

FALL 2020

DISORIENTATION

PRINCETON 101

Resources for incoming (and current) graduate workers at Princeton on how to navigate graduate life at the University and beyond it, especially during pandemic times, collected by current union members and organizers.

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Welcome to Princeton Graduate Students United’s “Disorientation Guide”! It is designed to offer incoming (and current) graduate workers at Princeton suggestions and recommendations by current union members and organizers on how to navigate graduate life at the University and beyond it, especially during pandemic times.

While we have tried to cover as much ground as we can, we do not claim that this guide is comprehensive. It is intended to collate relevant and important information and link you to essential resources, but much of it is incomplete! If you catch things we may have missed or gotten wrong, or would like to add ideas to share with colleagues, please contact us at askpgsu@gmail.com.

We will be continuing programming intended for incoming students as well as current graduate students looking to get involved in our efforts through the semester with reading groups, Union 101 events, online social hours, and general political action to improve our workplace conditions. Please sign up to be a member of PGSU [here](#) to receive information and updates as they go out, and [contact us](#) if you would like to organize with us!

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Leftist Student Orgs

- Intersecting Queer Identities: see their [website](#) for details
- Princeton Queer Graduate Caucus: see their [website](#) for details
- Graduate Women of Color Caucus: join their [listserv](#)
- Princeton First Generation and Low-Income graduate students (FLI Grads): see their [website](#) for details
- Princeton Young Democratic Socialists (YDS): see their [facebook page](#) for details.
- Princeton Students for Prison Education, Abolition, and Reform (SPEAR): see their [website](#) and [instagram](#) for details.
- Divest Princeton: see their [facebook page](#) for details
- Prison Tutoring Initiative (PTI): see their [website](#) for details
- Princeton Black Student Union: see their [website](#) and [facebook page](#) for details
- Princeton IX Now: see their [website](#) for details
- Graduate Women in Science and Engineering (GWISE): See their [website](#) for details.
- Society for the Advancement of Chicanos and Native Americans in Science (SACNAS): Unclear if a chapter of this organization still exists on campus, but it has [in the past](#).
- Black Graduate Caucus: see their [website](#) for details.
- Princeton for Black Lives: an organization not affiliated with the university that advocates for dismantling racism on campus. See their [instagram](#) for details.
- Princeton Citizen Scientists: A group of social justice-minded graduate students and postdocs in the sciences. See their [website](#) for details.
- South Asia Progressive Alliance (SAPA): See them on [facebook](#) and [instagram](#).
- Committee on Palestine, Princeton: Although apparently not too active at the moment, see their [facebook page](#) here.
- Alliance of Jewish Progressives: See their [facebook page](#) for details.
- Natives at Princeton: See their [facebook page](#) for details.
- The Princeton Progressive: a student-run print and [online](#) magazine.

Interesting Reading Groups/Workshops Around Campus

1. Agency in the Anthropocene: see [IHUM page](#) for details
2. Asian American Studies: see [IHUM page](#) for details
3. Theorizing Women in the Ancient World: see [IHUM page](#) for details.
4. Black Feminism(s): Theory, Praxis, and Poetics: see [IHUM page](#) for details
5. Diaspora: see [IHUM page](#) for details
6. Imperial Sound Media: see [IHUM page](#) for details
7. Race, Citizenship, and the State: see [IHUM page](#) for details
8. Theorizing Women in the Ancient World: see [IHUM page](#) for details
9. Latin América and the Caribbean [Workshop](#)
10. South Asia Graduate Workshop (contact PIIRS [South Asia Studies](#))
11. South Asia Translation Reading Group (contact PIIRS [South Asia Studies](#))
12. Gender & Sexuality Studies [Reading Group](#)
13. Disability Studies [Working Group](#)
14. Colonialism and Imperialism Workshop (see [CCH page](#) for this)
15. Social Theory: Theorizing the Human Reading Group (contact [CCH staff](#) for details)
16. Committee for the Study of Late Antiquity Book Club (see their [website](#))
17. Race and Racism in Medieval Studies Book Club (see their [website](#))
18. Intersections Working Group (see [Department of English website](#) for details)
19. Humanities Council Lectures and [Events](#)
20. Central NJ Asian American Reading Group (see [here](#))
21. Princeton Public Library [Book Groups](#)
22. Princeton American Indian and Indigenous Studies Working Group (see [here](#))

Things to Do Around Princeton

Cafes, Baked Goods, and Ice Creams

- **Rojos** - coffee shop in Palmer Square with good, if expensive, coffee (open during COVID, outdoor seating nearby)
- **Small World** - Princeton's local coffee shop, also has (their take on) chai, iced tea, and baked goods. Try their brownies! (open for takeout during COVID)
- **Sakrid Coffee Roasters** - over on Nassau Street past Palmer Square, expensive but good coffee
- **Chancellor Green Cafe** - on campus coffee shop in the basement of Chancellor Green library, quick stop for many humanities graduate students (closed during COVID)
- **Cafe Vienna** - further down Nassau Street towards the Whole Earth co-op (which is expensive but a good place to get quick groceries), this Austrian bakery has good brunch and pastries (and surprisingly, bun-maska chai) (closed during COVID)
- **Murray Dodge Cafe** - free freshly baked cookies and tea made by student workers, lots of cozy couches and board games, open 3pm-12am on weekdays, in the basement of Murray Dodge Hall (closed during COVID)
- **Chez Alice Cafe** - tea and coffee, pastries, macaroons, and wraps in Palmer Square
- **The Little Chef Pastry Chef** - Black owned, has the best croissants in town (and really across many towns), and also has some good espresso to boot.
- **Terra Momo Bread Company** - Not cheap, but quite good bread
- **Halo Pub** - espresso and ice cream store on Witherspoon street (open during COVID)
- **Bent Spoon** - artisanal ice cream in Palmer Square, also have great hot chocolate and cupcakes (open during COVID)
- **Thomas Sweets** - hard scoop ice cream spot on Nassau Street (open during COVID)
- **The Gingered Peach** - Black owned. While it is a bit of a drive away, in Lawrence Township, it has fantastic coffee, excellent cinnamon rolls (if you get there early in the morning), and other baked goods.

Groceries/Quick Needs (all open during COVID)

- **U-Store** - On-campus store with basic groceries (milk, eggs, bread), pre-packaged meals from local restaurants, snacks and drinks (on the slightly expensive end)
- **Wawa** - basic candy, snacks, milk, eggs, drinks, and cheap warm food at Princeton Station (near the Lewis Center for the Arts)
- **Saturday Shopper Bus to Trader Joes, Wegmans, and Whole Foods** - Princeton's University bus service leaves on Saturday mornings and takes students from Lawrence and Lakeside to the nearby larger grocery stores. If you want to make a single trip on the bus, you likely have to choose one grocery store complex, or rush through shopping and time it very particularly!
- **D'Angelo Italian Market** - Italian market with deli sandwiches and (slightly pricey) fruits, vegetables, breads, milks, meats, canned goods, and cheeses

- **Whole Earth** - fancy co-op grocery store down Nassau with whole spices, good loose-leaf teas, spices, and fresh vegetables
- **McCaffreys** - main grocery store for Princeton town down Harrison street, a 45 minute walk from graduate housing, 20 minute bike ride

Quick (relatively cheap) Bites (all open during COVID)

- **Olives** - quick salads and warm pre-prepared food options, sandwiches, pastries, and cake on Witherspoon Street
- **Princeton Soup and Sandwich** - soup, sandwich, and salad combinations on Hulfish Street past Palmer Square
- **Olson's Cheese** - grilled cheese sandwiches of various varieties in Palmer Square
- **Small Bites Local Greek** - dishes from the Local Greek restaurant available on Nassau Street, quick coffee and meals
- **Nassau Street Seafood** - Great fish sandwiches (and fresh fish)

Bars and Alcohol (open for outdoor seating during COVID)

Most restaurants in town (such as Efes, Little Thai Pin, Thai Village, Hunan) are BYOB. You can buy alcohol from Public (on Witherspoon) or Ivy (on Nassau Street) in town to take to these places, often without a bottle charge.

- **Ivy Inn** - Princeton's only dive bar down Nassau street, the cheapest of the options available in town. \$2 tall boys, darts, weekly karaoke nights, and a nice back porch to sit out (and smoke if you like) on warm enough evenings.
- **Triumph** - in-town brewery on Nassau Street with good dessert and on-tap drinks (open to takeout growlers and refills during COVID)
- **Alchemist & Barrister** - sports bar on Witherspoon street with a bar food menu and basic drinks
- **Early Happy Hour at Mediterra (4-6:30pm)** - discounted drinks and desserts and tapas, nice outdoor seating in Palmer Square
- **Happy Hour at Agricola (2-6:30pm)** - discounted cocktails, outdoor seating. A great spot to hit up when you need to get your bouginess on.

Things to Do Without a Car

- *Check out this guide to a "car free" Princeton for ride share and other options:*
https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/19Lg5X3Br3_WjrHWSB1BN2aY_pFc3SCSy
- **Princeton Public Library** - the library is great for working and often hosts interesting [events](#) (both virtually and in person)
- **Labyrinth Bookstore** - wonderful to browse through and also host virtual and in-person [events](#)
- **Princeton Record Exchange** - this record store boasts one of the most impressive record collections in the region--and an always great selection of Springsteen albums--as well as CDs, DVDs, and cassettes for all your hipster needs.

- **Historical Society of Princeton Walking Tours** - for a better sense of the history of Princeton town that includes a host of Black and brown community-members' perspectives
- **Delaware & Raritan Canal State Park** - a great option in town for walking, biking, running, and kayaking
- **IAS Woods** - Right behind Lawrence Apartments, an ideal place for long walks, particularly beautiful in the fall!
- **Princeton Battlefield State Park** - easily walkable from grad housing, particularly close to the GC, that is ideal for picnics
- **Dillon Gym Online Group Fitness Classes** - in case you're experiencing cabin fever and want to move a little, most of [these classes](#) are currently free

Things to do With a Car or Bike

- **Grounds for Sculpture** - strange sculpture garden in Hamilton, NJ. Student tickets are available
- **Washington Crossing Historic Park** - public swim and walk spot with trails and docks
- **Sourland Preserve** - medium level hikes near Princeton
- **Frenchtown, New Hope, Lambertville** - cute towns on the Delaware on the border between NJ and PA with nice restaurants, antique stores, and art galleries
- **Terhune Orchards** - for wine tasting, apple picking, animal petting, and other fall activities

Pay Structure for Grad Students (How are we workers?)

Humanities and Social Sciences Pay Structure

For their first five years, PhD Students in the Humanities and Social sciences receive University Fellowships that fund them at the University-set rate annually. [For Academic Year 2020-21](#), this rate is \$35,500 paid out in twelve portions at the end of each month. You should expect this rate to rise annually with inflation, though the university has made it clear that this sort of “raise” is not required nor should it necessarily be expected.

Teaching requirements are dependent on the department--some like History or Near Eastern Studies require no teaching while others like German or Classics have specific teaching requirements. We are always officially paid for teaching at the rate set by the university, equivalent to “1 hour” of acting as an Assistant in Instruction (AI) per precept, i.e. 1/12 of the AI rate, [equal to \\$2817 for 2020-21](#). Teaching multiple preceptors or acting as a head preceptor will get you more “hours” as an AI. When on the University Fellowship, however, the financial benefit for non-required teaching is extremely limited. Money is deducted from your stipend when you receive teaching pay, with the net effect that you only take home a few hundred dollars per precept. In 2019-2020, this take-home pay was \$351/precept. This is further exacerbated by the fact that our teaching pay--for which you will receive a W-2--is taxable in the state of New Jersey, while our Fellowship income is not. After the completion of our University Fellowships and when in Dissertation Completion Enrollment (DCE) status, however, we are paid for teaching per precept at the University AI rate without a subsequent deduction in stipends.

You should consult with your DGS and with friends and organizers in your department about what accommodations may have been made in light of COVID-19, as many departments have offered extended funding packages of various sorts due to the disruptions to our work caused by the pandemic.

Engineering and Natural Sciences

Fortunately or unfortunately depending on the circumstances of individual departments, the pay structure for grad workers in the “hard sciences” varies by department. Generally speaking, these departments have additional sources of funding from grants from various private and public sources. This grant money is funneled through the university administration first, which keeps a piece, and then to the departments and labs. It would seem that this additional source of money would lead to increased financial stability for grads in the hard sciences, but in many departments this is unfortunately not the case. There are not guaranteed University Fellowships for grads in the hard sciences, and *not* all grads in the hard sciences will have 5 years of guaranteed funding for research.

Unlike in the Humanities and Social Sciences, most grads in the hard sciences will begin active research, and therefore assume a position as a traditional Assistant in Research, immediately or shortly after arrival at the university, often concurrently with taking department-required classes. Grads in all departments in these early years will be covered under the university-wide University Fellowships, in some cases with variable departmental top-ups. Some departments have teaching requirements for particular years - for example, grads in the Chemistry Department are required to spend their 2nd year teaching, and are paid as Assistants in Instruction (payment details covered above). The funding situation after the early years of Fellowship coverage and teaching requirements varies completely by department, and is somewhat dependent on the amount of discretionary spending in which departments choose to engage. (Some departments, like Mathematics, will choose to cover all of their grads for the entirety of the traditional 5-year tenure, while others, like Chemistry, do not cover grads beyond their 3rd year and further funding is dependent on taking teaching appointments.) These departments also feature the additional bureaucratic structure of research groups, or "labs", which may choose to cover grads if the department does not. This once again will depend on the amount of funding principal investigators, heads of research groups, possess and/or will choose to spend.

As the funding situation for grads in engineering and natural science departments is much more opaque and disparate, you should consult with your DGS, with your departmental administration, and with friends and organizers in the department about the particular funding structure, so as to prepare optimally for the future. Not many of these departments have offered funding extensions as a result of COVID-19, but some have offered deadline extensions and leniency for course requirements.

Opportunities for Extra Pay and Teaching

In non-pandemic times, there are many opportunities for extra pay to be made in jobs around campus. Many students work in libraries, which, depending on your exact job, can often be a not too taxing way of getting paid to sit and work. Many students also work as Research Assistants for professors, for which the rates fluctuate depending on the professor and the department. A number of students across departments are fellows at the [Princeton Writing Center](#), a campus job with flexible hours with additional pedagogical benefits. Additional centers around campus, like the [Global History Lab](#) and the courses it teaches around the world or the McGraw Center for Teaching and Learning and the pedagogical workshops it offers, also provide opportunities for part-time work. The McGraw Center also provides outlets for [teaching outside of Princeton University](#), many of which are paid, such as the Mercer/Princeton Teaching Partnership Program which facilitates Princeton graduate students to teach at Mercer County Community College.

Note: you are only allowed to work on 10 hours per week part-time through Princeton. This is an average however from across the year, so in any given week, you can work significantly over 10 hours and be paid for it, as long as your average hours throughout the year are 10 or below.

Taxes 101

*International students, please also consult our **Visa 101** section on information specific to non-citizen taxation.*

Since Princeton does not consider our graduate stipends “reportable income,” most US citizens and “Resident Alien” graduate students do not have taxes withheld from their monthly paychecks. This makes tax season in April confusing and complicated. While we are by no means tax lawyers, and the University continues to remind us that they are not tax lawyers either, here is some information on how to organize and collect your tax information to make tax payments as painless as possible.

Reporting Your Own Taxes

Save your acceptance letter, re-enrolment letters or letters from your department that mention your stipend rate, and monthly pay stubs to get an accurate sense of how much you make yearly. Also save information on any additional funding you receive during the year for research travel, as a research assistant, or otherwise. Calculate ahead how much “non-reported” taxable income you are making - see the [University’s Tax page](#) for some guidance but also keep your own notes as much as possible.

Tuition support is currently non-taxable, so please do not report that. Only report your fellowship information and AI or RA information, as well as additional fellowship support you receive.

Travel or conference support may be taxable - it is unclear and depends on the particular legalities of your funding. Consider writing to the tax office or your department, although we cannot promise they will give you clear answers. This [page](#) offers some brief guidance on what may or may not be taxable and reported.

Our fellowship is non-taxable at the state level (in New Jersey) but is federally taxable. If your tax residence is another state (for example, New York or Pennsylvania), then your fellowship may become taxable at the state level.

Many campus jobs, teaching jobs, and research assistantships that you do to supplement your fellowship are “reported” income for which you will receive a W-2 - check your pay stubs to see if taxes have already been deducted on these, and make sure you download your W-2 and other tax forms from TigerHub when submitting your taxes in April.

Estimated Taxes

Each quarter you should pay a [quarterly estimated tax payment](#) to the IRS. This does not have to be exact (it’s “estimated”), but because the university does not withhold federal taxes from

students who are citizens or Resident Aliens, if you fail to make these quarterly payments, you can be fined in mid-April during the yearly “tax season.” You can pay these estimated taxes online (as you can with your taxes in general).

Filing for Free

There are a number of options to file your federal and state taxes via free online software that most graduate students qualify to use because of our income level. The IRS provides a [tool](#) to see which software you may be eligible to use, based on your income (and that of your household if you have a partner), and states in which you need to file. H&R Block is often a good choice, though the specific qualifications each piece of software uses to evaluate who can free file (both federally and for each state in which they must pay taxes) do change. Watch out for TurboTax, which may not tell you until you have put in all your information that you will actually have to pay to use their product!

Documentation

Typically, to file taxes as a citizen or Resident Alien (as online softwares will tell you), you need a Social Security Number (SSN), W-2, W-4, and other forms that show up in your TigerHub “tax forms” section, as well as the information on reportable income you have collected over the year. Also save any Estimated Tax receipts. The online software will fill out your form 1040 at the federal and state level - these are the typical tax forms most graduate students have to submit, but you may have specific or different ones based on your marital status, filing status, address or change of address, familial income, or other markers. Free online softwares should be able to help you identify your particular forms or deductibles.

International Students

For international students on non-immigrant visas who have not spent significant previous time in the United States, there are additional complications to take into account. First, you will not be able to obtain a Social Security Number as long as you don't receive “employment income.” University fellowships that fund most graduate students in their first year, and humanities and social sciences departments throughout their studies, do not count as employment income. If you take on additional employment (say an on-campus job), you qualify for an SSN. If a university fellowship (reported on a 1042 form that you can also find on TigerHub) is your sole source of income and you don't already have a SSN when starting your program, you will need to apply for an “International Taxpayer Identification Number” or ITIN instead in order to file your taxes. For this application, you need to provide original documents, including your passport, so making an in-person appointment at the Tax Office in Trenton is highly advised. *(It is yet unclear how this application process will work in the AY 20/21).* Note that the SSN functions as an important identification number in the US that is required for all kinds of things, including for obtaining a credit card and a driver's license. Sometimes an “SSN rejection letter,” also to be obtained at the Trenton Tax Office, is accepted as a workaround.

Second, the “law requires that 14 percent of the amount of fellowship stipends that exceeds the cost of tuition, books, fees, and related classroom expenses be withheld” ([Columbia GSAS information](#)) from international students’ income. **Unlike for US citizens and Resident Aliens, this amount will be automatically deducted from your payroll, so you need to take that into account in your financial planning.** Some countries have tax treaties with the U.S. that exempt you from paying this tax, but you will have to prove that you qualify first (via a form that can be submitted alongside your ITIN application).

The contact person for international graduate students’ tax matters is Kristy Holmes (klholmes@princeton.edu). It is advisable to get in touch with her as soon as you arrive at Princeton in order to prepare the application documents that you need. However, Kristy is the sole person responsible for administering all international graduate students’ tax matters and therefore highly overworked and often impossible to reach; and this astounding understaffing has created many problems for international grad students in the past. Moreover, she might not be able to advise you in advanced legal questions if, due to previous visa statuses you might have held in the US, additional income, marital status, dependents, or other circumstances your tax situation is more complex. Unfortunately, resources for international graduate students at Princeton remain highly insufficient in that regard.

Healthcare 101

University Health Services

UHS located in the McCosh infirmary just south of Frist (different to McCosh Hall opposite the University chapel). It's generally speaking a convenient one-stop shop for basic medical appointments and is fully integrated within our health insurance so you won't have to pay! Especially for international students who are unfamiliar with the mess that is private healthcare, McCosh saves a lot of worry and stress. See our **Institutional Resources** section for more information and an assessment of UHS.

General Health at UHS

Typically, you can go [online](#) or call 609-258-3141 to make a UHS appointment for preventative care, sexual health, immunizations, counseling, athletic medicine and more, and you can walk in to McCosh during business hours for an urgent need. As of August 2020 though, you should call to set up an appointment or before you go to McCosh: routine appointments are being offered via telehealth, and if you need to see a doctor in person they will want to screen you for Covid symptoms first.

Sexual Health at UHS

Through Princeton UHS, you can schedule free STI testing, free HPV vaccines, free birth control, and get free condoms. During COVID, you can schedule telehealth appointments with campus doctors and nurses if you are *in* Princeton, and then go in for your consult, testing, or to obtain your prescription. Birth control and other prescriptions can be transferred to an out of state address after the initial consult. If you are not in Princeton, consider making a telehealth appointment to avail of these free services while in town, but note Princeton's health plan and health services are more difficult to access from out of state.

Mental Health at UHS

In terms of mental health resources, graduate students can always avail themselves of on-campus counselors for free, and until the end of 2020, have free appointments with off-campus counselors, therapists, and psychoanalysts (with a "co-pay" for off-campus therapists thereafter). The following steps are the easiest way to be connected with a mental health professional:

- Make an online "initial consult" appointment with an on-campus therapist using the MyUHS portal.
- During your initial consultation, evaluate whether you prefer an on-campus therapist who can see you once every two or three weeks or a professional off-campus more regularly (weekly or as needed).

- Remember that you are allowed to have a choice in this process. Advocate for yourself in this initial consultation - ask for identity markers, specializations, and other things you might need from a mental health professional.
- If you choose to have an off-campus therapist, ask the UHS counselor to recommend a list of therapists in-network in the area (or around you, if you are out of state).
- Contact multiple therapists - do 3-4 initial consults, which are always free, and see if you click with any of them.
- Once you choose a therapist, if they are in-network, the logistics are fairly simple. Give the professional or their office your Aetna Student Plan information, and they should be able to take it from there.
 - Until the end of 2020, the \$20-\$25 co-pay per session is waived so all sessions are completely free - if they do not know this, mention it to them and ask them to look into it.
 - If you have to pay a co-pay, ask your counselor what the best method of payment is, and ask them if they'd consider reducing it slightly. They might say no, but you are entitled to asking for the best care you need!
- If you find a therapist off-campus and out of network, you can get reimbursement for up to 80% of your cost per session. You can contact the insurance company or UHS for information.

Note: *if you cannot afford co-pays or are struggling to pay for mental health resources*, UHS and the Graduate School have additional funding available upon application to the Medical Expense Reimbursement Program and Health Plan Assistance Funds. Find information [here](#) and [here](#) or contact UHS for more information.

Off-campus health

There are some circumstances where you will need to get a referral from UHS if you want to see an off-campus provider. Fortunately, if you live and are seeking services outside of Mercer County, you don't need to worry about a referral. You also never need a referral for a routine physical exam, OB-GYN visit, or pediatric care. Gender affirming surgeries and procedures do require a "pre-certification" by UHS staff, meaning you will need to schedule an appointment to discuss your plan with a nurse practitioner or counselor on campus. For info on the costs of off-campus care - read on to the next section!

If you are struggling financially with on or off-campus health care costs, look through [this list of assistance programs with medical expenses](#) and consider applying for them for additional funds.

The Student Health Plan

The health insurance plan for grad students (the Student Health Plan) has some frustrating gaps in coverage, but is not terrible considering the US' flawed system of private healthcare. The plan costs \$2,580 for a student in 2020, and it's \$2,000 to cover a spouse and \$1,000 to

\$3,000 to cover children. You are automatically enrolled every year, but don't forget to enroll any dependents! You must also re-enroll every year if you wish to use the [dental](#) and [vision](#) plans (an extra \$75 annually for each). The SHP is offered through Aetna. Make sure to register at [Aetna's member website](#), which is really helpful for finding in-network doctors and managing claims. It's a good idea to also register for an account on the [OptumRx website](#) -- this is where any prescription medications are covered.

You can find all the info on what's covered by the SHP [here](#). Basically, if you can find an in-network provider ("preferred care") who meets your needs, that's going to cost you less. So if you're looking to go outside UHS for things like routine primary care visits or gynecology and obstetrics, it's probably worth searching Aetna's website for an in-network doctor, which will be covered by the plan at 100% as compared to 70% for out-of-network. Of course, this is not always possible -- therapists tend not to be in-network, for example, or perhaps you have an existing relationship with a specialist who is not in-network. Because of Covid, all telehealth is currently covered at 100%, so if you are seeing a therapist virtually you will not need to pay anything right now, but this is only guaranteed through the end of November 2020. When this lapses, out-of-network mental health will only be covered at 70%. For mental health in particular, there is also an "[Exclusive Provider Network](#)" -- if you see one of the doctors on this list you only pay \$20 per session. Unfortunately it's a rather short list, and locations are limited! (FYI, the 70% out-of-network coverage rate is a CUT, it used to be 80%. Employer benefits are not supposed to get WORSE over time! We need a union.)

The plan has an out of pocket maximum of \$5,000 a year for an individual or \$10,000 for a family -- meaning, if you have spent that much on medical expenses through copays and coinsurance (the parts not covered by the plan), the plan will cover any other expenses for the year. This is a pretty high maximum, and given the outrageous cost of medicine some grads with acute health needs will unfortunately meet it. Most hospital and surgical expenses are NOT fully covered by the SHP (90% for in-network at 70% for out-of-network). Pregnancy related care is an exception -- after lots of student advocacy around this, maternity expenses are now covered at 100% with just \$10 copay per office visit!

Visa 101

More than 1,200 students (or 42%) come from outside the US to carry out their graduate work at Princeton, and their circumstances often differ dramatically from those of domestic colleagues. International and immigrant students can face immigration barriers, travel restrictions, finance, funding and healthcare inequalities, racism and political unfreedoms. At the same time, the university provides only very limited resources, which currently do not entail access to legal advice. We thus hope that this quick guide, while no substitute for the latter, might be useful to you as you navigate the highly complex US visa and immigration processes. This section was compiled by the recently formed International and Immigrant Student Working Group (PIISWG), and you are very much invited to get in touch with them if you encounter issues, or would like to get involved in advocacy at princetoniiswg@gmail.com.

“Visa” vs. I-20/ DS-2019 (Source: [IISWA FAQ](#), see more on IISWA below)

What is the difference between an I-20 (for F1 holders) or DS-2019 (for J1 holders) and a non-immigrant visa?

A visa is a travel document. It acts like a ticket to cross the border. An I-20 or DS-2019 specifically permits you to study in the United States for the duration that it is valid. Both F-1 and J-1 visas are considered non-immigrant visas.

What if my visa expires before my I-20 or DS-2019?

You are allowed to stay for the “duration of status,” which means the time it should take you to complete your program. You can remain in the United States with a valid study permit and an expired visa. Should you leave the country, however, you would need to renew your visa at an embassy outside the US in order to return.

What do I need to renew my visa?

- I-20 or DS-2019
- Proof of funding
- Valid passport
- A transcript from your institution

F1 vs. J1 visa

Both are non-immigrant visas managed by the DoS’s Exchange Visitor Program and can be used for full-time study in the US, though F1 is a more commonly used option for that purpose. You need a DS-2019 to apply for a J1 and an I-20 to apply for a F1 visa. There’s some

differences with regard to employment, employment for dependents and practical training options (see 'OPT' and 'AT' below). [See a comparative chart by the Davis Center](#) here.

OPT, CPT, AT

What is [OPT](#)?

Optional Practical Training (OPT) is temporary employment that is directly related to an F-1 student's major area of study. Eligible students can apply to receive up to 12 months of OPT employment authorization before completing their academic studies (pre-completion) and/or after completing their academic studies (post-completion).

What is AT?

Academic training is the temporary employment that is directly related to a J-1 student's major area of study. Eligible students can apply to receive AT employment authorization for the shorter of either 18 months or the amount of time it took them to complete their PhDs.

What is [CPT](#)?

Curricular Practical Training (CPT) is employment that is directly related to your field of study, commensurate with your degree level, and is an integral part of an established curriculum. It is an internship, practicum, or other type of employment that is either required for the degree program or taken for credit toward the degree. You must be a full-time student for one full academic year before being eligible to start your CPT. CPT is available only before completion of studies. (Source: [Davis Center website](#))

What is an I-9?

Upon arrival at Princeton, citizens as well as non-citizens have to "verify" that they are eligible for employment. To this purpose, the [I-9 form](#) "must be filled out in person at the time of hire. Princeton University cannot process payment or allow work to begin until the verification process has been completed."

What is an I-94?

[Form I-94](#) documents your travel history, it "is the DHS arrival/departure record issued to aliens who are admitted to the U.S., who are adjusting status while in the U.S. or extending their stay, among other uses. A CBP officer generally attaches the I-94 to the non-immigrant visitor's passport upon U.S. entry. The visitor must exit the U.S. on or before the departure date stamped on the I-94." You can retrieve your up-to-date I-94 [online](#). The I-94 is also required to complete the I-9 form (see above).

Taxes for International Students

If you have no tax identification or Social Security Number when you start your program, you will need to obtain one. Tax identification numbers are also crucial means of identification in the US, for example in order to obtain a credit card. As long as you are on a non-immigrant visa and solely receive fellowship income, you are not eligible for a Social Security Number (SSN), but will need to apply for a “Individual Taxpayer Identification Number” (ITIN). See more information in the [Davis IC FAQ on SSN and ITIN](#) and in our [Taxes 101](#) section. Note that Princeton may **withhold up to 14%** of your stipend for international tax purposes, even if your country of residency has a tax treaty that exempts you from paying them (you have to prove that you are exempted first, which can take a while).

If you are an international graduate student who has lived in the United States for some years before beginning graduate school on an F-1 visa, OPT, J visa, or H visa, you might qualify to pay taxes as a “resident alien.” In this case, you likely already have an SSN. If you qualify for “Resident Alien” status, taxes will not be withheld from your stipend. Keep track of your yearly income as reported in your admission letter, or on your monthly Pay Stubs, as well as any additional taxable fellowship or travel money you may receive. See [here](#) for a helpful chart on what is and is not taxable. You will have to self-report these amounts during tax season. See our [Taxes 101](#) section and the Graduate School’s [Tax Information Website](#) for information on paying taxes as a “resident alien.”

What/Who is a DSO?

DSO refers to “Designated School Official”. Your DSO is listed on your I-20 or DS-2019 and is considered your point of contact at the Davis IC. Their function has shifted in the past decades:

In the pre-SEVIS era [before 2003, when a lot of policies shifted in the aftermath of 9/11], the responsibilities of ISOs were directed mostly toward providing the international student population with services critical to the success of their academic and social adjustment at the U.S. higher education institutions. Although present, a focus on legal compliance with immigration regulations did not dominate ISOs’ work. Implementation of SEVIS and the regulations that accompanied it presented unique challenges for ISOs, ISAs, and their institutions (Bellows & Croom, 2002; NAFSA, 2003a).

*With the implementation of new immigration regulations for the international students and the consequent full-scale implementation of SEVIS, the roles and responsibilities of ISOs and ISAs – **who now became DSOs** – shifted toward legal compliance with new immigration rules, government reporting, and maintenance of the electronic database SEVIS (NAFSA, 2003b; Rosser et al., 2005). While bringing in new technology in the field of international education and making the profession of ISA more visible on the U.S. campuses, implementation of SEVIS has challenged ISAs to maintain their role as advocates and the counselor-educators for international students. (Bratichko, Guennadi A. The George Washington University, ProQuest Dissertations Publishing, 2009. 3360167.)*

See also: [ICE document about DSOs' role and training](#); [Study about how the role of DSOs\(or ISSAs\) changed after implementation of SEVIS](#).

What is SEVIS?

SEVIS is an automated process for collecting, maintaining and managing key data on international exchange visitors, international students, and their dependents — prior to their entry in the US, upon their entry, and during their stay (DHS, 2004; Government Accountability Office [GAO], 2004; U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement [ICE], 2004). SEVIS was designed to replace the previous paper-based process. In this automated process real time, accurate information is updated and maintained by schools through the use of an Internet application (DHS, 2004). SEVIS enables education institutions and exchange programs to transmit electronic information via the Internet to the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) and the Department of State (DOS) throughout the student's or exchange visitor's stay in the United States (DHS, 2004). To become SEVIS certified, an institution has to fill out a Petition for Approval of School for Attendance by Nonimmigrant Students, the I-17 form provided by DHS in order to be certified to accept international students (Retention and Reporting of Information for F, J, and M Nonimmigrants; Student and Exchange Visitor Information System [SEVIS], 2002). (Bratichko, Guennadi A. The George Washington University, ProQuest Dissertations Publishing, 2009. 3360167, pp.31-32)

SEVIS is related to US policy on “illegal immigration” as well as the “War on Terrorism” following 9/11. See also: [Study on the “Patriot Act” and SEVIS implementation](#)

The “five month” rule

Leaving the US for a longer period of time might have implications on your immigration status. Students in F1-status who leave the US for more than five months usually need to apply for a new I-20 in order to re-enter the country. Note that this rule has been suspended since March 2020. Students who have left the US after that date and continue to fulfill their obligations abroad are considered in ‘active status’. Cf. this helpful [FAQ](#) by the University of Pittsburgh's Office of International Services

DACA

Princeton commits to accept students into their undergraduate program regardless of [citizenship status](#), while admission to the graduate school is contingent on the students' ability to be [lawfully present](#) and eligible for employment in the US. DACA refers to Deferred Action for

Childhood Arrivals, and is one way for undocumented youth to obtain a temporary employment authorization in the US:

On June 15, 2012, the U.S. Department of Homeland Security (DHS) announced that it would not deport certain undocumented youth who came to the United States as children. Under a directive from the DHS secretary, these youth may be granted a type of temporary permission to stay in the U.S. The Obama administration called this program Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals, or DACA. (Source: NILC [website](#))

Sanctuary Campus

A sanctuary campus is any college or university that adopts policies to protect members of the campus community who are undocumented immigrants. You can check out the [New School's Sanctuary Working Group's 16 points towards a sanctuary campus](#) and a [scorecard](#) tracking measures taken at different universities to find out about policies this can entail. Princeton has so far refused to consider declaring itself a [sanctuary campus](#).

See also: [Center of Immigration Studies Document \(2017\) on SEVIS, DSOs and Sanctuary statuses](#) [Resources from material to administrative support that Princeton has not a good record in providing]

Immigration “bans”

“Bans” and restrictions on both non-immigrant and immigrant visas have become a more and more frequent political tool that has affected international students enormously. In 2017, Trump signed an Executive Order that is often referred to as a “Muslim ban” and that “banned foreign nationals from seven predominantly Muslim countries from visiting the country for 90 days, suspended entry to the country of all Syrian refugees indefinitely, and prohibited any other refugees from coming into the country for 120 days.” This order was quickly challenged in court, but new versions have been announced over the past years (see this [informative timeline](#) by the ACLU); and there have been many other policies deeply affecting various parts of the U.S. immigration, visa and asylum system in the US. Most recently, Trump issued Executive Orders limiting the issuance of [certain work visas](#) and suspending [entry to certain Chinese Nationals](#) including students. (*Covid-related “travel bans” remain in effect as well for people travelling from China, Iran, the European Schengen Area (Austria, Belgium, Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Iceland, Italy, Latvia, Liechtenstein, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Monaco, San Marino, Vatican City), the UK, the Republic of Ireland and Brazil. As of July, students from the Schengen area, UK and Ireland, are eligible for [National Interest Exemptions](#) which allow them to travel. F1-students are considered exempt automatically, J1 students need to obtain an NIE at their local consulate.*)

Questions (Source: [IISWA FAQ](#), see also below)

- **Where can I find useful information about regulations affecting international students due to COVID-19?**

For general information, <https://studyinthestates.dhs.gov> is a good resource. However, many things are changing due to the pandemic and executive orders. For more detailed information: for F student status and I-20s, see the [ICE](#) website under the SEVP section. For J students and DS2019, see the ECA section of the [Department of State website](#). There is no government website that collects regulatory information about visas, but NAFSA maintains information [here](#), as well as more general information on [Critical Coronavirus Resources](#).

- **I would like to protest. Is it safe?**

The risks for an arrest for non-citizen protestors is higher than for citizens. Please find more information [here](#), and a number of practical tips if you do choose to protest [here](#).

- **How can universities affect federal immigration policy?**

The primary way is through lobbying. The main organizations involved in lobbying on behalf of international students are NAFSA and the President's Alliance for Higher Education and Immigration. Ask your university whether they are actively participating in these organizations.

Additionally, universities can push elected representatives like local senators and representatives to support or oppose specific bills in Congress. You can also do this, whether individually or through your union.

Contacts/Resources:

Important University contacts

- *For Visa and Immigration matters:* Davis International Center <https://davisic.princeton.edu/> Your DSO is listed on your I-20 or DS-2019.
- *For International Tax matters:* Your point of contact is the Department of Global Financial Services at the Office for Finance and Treasury: <https://finance.princeton.edu/our-organization/departments-and-people/financial-services/global-financial-services>. As of August 2020, Kristy Holmes is administering international students' tax matters.

Advocacy and Activism

- **Princeton International and Immigrant Student Working Group (PIISWG)** - This working group formed in spring 2020 with the goal to advocate and organize for international and immigrant student workers at Princeton. **Contact us at princetoniiswg@gmail.com** with questions or if you'd like to get involved!
- **International and Immigrant Student Worker Alliance (IISWA)** - A group of international and immigrant student workers across the United States. For more information see: tiny.cc/iiswaintro
- Check out other campus groups in our **student organizations section**.

Resources

- [Support International and Immigrant Student Workers](#) -- IISWA petition and list of demands for universities
- [International students and the Struggle for Black Lives](#) - IISWA statement

Institutional Resources and their Issues

Princeton, perhaps unsurprisingly, has a lot of resources: it can certainly afford them with a \$25bn endowment. While some are truly excellent, others can be frustrating to navigate or downright harmful. This is a brief rundown of the main resources on campus and some important information so that you know what to expect. If you ever find yourself trying to navigate some aspect of this institutional bureaucracy you can reach out to PGSU for help and one of our activists, who have been through many of these processes, will help with more detailed questions and support!

Libraries

Easily the best resource on campus is Firestone library, it is well stocked and the librarians are available and incredibly helpful. This semester it is unclear how the library will function as a result of COVID-19 but nevertheless throughout the summer staff have been very willing to find ways to get books to graduate students in need. Usually the best way to navigate the library bureaucracy if you need something special or specific is through one of the subject librarians and they'll be happy to help. There is also a bewildering collection of fiction, ebooks, audiobooks, and independent film available through Firestone if you want to use it for your recreational time as well. Finally, the Princeton Public Library, as befits a rich banker suburb, is very well-resourced and a lovely study space.

University Anti-Racism Resources

Unsurprisingly, most of the anti-racism work done at Princeton comes through an array of student groups who are more or less in opposition to the university and its continued investment in the prison industrial complex, the local police force, and its willingness to bring BIPOC students to campus and then provide them with only minimal support.

Diversity Centres

That being said, the diversity centres (the Carl A Fields Center, the LGBT Center, The Women*s Center, and the Access Ability Center) are staffed by wonderful humans who are available to discuss the environment at Princeton and listen to complaints. If you have a problem or issue then they are excellent advocates and can help pull the levers of power to help you out. Princeton, frustratingly, refuses to address systemic problems at a systemic level but does have a track record of sorting things out for individuals who can make enough noise and the staff at these centers can really help with that. The centres also run bomb-ass events and generally try to make life at Princeton more livable if you're not a cishet straight white rich 20 year old who is going to graduate into a job at McKinsey.

SHARE

Princeton SHARE is the Sexual Harassment and Assault Resources and Education group on campus. They are fully confidential and are a mix of staff from University Health Services and student fellows, both undergraduate and graduate. It's a wonderful resource if somewhat limited in scope and is fully aware of the failings of the Title IX office.

Title IX

Reform of the Title IX office has been the aim of a student campaign at Princeton for several years now and the university refuses to budge in order to protect abusive faculty from a more rigorous process. The Title IX office is notorious for swallowing student complaints, handing out absurdly light "punishments" for faculty, and being an incredibly stressful part of the bureaucracy for students to deal with. For a full and comprehensive list of demands see:

<https://princetonixnow.com/suggestions-new-titleix-rules>

UHS

University Health Services are located in the McCosh infirmary just south of Frist (different to McCosh Hall opposite the University chapel). It's a convenient one-stop shop for basic medical appointments and is fully integrated within our health insurance so you won't have to pay! Especially for international students who are unfamiliar with the mess that is private healthcare, McCosh saves a lot of worry and stress. See our **Healthcare 101** section for more details.

CPS

Counselling and Psychological Services fall under the McCosh umbrella but where most of the McCosh facilities are well-resourced, CPS falls well short of what is needed. The counsellors do their best but are trying to help so many students that it is difficult to get an appointment more often than once every two or three weeks. Mostly the CPS counsellors will try and refer you to off-campus therapists who can meet more regularly but this becomes a problem for queer/BIPOC students who want to see a therapist who shares their experiences and there simply aren't enough queer/BIPOC therapists either at CPS or in town to adequately meet this demand. The CPS resources, like so many at Princeton, are aimed primarily at undergraduate needs and so graduate students often struggle to fit in with CPS programming.

Public Safety

The Princeton University Public Safety department maintains links with the local police force and as of a new policy in 2016 each Public Safety car now carries a firearm. Public Safety presents a fluffy image to many students but has a track record of harassing BIPOC students and making campus an inhospitable space for them. In this, Public Safety should be considered and critiqued as a police force and we encourage all of our supporters to not call them to

resolve problems as their involvement only increases the risk of violence. The SPEAR Prison Abolition group and Mercer County for Abolition are two local organizations with resources for understanding how the patterns of policing in Princeton and Mercer County uphold white supremacy.

OIT and Princeton tech support

Located in the Frist Campus Center the tech support guys are helpful and fine. Faculty are universally bad at technology so the Office for Information Technology is a useful resource.

Rides and Transport

Princeton has several bus routes that help graduate students get from grad housing to campus and, on the weekends, to the shops along Route 1. At night there is also the P-Ride shuttle which can give you a lift back to the grad college or the Lawrence/Lakeside apartments if the bus is no longer running. The buses are wheelchair accessible.

Housing

The housing situation at Princeton is a bit of a mess. Off-campus students will pay prices that are almost as high as New York to live in town while on campus housing is only guaranteed for the first two years and graduate students have been kicked out of their houses with little warning. There is no facility to ensure LGBT-friendly roommates in the random assignments and the housing bureaucracy is very rigid and resistant to change. Irritatingly, they do not answer emails or voicemails and the only way to get to them is by going in person to their office in New South. Housing has long been a touchpoint of graduate student activism in Princeton and we expect that to continue as rents remain high and as the new development in the works seems likely to expose graduate students to a predatory development company. Working as an [Resident Graduate Student](#) (RGS) in an undergraduate college can provide low-priced housing and a meal plan, but does require limited duties in providing study breaks, advising, and care work for undergraduate students.

The Writing Center

A really useful place to find consultation with a trained fellow to brainstorm as you write and get feedback on your written work. Graduate students can schedule 80-minute appointments with a specific writing center tutor in their subject area. Take advantage of this resource and consider working there as a tutor (currently pays \$20/hour), as they take new fellows annually and need graduate students from across all fields. It's a great way to earn extra cash and learn some pedagogical techniques. See their [website](#) for more details and to schedule appointments (all online because of COVID).

The McGraw Center for Teaching and Learning

An institutional resource that many graduate students only interact with when doing their first-time teacher training, but which holds pedagogically-oriented events throughout the year. It also provides jobs to interested graduate students. They also host a list of [other teaching opportunities](#) in the area.

Princeton Teacher Prep

Princeton does not advertise this much, but we have a program through which you can gain certification to teach in public schools in New Jersey. Check out their [website](#) for details.

Princeton Community Orgs - How to Get Involved

The following is an incomplete list of community organizations in Princeton and the broader Mercer County area. They have spearheaded and collaborated on grassroots organizing on many different fronts, and have significant participation from Princeton grads currently.

Princeton Mutual Aid

Princeton Mutual Aid is (notably) a mutual aid organization that serves the community of Princeton, NJ and is involved in the redistribution of resources and the building of community and communal power. The organization is involved in numerous community initiatives, primarily the maintenance of a network that connects people from across various Princeton communities, from the university-affiliated to those from the more vulnerable undocumented and housing-insecure communities in town. The organization is also involved in tenant organizing, applying pressure at the municipal level for various initiatives (such as affordable housing), and also helps run a tutoring network for local students. To see more visit <https://www.princetonmutualaid.com> and to get involved email tigerpackmutualaid@gmail.com

Princeton Anti-Austerity Coalition

The Princeton Anti-Austerity Coalition (PAAC) is a group working to connect people affiliated with the university in some way, students and employees, to build power and force the university to treat all of its workers fairly and with dignity. The workers on the university campus have very different employment conditions, (some are unionized and some are not unionized, some are contract workers while some work directly for the university) and part of the work of the PAAC is to make transparent to workers from across the university, the working conditions of their fellow university employees. The PAAC connects and hosts meetings where workers from disparate and often segregated parts of the university come together and share information, for the purpose of building solidarity and building power on campus. To get involved email Tom Davies therculesdavies@gmail.com

Mercer for Abolition

The Mercer for Abolition group is an organization working toward the abolition of the current model of policing in Mercer County. They are involved in collecting information about policing in the Mercer County area through surveys and research, and spreading this info through town halls, surveys and coordination with other organizations in the area. They are involved in putting pressure on municipal and county officials through organized call and email-banking. To get involved please email Fatima Mughal at fatima23@gmail.com

PGSU 101

Who we are:

Princeton Graduate Students United (PGSU) is the graduate worker union at Princeton University. As a labor union, our goal is to advocate for the living and working conditions of our members across departments and disciplines by building and sustaining a democratic, active, and member-led organization. Graduate workers play an integral role in both the research and teaching mission of the University. As higher education becomes more precarious, it is increasingly urgent that we have a collective voice and stand in solidarity with fellow workers, students, and community members at Princeton. PGSU is committed to creating a graduate labor union on our campus committed to combating inequality, including but not limited to economic, social, racialized, gendered, and disability-based inequality, and building an organization that is responsive to and understanding of the structures that differentiate access to higher education and decision-making power. In affiliation with the American Federation of Teachers and in solidarity with other workers on campus (unionized or otherwise), we will empower student workers to improve transparency, demand accountability, and build power as graduate students and workers.

Membership

Our membership is made up of graduate students at Princeton University who have elected to become members by signing a membership form and code of conduct. All members are welcome to attend meetings, participate in decision-making discussions, contribute to working groups, and organize their fellow workers, with the aim of recognition of PGSU as a legally-recognized bargaining entity by our employer, Princeton University.

Not a member yet? Sign up here: <https://www.prinetongsu.org/become-a-pgsu-member/>

Working Structure

Organizing Committee (OC): Decisions that concern the entire organization, including but not limited to political vision, policy, strategy, long-term agenda-setting, outreach, rhetoric, and crisis management are made by general consensus of OC, which meets every week. Membership in the OC is open to all PGSU members who have attended an organizer training and/or participated in a working group. ***OC meetings are currently being held Fridays at 5pm ET.*** Let us know if that time doesn't work for you--it is subject to change each semester depending on schedules.

Elected positions: PGSU currently has two elected positions: secretary and treasurer. OC members can volunteer for one of the positions at the beginning of any semester, and are confirmed by an OC meeting vote. The secretary is responsible for gathering and sharing

weekly agendas and minutes for OC meetings, and ensuring each meeting has a moderator and a note-taker. The treasurer manages the PGSU bank account and keeps a record of all transactions -- presenting quarterly financial reports and any funding requests to the OC.

Department Organizers: We are working towards having each department represented by at least one PGSU member who can coordinate communication, organizing, and issues in that department. If you are interested in organizing for your department, let us know! We prefer to pull reps from outside the OC, so don't be discouraged from volunteering if you haven't been deeply involved with PGSU in the past. Department organizers meet on an as-needed basis, and work closely with the Membership & Mobilization Committee.

Membership and Strategy Meetings: We hold open membership meetings regularly, and are additionally trying a new format that we call strategy meetings this semester. The idea is to provide a forum to build an effective middle- and long term organizing strategy for the year, and to develop it in a participatory way, by taking these decision processes explicitly to any members who wish to attend. Ideally we can democratically decide and commit to an action plan at the end of each session-set, and to develop a more robust union structure along the way. The semester strategy meeting schedule can be found [here](#).

Committees: When PGSU members see a need for ongoing collaboration to accomplish a task, they may choose to form a working group or committee. Working groups are generally shorter term (for example, there is one currently working on planning the sickout), while our committees represent ongoing needs and priorities of the organization. These groups have the autonomy and authority to make decisions regarding the initiatives, events, communications, etc. that pertain to their issue. They provide updates and bring larger questions to the OC.

Our current committees are:

- *Membership and Mobilization*
- *Communications*
- *Curriculum*
- *Data*
- *International and Immigrant Students*
- *Community Outreach.*

Get in touch with us if you want to learn more or want to get involved! Taking on a specific task in a subcommittee is a great way to get into labor organizing.

Finances

We recently started a system for collecting *voluntary* membership dues to fund our union. Currently, PGSU spends about \$40 a month on web services, and we hope we will soon return to a world where we buy snacks and drinks for in-person events, print flyers and distribute buttons and paper union cards, and more. We are not currently receiving financial support from AFT, and we want to build a fund we can sustainably rely on to do the things we collectively decide on. We encourage you to see how it feels to start chipping in a few dollars a month! Just

20 people giving \$2 a month would meet our current needs. You can send a contribution through Google Pay (pay.google.com). Just write askpgsu@gmail.com in the recipient field and “dues” in the comment field.

How we communicate

General listserv: If you are not our general listserv, sign up as a member on our website or email us at askPGSU@gmail.com to be added.

OC listserv: Reach out to any active committee chair or to askPGSU@gmail.com if you want to attend an OC meeting. You will then be added to the listserv. We also have a slack to coordinate our work.

Website and Social Media: Check out our website (princetongsu.org) and follow us on

- Twitter: [@PrincetonGSU](https://twitter.com/PrincetonGSU)
- Instagram: [@princetongradsunited](https://www.instagram.com/princetongradsunited)
- Facebook: [@PrincetonGradsUnited](https://www.facebook.com/PrincetonGradsUnited)

For more info, see our [FAQ](#), and [sign up](#) to receive membership emails.

Timeline of Activism

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|---------------|---|
| Prior to 2000 | Graduate student workers at private universities are considered to be excluded from protection as employees under the National Labor Relations Act |
| 2000 | NYU GSOC-UAW wins its union with certification from the National Labor Relations Board |
| 2004 | Brown issues a challenge to that ruling, the NLRB decides that graduate students are not employees |
| 2014 | Columbia’s GWC-UAW files an election petition, re-opening the issue |
| February 2016 | 9 universities, including Princeton, jointly file an amicus brief urging the NLRB to decide against recognizing Columbia’s grad union |
| Spring 2016 | - Initial meetings of grad labor organizers at Princeton lead to the formation of Princeton Graduate Students United (PGSU) |
| August 2016 | NLRB rules in favor of GWC-UAW and overrules the Brown decision! Ruling states that we have the right to organize graduate worker unions that our employers are legally mandated to recognize and bargain with. |
| Fall 2016 | - PGSU is approached by multiple national unions, votes to affiliate |

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| | <p>with the American Federation of Teachers (AFT)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - AFT staffers are assigned to our campaign, office opens in downtown Princeton - Formation of the Organizing Committee - Begin drive to talk to every grad student about their working conditions and build supporter base through signatures on our mission statement card |
| Spring 2017 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - PGSU and Graduate Housing Project co-sponsor Housing Summit - Speak at YDS' Students for Workers' Rights march - Contingent participates in Newark action for Rutgers DACA student facing deportation threat - Organizers participate in solidarity actions with Yale's unionization campaign and hunger strike - Communications campaign to counter Princeton's anti-union propaganda |
| Summer 2017 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Organizers participate in Labor Notes organizing training - First bargaining survey - 200 grads respond, helping us shape our campaigns for the next year |
| Fall 2017 | <p>President Trump's second appointment to the NLRB is confirmed, swinging the board to an anti-labor majority. AFT and other national unions pull petitions for union recognition, fearing a case will be used to overturn the <i>Columbia</i> precedent.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - PGSU shifts from working towards election in near future and refocuses on long-term power building and "acting like a union" now. - Working groups form and draft platforms with demands on: racial discrimination, gender-based discrimination and harassment, family and dependents, healthcare, housing, international student issues, transparency, and working conditions. - Sexual misconduct working group submits policy demands to Faculty-Student Committee - First event partnering with Tigers with Cubs to bring grads with parents together to talk issues (and swap clothes and supplies!) - Proposed congressional tax bill threatens to tax our tuition waivers like income, which would significantly decrease our take home pay. PGSU petitions the University to stand against the bill and commit to preserving our after-tax income. Over 1,300 sign the petition. Over 100 march on Nassau Hall to deliver the petition to President Eisgruber. |

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| Spring 2018 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - At our first PGSU retreat, we review our newly drafted Constitution, and formalize the transition from a “union campaign” to a “union” -- an organization of members working collectively to build power and improve our working conditions. - Begin drive to get supporters signed up as members - Support grad organizers in Feminist Strike 8M against unfair targeting by the university - Internal workshop with peer educators from the LGBT Center <p>Supreme court case <i>Janus v. AFSCME</i> threatens to greatly weaken labor unions by allowing workers to opt out of paying dues</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - In this context, AFT announces the launch of its new associate membership program -- they will be organizing grads at private universities under one banner rather than supporting campus-based locals. |
|-------------|--|

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|------------------------|---|
| Summer 2018 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Some PGSU organizers become dues paying organizers of AFT’s United Academics, but we maintain our organizing focus on building power on campus - PGSU members co-organize the Coalition of Graduate Employee Unions conference in New York |
| Fall 2018 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - AFT staff are taken off permanent assignment at Princeton and downtown office is closed |
| Spring and Summer 2019 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Organize actions around abrupt changes to the Student Health Plan - Organize a workers’ inquiry on housing and another housing forum |
| Fall 2019 | <p>NLRB has not yet taken up a case to overturn the <i>Columbia</i> decision, instead proposes to make a rule change nullifying our status as workers</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - PGSU participates in an AFT Academics nationwide campaign to submit public comments to the NLRB opposing the rule change. - Organize around payment transparency as we notice some weird deductions from paychecks. Princeton responds by implementing monthly “stipend deduction request” emails from Student Accounts. |
| Spring 2020 | <p>Pandemic hits</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Our petition details how Princeton’s COVID response falls short of protecting the university community. Over 700 sign |

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| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - We release an open letter calling on Princeton to “Stop the Clock” and provide a one year funding extension to all grads. Over 1,100 sign - Hold a “Day of Action” where over 200 participate in a coordinated campaign demanding university admins respond to our petitions. We fill up 11 voicemail boxes and run out of people to call! - Active organizers with PGSU increase exponentially, work proceeds along a number of subcommittees and with closely related entities, including the anti-austerity coalition, international and immigrant student working group, x-campus organizing, and town outreach and mutual aid - Big boost in social media presence, communications campaigns highlight individual grads’ testimonials and continue to shine light on university hypocrisy and shortcomings - Record numbers of people attending our general membership meetings and newly formed department organizer meetings |
| <p>Summer 2020</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Meetings to strategize on how to amplify the work of the Black Leadership Coalition (BLC), Students for Prison Education, Abolition and Reform (SPEAR), the Black Graduate Caucus (BGC), and Unidad Latina en Acción - Launch of our strategy meeting series to facilitate broader member participation in union decision making |