

COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY

SCHOOL OF GENERAL STUDIES
STUDENT COUNCIL



March 4, 2008

WHEREAS, attending Columbia University's School of General Studies (GS) full-time costs more than \$60,000 annually; and

WHEREAS, the majority of GS students bear the financial burden of their education by themselves only; and

WHEREAS, GS has no algorithm for its merit-based financial aid system and if it does, said structure has not been made public; and

WHEREAS, GS offers no need-based institutional financial assistance; and

WHEREAS, the average GS student graduates with more than \$60,000 in student loans (according to survey of seniors self-reporting their current personal educational debt load) which is significantly more than the \$16,358, as of 2006-2007, that is incurred by the average Columbia College graduate; and

WHEREAS, the Federal Stafford Loan program grants a maximum of \$46,000 in federally guaranteed loans, GS students are forced to mortgage their futures by committing to **private loans** at substantially higher interest rates; and

WHEREAS, it should be the goal of the school as well as the university to attract students based on intellectual abilities and individual achievements; and

WHEREAS, this lack of financial aid may motivate many of the best and brightest non-traditional students to pursue their educations at competing and peer institutions; and

WHEREAS, any further commitments in need-based financial aid towards students in Columbia College and SEAS without parallel commitments to students in the School of General Studies creates a disproportionate subsidizing of the University at the expense of the students in the School of General Studies;

Be it therefore **RESOLVED**, that the General Studies Student Council (GSSC) calls upon the School of General Studies to develop an algorithm for merit-based aid and to offer transparency to its students as to the definition of said merit; and

Be it further **RESOLVED**, that the GSSC calls upon Columbia University to augment and reform its financial aid commitments for all Columbia University undergraduates: Columbia College, SEAS, and the School of General Studies; and

Be it further **RESOLVED**, that the School of General Studies student body calls upon Columbia University to "do the right thing" and rectify the current financial aid disparity by rescuing its most vulnerable students – those enrolled in the School of General Studies - from the burden of unreasonable and disproportionately large college debt; and

Be it finally **RESOLVED**, that with the full backing of the GSSC, the 3 School Financial Aid Task Force will take up the initiative of lobbying Columbia University and its Trustees for parity in financial aid, transcending school affiliation.