



Resolution to Establish the Pilot GAPSA Meal Voucher Program (GA/44/BILL/15/R1)

To: Graduate & Professional Student Assembly (GAPSA) - General Assembly

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ABSTRACT:

The Graduate and Professional Student Assembly (GAPSA) at the University of Pennsylvania commits to subsidizing meal swipes, meal vouchers, or equivalences, from Penn Dining and Penn Retail Dinings for graduate and professional students. This resolution is motivated by the results from the 2021-2022 Graduate and Professional Student Survey (GPSS) published by Penn Institutional Research & Analysis (IR&A), showing a large number of students facing food insecurity and financial concerns.¹ This resolution proposes directing \$50,000 in total from the budgets of GAPSA's Executive Vice President, Advocacy Division, Operations Division, and Finance Division, to establish the *Pilot GAPSA Meal Voucher Program*.

WHEREAS, The Graduate and Professional Student Assembly (GAPSA) is charged with representing all 16,000 graduate and professional students enrolled at the University of Pennsylvania;

WHEREAS, According to GAPSA Constitution Article I.D, GAPSA shall monitor issues of importance to the graduate and professional student community and foster dialogue among its members for the purpose of identifying relevant issues of advocacy;

WHEREAS, According to the Graduate and Professional Student 2021-2022 survey, with 6680 respondents, 24% of the students responded are classified as “food-insecure” as defined by the USDA;²

WHEREAS, According to the Graduate and Professional Student 2021-2022 survey, 64% of students view financial commitments as the biggest obstacle to academic progress for graduate students;

¹ *Graduate and Professional Student Survey* | Penn Institutional Research & Analysis. <https://ira.upenn.edu/node/32>.

² *USDA ERS - Definitions of Food Security*. <https://www.ers.usda.gov/topics/food-nutrition-assistance/food-security-in-the-u-s/definitions-of-food-security/>.

WHEREAS, Due to lack of financial resources, 32% of graduate students reported that they did not participate in conferences last year;

WHEREAS, Due to lack of financial resources, 30% of graduate students reported that they did not engage in networking opportunities;

WHEREAS, Due to lack of financial resources, 20% of graduate students reported that they did not engage in research opportunities;

WHEREAS, Food costs in the Philadelphia area rose;

WHEREAS, Inflation and rising costs disproportionately impact already cost-burdened graduate students, particularly students from low-income, working class backgrounds facing precarious socioeconomic situations, students with families, and international students who cannot work extra jobs or apply to external federal fundings due to their visa statuses;

WHEREAS, Graduate and professional students often face extra barriers to access affordable stores and nutritious food options, and to prepare meals, owing to reasons such as constrained hours due to classes, research, field studies, teaching, and other commitments;

WHEREAS, There is a need to raise awareness of the available healthy food options on campus among the graduate and professional student population;

WHEREAS, Both the University of Pennsylvania and GAPSA derive strength from the diversity of its students;

WHEREAS, Inclusion is one of the three central tenets of the Penn Compact 2022, along with Innovation and Impact;³

WHEREAS, Lack of funds to cover the rising costs of food impedes students' ability to contribute to Penn's vibrant intellectual community, causing a rift in accessing educational opportunities along socioeconomic lines; now therefore; be it

RESOLVED, GAPSA shall initially purchase \$50,000 worth of meal swipes, meal vouchers, or equivalences (about \$20-\$22 per swipe or voucher), for graduate and professional students to use at Penn Dining or at Penn Retail Dining. Meal vouchers will be available for pick up at campus locations such as the Graduate Student Center.

³ Penn Compact 2022. <https://diversity.upenn.edu/diversity-at-penn/penn-compact-2020>.

RESOLVED, that the GAPSA General Assembly amends the FY'2022/2023 budget by reallocating \$50,000 to Pilot Funds (Budget Line Item 2.2.) from the following: (1) \$10,000 from EVP Special Project (Budget Line Item 1.2); (2) \$8,000 from EVP Leadership Development (Budget Line Item 1.3); (3) \$10,000 from Advocacy Division Development (Budget Line Item 5.5); (4) \$2,000 from Equity & Access Committee (Budget Line Item 5.1); (5) \$10,000 from Operations Division Development (Budget Line Item 3.5); and \$10,000 from Finance Division Development (Budget Line Item 2.6); and be it further

RESOLVED, that the GAPSA General Assembly authorizes the Vice President for Finance to establish a GAPSA Meal Voucher Fund to be managed by the Director of Equity & Access towards the furtherance of the GAPSA Meal Voucher Pilot Program; and be it further

RESOLVED, that the GAPSA General Assembly authorizes the allocation of \$50,000 from Pilot Funds (Budget Line Item 2.2) for the GAPSA Meal Voucher Fund; and be it further

RESOLVED, Based on utilization, GAPSA will consider adding a separate budget line item for the GAPSA Meal Voucher Program in future years' provisional budgets.

FINALLY, LET IT BE RESOLVED, that this pilot Meal Voucher Program reflects GAPSA's unwavering commitment to collaborate with University partners to combat food insecurity and support student wellness.