free non-perishable items. Additionally, partner with the Schwarzman center to provide more graduate student events which provide access to free or subsidized meals. Throughout these pilot programs, GSA will continue to gather information on the severity and prevalence of food insecurity during department meetings
3. Increase the total funds available for relocation stipends for incoming GSAS students to meet the demonstrated financial need of the incoming class. Harvard has offered \$2,000 in relocation funds to incoming students in some departments, and in future years, the relocation fund given to each student should increase to match increases in cost-of-living and moving expenses.
4. Increase the family subsidy to \$5,000 for additional children under the age of 18 to better support graduate student families with multiple children. To also help the family subsidy cover more of the total childcare costs for young children, increase access to Yale

subsidized daycare for graduate students by prioritizing graduate students on the waiting list.

5. Create a \$500 technology and research fund for students in departments that do not already have programs in place to subsidize the purchase of research supplies, such as computers, software, monitors, and books.

International Students Priorities and Projects

1. **Increase staffing and funding for OISS as well as advertising OISS support already in place to international graduate students, including expanding or providing the following services:**
 - a. Pay for all international students state tax filing fees and increase funding so as to guarantee discount Sprintax codes for all those requesting them. Currently, OISS can cover only the cost for federal income tax return (\$49.95) and they also add that this opportunity is limited: "There are a limited number of Sprintax codes offered by Yale for each tax year. Please file as early as possible. Although we usually have enough codes for all of our students and scholars, please note that we cannot guarantee a Sprintax discount code, especially after the April tax deadline."
 - b. Create and update a guide for existing on campus employment and after graduation that is distributed to students and departments.
 - c. Retain a lawyer to assist students with visa, legal, and travel issues
 - d. Expand communication with incoming students about visas, housing, matriculation, and resources at Yale prior to arrival.
2. Survey international students to determine their concerns and knowledge of available services. International students make up 39% of the student body and have specific issues that are currently undersupported by Yale and GSAS. Results from this survey will inform future GSA advocacy around international students.
3. Create and prioritize new fellowships and work on campus for international students. International students are limited to on campus work. Many who want to work on campus feel underemployed and unfamiliar with the job application process. In particular, positions should be created for and advertised to masters students who are in a more financially precarious situation and have less time to become familiar with Yale.
4. Create a fund designed to help students in need bear the financial costs associated with the visa renewal process. As OISS states, "it is not possible to renew a visa in the United States. Visas are issued only by a U.S. consul in a U.S. embassy or consulate outside the United States." Renewing a visa is therefore financially burdensome not only because of the SEVIS fees, but also because it requires the student to travel internationally.

5. Increase financial and housing support for international students with international spouses, especially F-1/F-2 visa holders. Spouses on a F-2 visa are not allowed to work in the US, making them financially dependent on their partner's Yale stipend.

Health Care Priorities and Projects

1. **Incorporate and subsidize the graduate student dental and eye insurance plans into GSAS plans to provide more comprehensive and affordable coverage for graduate students.** The current G&P dental plan cost is expected to increase over 17% after contract ends this year (Oct. 2022) after the original renewals of 17.1% in 2021 and 16.9% in 2022 were avoided due to a negotiated three year cap of 7% per year until 2023. In addition to folding students into the GSAS plan, a subsidy or personal contribution cap should be provided for the insurance premium, which is similar to what Brown (100% subsidy for doctoral and MFA students and 75% subsidy for dependents) and Princeton (\$78 per year) provide for students.
2. Change the Medical Leave financial policy to mirror the [Parental relief policy](#) and provide Medical Leave Hardship Awards to students who take more than 15 weeks of medical leave. The current lack of financial support during the medical leave discourages students from taking leave and inhibits them from returning to their studies.
3. Create a new student orientation event with GSAS/professional school counselors, Magellan liaison, and Yale health provider(s) to expand understanding of mental healthcare and student accessibility services.
4. Expand access to mental health resources including: prioritizing hiring more Yale health MHC clinicians, holding orientation events about MHC resources at Yale for incoming students, and having DGSs share information about MHC to all current GSAS students in their departments.

GSAS Policies Priorities and Projects

1. **Publicize the GSAS grievance procedure in advising guidelines and on the GSAS website with links for anonymous reporting of issues to encourage reporting.** Increase the visibility of the four members of GSAS who are available to discuss issues and help guide graduate students through grievance procedures within GSAS. Based on reported grievances, annually review the policy and expand or modify it as needed to better protect students, faculty and staff.
2. COVID extensions should be expanded to all students who entered and were current students from 2020/2021. The current extension only applies to students enrolled in spring 2020, however COVID impacted classes and in-person research activities (labs

were at 50% capacity through Spring 2021, classes were online through Spring 2021, and hybrid through Spring 2022) through 2022. International travel for academic and research purposes was delayed in the summer 2020 and 2021 and students' research and professional development was greatly impacted.

3. Establish an ombuds office to support the work of current administrators at Yale by helping students navigate Yale and its procedures when issues arise. Many other Ivy institutes have an ombuds office, or have recently created one, like Dartmouth.
4. Publish all departmental advising guidelines on the GSAS website so that they are accessible to all incoming and current students outside of their department in addition to encouraging DGSs to share the guidelines with all students at the beginning of the year. If departments have not finish their guidelines, provide students in these departments with interim general GSAS guidelines. Biannually review departmental guidelines to allow for feedback to be incorporated by students and faculty.
5. Create and publicize a GSAS wide minimum vacation policy.
6. Expand funding for the Dean's emergency fund in addition to widening the policy to include broken computers, which is especially important for MS students who do not have a stipend.
7. Advocate for the requirement that letters of support from previous graduate students be gathered in tenure evaluations and require student representatives in Faculty Search Committees with voting power.
8. Work with FAS to require yearly TMS required training for faculty regarding legal work laws/University guidelines, such as Sexual Misconduct Training
9. Update Dissertation Progress Reports (DPRs) to help students stay on track. After submission, DPRs should be automatically sent to a student's dissertation committee and used as starting point for conversation about their projects and professional development.

Transportation and Housing Priorities and Projects

1. **Implement access to UPass for GSAS students in the Fall 2023, funded by GSAS, to provide free access to all Connecticut public transportation.**
2. Provide subsidized or free parking for students with disabilities and facilitate accessible housing. Currently students must rely on accessibility services or pay for their own transportation which can be unsustainable on a graduate student stipend.
3. Create and publicize resources related to affordable housing and illegal landlord behavior. Publicize the Dean's emergency fund as applicable for relocation financial support when there is illegal landlord behavior. Institute a commission in collaboration with fair housing lawyers at Yale to re-evaluate best practices for Yale to distribute its vast graduate rental market across New Haven, including consideration of building new dorms or providing an official approval program for landlords' practices.

4. Expand Yale graduate housing and formalize rental price increase processes. Each year, on campus housing and Yale-partner Elm City properties should not increase at the higher rate than the stipend.
5. Restart the saferides program to provide access to safe and reliable night time transportation. Private transportation has increased in price, and the financial burden of safe transportation is most felt by low-income and non-stipended master students.
6. Expanded shuttle service to Westville and shopping districts in Orange/Hamden close to Trader Joe's on the weekend. These expanded routes would allow for students to more easily live in Westville, as well as having increased access to affordable food and good stores.
7. Open and advertise additional lots on all campuses after 4pm to allow students to travel to campus at night for work and social events safely.

Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Priorities and Projects

1. **Conduct a third-party exit interviews to learn why students leave Yale before finishing their degree.** This feedback and data will be reviewed by a committee every year, including GSAS students, to recommend changes to GSAS policies.
2. Conduct an assessment of GSA representative diversity and accessibility.
3. Create a network for DEI resource sharing for GSAS and the professional schools in partnership with GPSS.
4. Advocate for FAS to require a DEI statement for each promotion detailing their DEI accomplishments and future goals.
5. Market the application fee waiver to all applicants, and ensure that there is support for international students to easily apply for fee waivers. The fee waiver process should be simplified if possible to make it more accessible to all prospective students. Ensure that there is language present in the application ensuring that applicants are informed that the fee waiver will not impact their admissions decision.
6. Introduce DEI fellowships across GSAS as an alternative for the TF fellowship. There is already one department, [earth and planetary sciences](#), which can serve as a model for other departments.
7. GSAS should adopt an anonymous reporting system and assessment of professors to remove barriers to reporting issues (e.g., due to repercussions to the student for accusing a professor).
8. Advocate for the creation of a graduate school dean who focuses on first generation graduate students, including students who are first generation for undergraduate and/or graduate school.