

**Columbia University**  
**General Studies Student Council:**  
**Impact Report 2025-26**





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GSSC

**Executive Summary:**

In the 2025-26 academic year, GSSC introduced a novel strategy to implement policy initiatives. While past GSSC policy initiatives have focused on persuading administration to make certain decisions, this year's initiatives were largely anchored in unilateral GSSC actions. For the first time, GSSC voted to include a "Pilot Fund" of \$50,000 in the council budget. This reserved fund allowed for the creation of more than 50 new GS research grants, the GSSC Travel Fund, the GSSC Internship Stipend Program, and the continuation of the GSSC MetroCard Program. While the GSSC Alumni Mentor Match Program did not require any financial commitment, its creation followed the same model by utilizing GSSC's own resources in the form of personnel through the GSSC Alumni Task Force.

*This report was unanimously adopted by the Columbia University General Studies Student Council in a General Body meeting on Tuesday, April 28, 2026.*



**GSSC MetroCard Program:**

<p><b>Summary:</b></p> <p>The GSSC MetroCard Program is the only pilot program in this report founded before this academic year. However, the size of the program was more than doubled in the 2024-25 academic year, and that size was maintained this academic year.</p>
<p><b>Outline:</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. GSSC allocated \$10,000 for this year’s GSSC MetroCard Program.</li> <li>2. GSSC Executive Board released a MetroCard application to all GS students.</li> <li>3. GSSC Executive Board anonymized applications, and then gave an anonymized spreadsheet of application responses to the GSSC Task Distribution Committee, a newly formed group consisting of the four Chief Representatives, along with relevant policy representatives including Commuting Students Representative, FGLI and Working Students Representative, and a Policy Coordinator.</li> <li>4. GSSC Task Distribution Committee signified their selections for MetroCard recipients without ever seeing applicants’ identity.</li> <li>5. GSSC Executive Board worked with GS Student Life to distribute MetroCards to selected recipients.</li> </ol>
<p><b>Impact:</b></p> <p>The GSSC MetroCard Program received 479 applications in the fall semester, and 206 applications in the spring semester. Of these, GSSC granted MetroCards to 214 applicants.</p>
<p><b>Recommendations:</b></p> <p>In the short term, next year’s GSSC will need to redesign this program around the distribution of OMNY cards instead of MetroCards, due to the MTA’s transition. In the long term, the most sustainable and efficient version of this program will be one funded and operated at the University level, <a href="#">as described in this GSSC statement from 2024</a>, instead of by individual schools or student councils.</p>



## **GSSC Funding for Research Grants:**

### **Summary:**

There are four existing programs providing research grants exclusively to GS students: Bancroft Research Scholars Program, GS Research for Summer Exploration (RISE) Program, Senior Thesis Stipends, and GS Research Stipends. This year, GSSC infused its own funds into the endowments for these research grants, more than doubling the total volume of research grants available to GS students.

### **Outline:**

1. GSSC voted to allocate \$22,600 to the four GS-specific research grant programs.
2. GS Academic Affairs added the additional funds to the respective endowments.
3. GS Academic Affairs selected research grant recipients, and distributed the grant money including the additional funds from GSSC.

### **Impact:**

The GSSC funding allowed for the establishment of 56 additional research grants including:

- 2 additional Bancroft Scholars (\$2,200 each)
- 2 additional RISE recipients (\$2,600 each)
- 12 additional Senior Thesis recipients (\$250 each)
- 40 additional GS Research Stipend recipients (\$250 each)

### **Recommendations:**

The four existing GS-specific research programs operate effectively, and the decision to infuse GSSC funds this year was due to the fact that these programs consistently receive more applications than available grants. GSSC could continue to add funds in future years to address this, but no structural changes to the GS research grant programs are recommended.



# GSSSC

## **GSSC Travel Fund:**

**Summary:**

GSSC established the GSSC Travel Fund to provide travel subsidies for Columbia-affiliated travel exclusively to GS students. Columbia College and Columbia Engineering offer comparable programs funded by their respective school administrations.

**Outline:**

1. GSSC allocated \$5,000 to establish the GSSC Travel Fund.
2. GSSC Executive Board released the GSSC Travel Fund application to all GS students.
3. GSSC Finance Committee, led by Chief Finance Representative, reviewed and interviewed Travel Fund applicants.
4. GSSC Finance Committee made selections for Travel Fund recipients, and notified GS Student Life in order to distribute the funds to students.

**Impact:**

GSSC allocated \$5,000 for this initiative, and 100% of funds were awarded. The GSSC Travel Fund received 38 applications, and was able to fulfill 17, compensating travel expenses for 24 individual GS students.

**Recommendations:**

The most ideal version of a GS Travel Fund would be one funded and operated by GS administration. Until such an arrangement is achieved, GSSC should continue to offer the GSSC Travel Fund to GS students.



## **GSSC Alumni Mentor Match Program:**

### **Summary:**

While GS has long benefitted from concierge-style alumni offerings through GS Alumni Affairs, GSSC established the GSSC Alumni Mentor Match Program to provide a systematized alumni mentorship program for GS students, modeled after the Odyssey Mentoring Program in Columbia College and Blueprint Mentorship Program in Columbia Engineering.

### **Outline:**

1. GSSC Alumni Task Force released an application for mentors to GS alumni, and recruited alumni mentors over the subsequent months.
2. GSSC Alumni Task Force released an application for mentees to all GS students.
3. GSSC Alumni Task Force paired student mentee applicants with alumni mentor applicants based on professional and personal interests.
4. GSSC Alumni Task Force performed secondary verifications of each match, with a final check by GS Student Life.
5. GSSC Alumni Task Force notified students and alumni of their respective pairings.

### **Impact:**

The GSSC Alumni Mentor Match Program received more than 250 student mentee applications, and 170 alumni mentor applications. As of the publication of this report, the GSSC Alumni Task Force has matched more than 200 students with alumni mentors.

### **Recommendations:**

The most ideal version of this kind of systematized one-to-one student-alumni matching program would be one operated by GS administration. Until such an arrangement is achieved, GSSC should continue to offer the GSSC Alumni Mentor Match Program to GS students.



**GSSC Internship Stipend Program:**

**Summary:**

GSSC established the GSSC Internship Stipend Program to provide internship stipends to GS students participating in unpaid and low-paid internships. Columbia College and Columbia Engineering offer similar programs funded by their respective school administrations.

**Outline:**

1. GSSC allocated \$10,000 for the GSSC Internship Stipend Program.
2. GSSC Executive Board released the internship stipend application to all GS students.
3. GSSC Executive Board selected 20 internship stipend recipients.
4. GSSC Executive Board notified GS Student Life of selected recipients in order to distribute the funds.

**Impact:**

55 students applied for the 20 stipends available through the GSSC Internship Stipend Program. 20 individual GS students each received a \$500 stipend for internships including:

- Accenture
- European Union Delegation to the United States
- New York Supreme Court
- PwC
- Texas State Senate
- The Daily Show
- United Nations
- US Attorney for the Southern District of New York

**Recommendations:**

The most ideal version of a GS Internship Stipend Program would be one funded and operated by GS administration. Until such an arrangement is achieved, GSSC should continue to offer the GSSC Internship Stipend Program to GS students.



GSSC

**Additional Initiatives:**

In the summer of 2025, Columbia Residential abruptly removed around 160 GS students from two buildings—600 West 113th Street (known as Nussbaum) and 503 West 121st Street (known as The Fairholm). In response, GSSC organized the GSSC Housing Relocation Survey. Directly following the release of the [2025 GSSC Housing Relocation Survey Report](#), Acting University President Claire Shipman apologized to impacted students.