

TGS Support of the Graduate Student Experience

[The Graduate School](#) (TGS) has a strong history of working closely with and advocating for the graduate student population. From enhancing benefits to creating new opportunities to engage with one another, TGS recognizes the value of our graduate students to our University community, and is committed to ensuring they have a positive experience at Northwestern.

Included below are several targeted actions that have been implemented to help better meet the needs of our graduate students.

Benefits

- In 2006, the Graduate Leadership Council (since renamed the “Graduate Leadership and Advocacy Council,” or GLAC) requested transit passes to then-Dean of TGS, Andrew Wachtel, which eventually launched the Activity Fee program. Now, students enrolled full-time are issued U-Passes and provided access to TGS Night Out, Community Building Grants, and may participate in graduate student associations.
- In 2012, TGS Dean McBride reinstated the student dental plan after learning it was discontinued without proper consultation.
- In 2016, following direct feedback from GLAC, Northwestern changed the provider and structure of its student dental insurance plans to better meet the needs of the TGS population. In addition, Northwestern introduced a vision insurance plan for TGS students and their families for the first time.
- Northwestern remains committed to providing TGS students with platinum level health insurance, with lower out-of-pocket costs than would be found in employer or marketplace plans. Work is underway on renewing the plan for 2017-2018 academic year, and [feedback from students is welcome](#).

Financial Support

In 2015, The Graduate School led efforts to increase the base stipend rates for students, following conversations with students and faculty confirming that the stipend level was low and not competitive with national averages at private institutions. These collaborative efforts resulted in a raise to the base stipend rate for all PhD students as of September 1, 2015.

Work-Life Balance

In 2015, conversations with graduate students raised challenges that students with children faced in balancing academic pursuits and accomplishments with family obligations. Recommendations from a task force assembled to tackle these issues were quickly implemented, including paid parental leave for eligible PhD and MFA students and a graduate student-centered resource in the [Office of Work/Life & Family Resources](#).

Other Key Support Initiatives

TGS hosts “Drinks with the Dean” several times each academic year, where students have an opportunity to share personal successes and challenges along their academic journey, and provide TGS with valuable feedback on the graduate student experience. These conversations have enabled TGS to respond on an individual basis to address issues such as conflicts with advisors and unclear policies, as well as to strengthen services such as professional development offerings.