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MASSACHUSETTS INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY
# GRADUATE STUDENT COUNCIL

## General Council Meeting
## February 2015

**61.gsc.**

**Resolution to update the Graduate Student Council's Legislative Platform**

**Author: Legislative Action Subcommittee**

Whereas, graduate students at MIT are stakeholders in legislative issues both at a local and national level; and

Whereas, the Graduate Student Council actively promotes the interests of graduate students through the activities of the Legislative Action Subcommittee; and

Whereas, the Legislative Platform should reflect the current interests of the MIT graduate community as well as the current state of legislative affairs; now, therefore, be it hereby

Resolved, that the Graduate Student Council updates its Legislative Platform to the following:

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## LEGISLATIVE ACTION SUBCOMMITTEE MISSION STATEMENT

The GSC LASC has a threefold mission:

I. To advocate on behalf of the graduate student body to local, state, and federal governments in concert with other parts of the GSC, as appropriate;
II. To maintain awareness of legislative and regulatory developments affecting graduate students and disseminate information through the GSC;
III. To encourage graduate student participation and activism in the political and legislative process.

## FOREWORD

The GSC Legislative Action Subcommittee is responsible for assisting the GSC in development of its legislative policy by annually submitting a proposed Federal Legislative Platform for consideration and approval by the membership. While the Federal Legislative Platform is not an exclusive expression of the federal legislative issues of concern to the GSC, this platform identifies the GSC's main public policy priorities.

GSC seeks to work with the higher education community to formulate policies affecting GSC's membership that advance national goals and objectives.

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## STUDENT RIGHTS AND DIVERSITY

### The GSC firmly supports:

1. Protecting the principles of First Amendment rights for students and their elected representatives to establish and fund their own programs, to publish scholarly work without fear of reprisal, and to engage in advocacy, lobbying, or debate.
2. Access to affordable and comprehensive health care for all graduate students and their dependents.
3. Access to affordable childcare for all graduate students.
4. Access to affordable housing for all graduate students and their dependents.
5. Extension of benefits to graduate students that are currently exclusively offered to undergraduates to the extent to which those benefits are relevant to the graduate population.
6. Legislative efforts that encourage diversity at institutions of higher learning.
7. Protecting the rights of all students regardless of race, color, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, religion, disability, age, genetic information, veteran status, ancestry, or national or ethnic origin.

## HIGHER EDUCATION FUNDING

### The GSC firmly supports:

8. Efforts by the Administration and Congress to maintain and/or increase the amount of federal funding provided for colleges and universities in the United States.
9. The expansion of graduate fellowship and need-based scholarship programs that:
    i. Train tomorrow's scholars, scientists, and leaders;
    ii. Provide educational opportunities to traditionally underrepresented groups, as well as to traditionally underfunded disciplines.
10. Actions taken to promote affordable tuition and low student loan interest rates, including:
    i. Adjusting federal loan programs to match graduate student expenses and time to degree;
    ii. Increasing borrowing limits for federal student loans and periodically adjusting for inflation and the rising cost of tuition;
    iii. Indexing the income limitation on student loan interest deductions to the rate of inflation;
    iv. Increasing tax deductibility of student loan interest;
    v. Maintaining and continuing funding for the Federal Direct Student Loan Program (FDSLP) in order to offer students choices to suit their individual needs.
11. Broadening of tax exemptions and deductions for graduate education expenses and protecting all such existing exemptions and deductions.

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## RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT FUNDING

### The GSC firmly supports:

12. Policies that encourage public and private investments in innovation through research and development in order to improve the competitiveness of the United States.
13. Legislation that promotes the use of federal discretionary spending for research and development that supports grants and fellowships at institutions of higher education at a level on par with global leaders in research.

## INTERNATIONAL STUDENT ISSUES

### The GSC firmly supports:

14. Streamlining visa and immigration processes that are relevant to international students and to undocumented students.
15. Legislative efforts that encourage U.S. permanent residency, citizenship, and civic participation among international graduate students, undocumented students, and recent graduate alumni, including the authorization of dual intent for student visa holders.
16. Student visa policy that allows international students to participate in extracurricular, educational, training, and on-campus employment opportunities available to domestic students and that allows their spouses to pursue employment opportunities in the United States.
17. Efforts by lawmakers to make more employment-based visas (particularly H-1B) available to international students who obtain their graduate degrees in the United States.

## PROMOTING SCIENCE

### The GSC firmly supports:

18. Federal initiatives to increase the public dissemination of scholarly research products.
19. Legislation solidifying open access to publications resulting from federally funded research following the example set by the NIH's PubMed repository and the Office of Science and Technology Policy's public access directive in February 2013.
20. Efforts by lawmakers to take action on issues raised by the scientific community that are crucial to society's well-being including but not limited to climate change and sustainability. The GSC supports strengthening ties between policy makers and experts in science in order to take full advantage of the investments by the federal government in scientific research by using scientific findings to inform policy decision making.