



Graduate Student Association Endorsement of the Call to Conversation

The conversations between the Graduate Student Association (GSA), the graduate students, and President Leebron have proved very informative for both the graduate students and the administration. We have been well informed of the plan for Rice University for the next ten years, and have discussed our role as graduate students in achieving this plan. We also had the opportunity to convey our interests and our concerns directly to President Leebron.

In general, graduate students widely support the goals presented in the Call to Conversation, particularly Rice's ambition to become a top research institution, and the measures that will be needed to realize this goal. Many of the graduate students at Rice plan to continue our careers in research, and we realize that our self interest will also be advanced by Rice's increasing reputation as a top-tier university. We are in favor of the proposed plan to advance the university not only because it will enhance Rice's reputation but also because of the quality of education and research that we will participate in as graduate students.

An important aspect of high-level research is recruiting and retaining the best graduate students, and to do this the university must make a commitment to improving key aspects of the graduate student experience. Through many conversations with graduate students, some issues have emerged as top priorities for increasing Rice's competitiveness for attracting and retaining the top students. These include:

1. Enhancing university-wide facilities and services: Improving health services and insurance quality and subsidy, increasing public space for graduate student use on campus, and increasing off-campus housing options for graduate students
2. Assuring competitive stipends and support for graduate students, paying special attention to the stipend gap between the non-science and science students, so that Rice is more in line with its peers and able to attract the best students
3. Increasing teaching opportunities for graduate students, starting gradually with new classes or modules taught by graduate students. We believe that Rice can change this trend and can be a pioneer in preparing students for academia

We believe President's Leebron's Call to Conversation has been a great opportunity to gather issues and ideas that concern the Rice University community. It is now time to take action following these discussions and work toward the achievement of our collective goals. The GSA officers and the GSA council are in the best position to assist and are enthusiastic to work toward the improvement of the graduate experience at Rice.

Respectfully submitted on behalf of the GSA:

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