

# Graduate Student Senate Survey Analysis Report

Analysis of 2025-2026 GSS survey export - completed responses only

## Executive Summary

This report analyzes 192 completed responses from the GSS survey export. The survey covers demographics, housing, transportation, GSS engagement, academic support, grievance awareness, mental health, safety, food security, and financial stability. The survey instrument states that responses are confidential and reported in aggregate, so this report excludes identifying fields such as names, email addresses, IP addresses, and raffle/contact information.

Overall, students report generally positive academic/advisor support and strong appreciation for GSS community-building, but the strongest problems are financial: housing costs, health-insurance affordability, regular financial worry, vulnerability to emergency expenses, and uneven knowledge of funding/support resources.

- Financial hardship is the clearest system-level issue: 66.8% agree that unexpected expenses would cause serious hardship, and 64.2% worry about finances regularly.
- Health insurance affordability is a major pain point: only 29.7% agree it is affordable, while 43.8% disagree.
- Housing is mixed: 61.7% are satisfied overall, but among those reporting housing challenges, 88.1% identify cost, with lease inflexibility and distance from campus also common.
- GSS communication reaches students mainly through the newsletter, but contact pathways and visibility remain uneven: 24.1% disagree that they know how to contact GSS leadership or their representative.
- Students strongly prioritize direct academic/professional and financial support in the GSS budget, especially the Elevate Grant and professional events/workshops.

## Method and Data Notes

The dataset contained 249 exported response rows after Qualtrics metadata rows. The main analysis uses the 192 rows with Finished = 1 and Progress = 100. Partial responses were excluded from percentage calculations so that summary percentages reflect completed surveys. Percentages are calculated using valid responses for each item, because some questions were skipped or conditionally displayed.

Important limitation: the file is a Qualtrics value export. Choice labels were reconstructed from the Qualtrics survey structure/QSF and survey PDF. Multi-select questions were split into individual selections when calculating item-level frequencies.

## Respondent Profile

Category	Top response / distribution	Result
I am an enrolled grad student in the following college:	College of Education and Social Services (40, 20.8%), College of Engineering and Mathematical Sciences (40, 20.8%), Larner College of Medicine (not MD degree) (28, 14.6%), College of Agriculture and Life Sciences (26, 13.5%)	N=192
I am an international student	No (158, 82.3%), Yes (34, 17.7%)	N=192
I am currently a	Doctoral Student (PhD, EdD) (105, 54.7%), Masters Degree Student (84, 43.8%), Other (2, 1.0%), Post Graduate Certificate Student (1, 0.5%)	N=192
My gender identity is - Selected Choice	Woman (132, 68.8%), Man (46, 24.0%), Prefer not to answer (8, 4.2%), Non-binary (6, 3.1%)	N=192

The response pool is broad across colleges, with the largest representation from Education and Social Services and Engineering/Mathematical Sciences, each at 20.8% of completed responses. Doctoral students make up 54.7%, master's students 43.8%, and international students 17.7%.

## Housing

Median reported housing cost is \$1,132/month; the mean is \$1,240/month. The middle 50% of reported housing costs fall from \$903 to \$1,518/month, and the 90th percentile is about \$1,997/month.

Measure	N	Result
Satisfied/strongly satisfied with current housing	167	61.7%
Dissatisfied/strongly dissatisfied with current housing	167	26.3%

### Reported housing challenges among respondents who selected at least one challenge:

Challenge	Count	% of respondents selecting challenge
Cost	118	88.1%
Lease dates/Inflexibility	53	39.6%
Distance from campus	50	37.3%
Security or initial deposit	36	26.9%
Ability to find potential roommates	29	21.6%
Other	12	9.0%

Interpretation: students may be satisfied with a current unit once secured, but the pathway to housing is difficult. Cost dominates, followed by lease-date inflexibility and distance from campus.

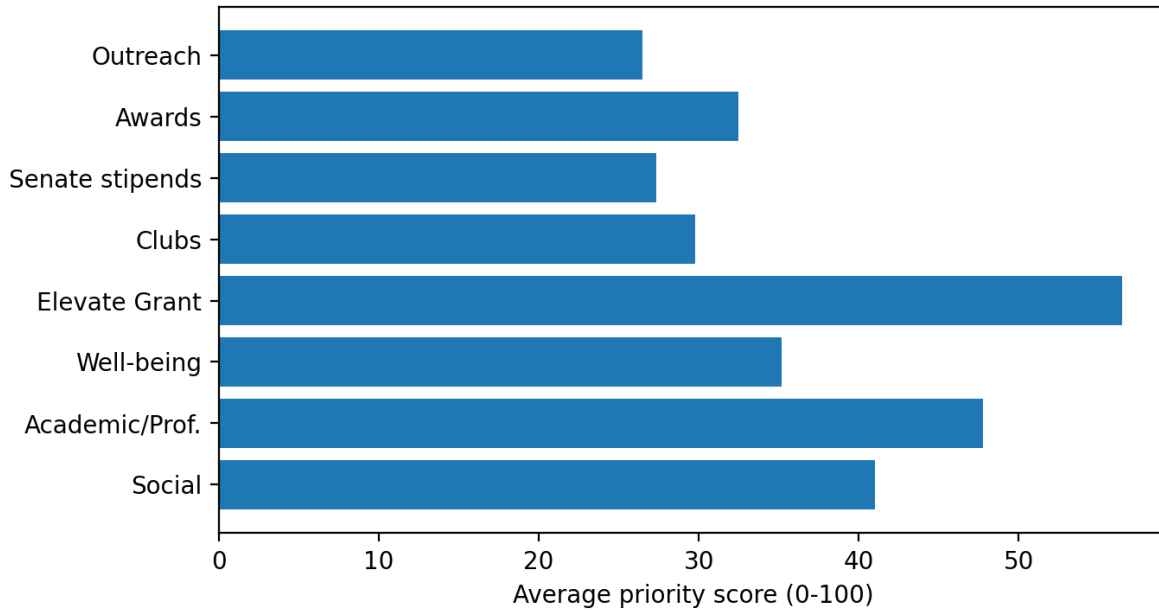
## Transportation

Item	Key result	N
I have ample routes/modes of transportations to get to where I need to be as a graduate student.	Agree (46.7%), Disagree (19.4%), Neither agree nor disagree (16.4%)	165
On days you are physically on campus, how late do you typically stay?	5:00 to 7:00 PM (31.3%), Before 5:00 PM (30.1%), My schedule varies significantly (18.1%)	166
I use the GMT bus service	No (38.2%), Yes (38.2%), Not currently, but may in the future (18.8%)	165
Would you use a dedicated bus service between campus and downtown Burlington if it were available?	Yes, occasionally (26.2%), No (25.0%), Yes, regularly (25.0%)	164

Demand for a dedicated campus-downtown Burlington service is substantial but not universal: 25.0% would use it regularly, 26.2% occasionally, and 23.8% maybe/not sure. Open-ended transportation feedback repeatedly mentions direct routes, late/evening access, downtown/South Burlington connectivity, parking/garage-to-campus movement, and accessibility at bus stops.

## GSS Awareness, Engagement, and Budget Priorities

GSS budget priority scores



Item	Positive / key result	Concern
GSS newsletter readership	58.1% agree/strongly agree	19.9% disagree/strongly disagree
Know how to contact GSS/departmental representative	55.0% agree/strongly agree	24.1% disagree/strongly disagree
GSS events build community	64.6% agree/strongly agree	6.2% disagree/strongly disagree

Budget priority ranking by average 0-100 score: Elevate Grant (56.4), Academic/Professional Events and Workshops (47.8), Social Events (41.0), Well-being Events (35.2), Collaborator/Student Awards (32.5), Supporting Clubs/Communities (29.8), Senate Worker Stipends/Appreciation (27.4), and GSS Outreach/Visibility (26.5). This suggests students most value GSS when it provides tangible financial/professional support, while still valuing community events.

## Academic Experience and Professional Development

Measure	Positive	Negative/concern
Department/advisor support	77.6%	7.3%
Timely advisor guidance	81.2%	8.9%
Clear milestone expectations	72.3%	17.8%
Adequate workspace/resources	0.0%	0.0%
Manageable workload	72.3%	15.2%
Post-graduation resources	55.3%	22.6%
Job search support	43.2%	14.2%

Funding item	Main finding	N
My department funds grad student conference expenses	No, I'm not aware that departmental funding is available to graduate students for conference expenses (45.5%)	189
My department funds my professional development expenses - Selected Choice	No, I'm not aware that departmental funding is available to graduate students for professional development expenses (52.1%)	192

Funding item	Main finding	N
I am aware that the Graduate College funds Masters and Doctoral conference expenses through a grant program if criteria is met (i.e. first author, UVM conference presentation, etc.) - Selected Choice	Yes--though I have not received funds (49.5%)	186

Interpretation: the academic environment is comparatively strong, especially advisor guidance and departmental support. The main weaknesses are professional-development funding awareness and career/job-search support. More than half report no awareness of departmental professional-development funding, and 37.1% are not aware of Graduate College conference funding.

## Grievance Awareness, Mental Health, and Safety

### Known grievance/support resources:

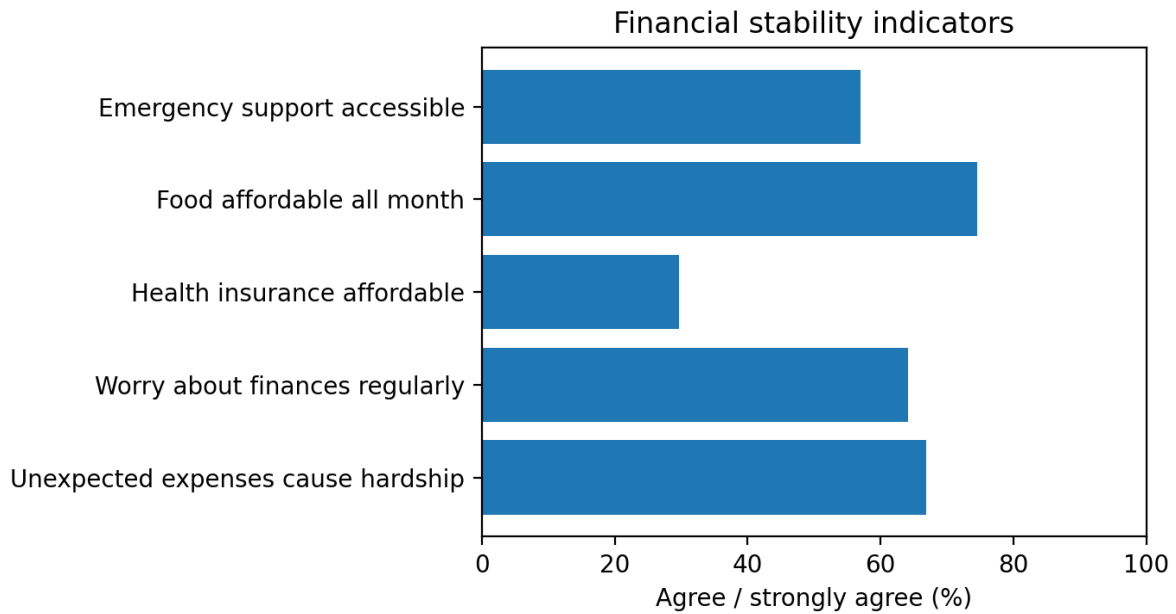
Resource	Count	% among respondents selecting resources
Graduate Students United (for student workers)	109	74.7%
UVM Staff United (for UVM employees)	69	47.3%
GSS Student Affairs	62	42.5%
HOPE Works	62	42.5%
Ombudsman	37	25.3%
Other	2	1.4%

Measure	Positive/key result	Concern
Experienced issue warranting grievance/complaint	5.7% yes	9.4% prefer not to answer
Feel good about mental health	60.5% positive	21.1% negative
Mental-health resources easily accessible	48.6% positive	16.9% negative
Have time to access mental-health resources	46.4% positive	30.9% negative
Feel safe off campus	81.0% positive	4.2% negative
Downloaded/used CatSafe	34.9% yes	59.4% no

Interpretation: mental health is not uniformly negative, but accessibility and schedule capacity are weaker than basic awareness. Safety perceptions are generally positive, but CatSafe adoption is low and open-ended comments point to concerns around off-campus environment, housing/safety, and reduced mental-health availability.

## Financial Stability and Food Security



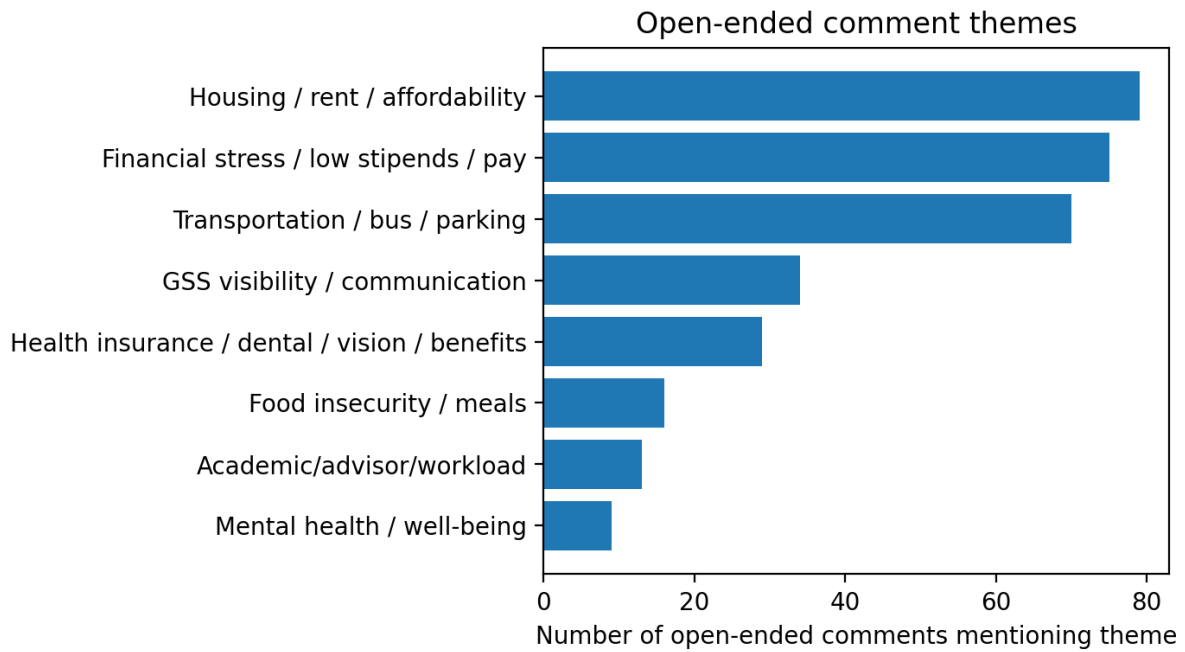
Measure	Agree/Strongly agree	Disagree/Strongly disagree
Access to three nutritious meals all month	74.6%	13.2%
Unexpected expenses would cause serious hardship	66.8%	19.3%
Worry about finances regularly	64.2%	15.0%
Access to emergency financial support	57.0%	28.5%
Health insurance is affordable	29.7%	43.8%

### Food-insecurity resource awareness:

Resource	Count	% among respondents answering
Rally Cat's Cupboard	132	73.7%
Supplemental nutrition assistance programs (SNAP/3SquaresVT)	56	31.3%
Local community food shelves	55	30.7%
Campus meal swipe donation	41	22.9%
Other	14	7.8%
UVM emergency financial assistance loans	14	7.8%

Interpretation: food access is positive for most respondents, but 13.3% disagree/strongly disagree that they can afford three nutritious meals throughout the month. Financial fragility is much broader than food access alone: emergency expenses and recurring financial worry are widespread. Health insurance affordability is one of the clearest negative indicators.

## Open-Ended Comment Themes



Theme	Mentions	Share of coded comments
Housing / rent / affordability	79	22.6%
Financial stress / low stipends / pay	75	21.4%
Transportation / bus / parking	70	20.0%
GSS visibility / communication	34	9.7%
Health insurance / dental / vision / benefits	29	8.3%
Food insecurity / meals	16	4.6%
Academic/advisor/workload	13	3.7%
Mental health / well-being	9	2.6%
Safety / campus environment	7	2.0%
International student issues	5	1.4%

The open-ended comments reinforce the quantitative findings. The dominant qualitative themes are housing/rent affordability, financial stress/low stipend or pay, transportation/parking/bus access, and health insurance/benefits. Comments also show appreciation for free-food/community events and ask for clearer GSS communication and broader recognition of non-traditional, commuter, remote, staff, and working graduate students.

## Main Problems Identified

- 1. Financial pressure is the central issue.** The strongest indicators involve hardship from unexpected expenses, regular financial worry, health-insurance affordability, housing costs, and limited emergency financial support.
- 2. Housing is not only a satisfaction issue; it is an access issue.** Current housing satisfaction is moderate, but the process of securing housing is burdened by cost, lease inflexibility, distance, deposits, and roommate challenges.
- 3. Support resources are fragmented or insufficiently visible.** Many students do not know about departmental or Graduate College funding, and a sizable group does not know how to contact GSS leadership or representatives.
- 4. Transportation gaps matter for access and safety.** Students want more direct, reliable, accessible transportation, especially for downtown, South Burlington, medical campus, parking/garage routes, and late/on-campus schedules.

**5. Mental health support is constrained by access and time.** Access is not only about whether services exist; it is also about appointment availability, schedules, and whether students have time to use support.

**6. GSS is valued, but its role can be clearer.** Students appreciate events and grants, but some comments ask GSS to clarify what it does, improve newsletter consistency, and represent broader types of graduate students.

## Recommendations

### Immediate GSS Actions

- Publish a one-page 'Graduate Student Support Map' with contacts for GSS reps, grievance channels, funding, food support, emergency aid, and mental-health access.
- Make the newsletter more action-oriented: deadlines, grants, food/support resources, transportation updates, and 'who to contact' blocks.
- Create targeted resource campaigns around conference funding, professional-development funding, Graduate College conference grants, and emergency support.
- Continue food/community events, because students explicitly value them, but connect them to resource navigation and advocacy updates.

### Advocacy Priorities for University Leadership

- Stipend/pay and cost-of-living alignment should be framed as the top structural issue.
- Advocate for affordable graduate housing options that students perceive as genuinely affordable.
- Raise health-insurance affordability, dental/vision coverage, and dependent coverage as graduate-student benefit priorities.
- Push for clearer advisor/department expectations, especially milestone guidance, workload norms, and professional-development support.

### Transportation and Safety

- Explore a dedicated or improved campus-downtown/South Burlington route, better medical-campus/garage connection, and late-day mobility support.
- Improve bus-stop accessibility and seating where possible.
- Increase CatSafe awareness through orientation, newsletter, and event QR codes.

### Survey Improvements for Next Year

- Use labeled export or preserve value-label mapping to reduce analysis ambiguity.
- Separate single-select and multi-select questions clearly; the food-resource awareness item should be confirmed as multi-select.
- Add a stipend/pay bracket question and a rent-burden question if advocacy around affordability is a goal.
- Add optional subgroup questions for commuter status, distance from campus, and remote/hybrid program type.

## Appendix: Selected Quantitative Tables

### College distribution

Response	Count	%
College of Education and Social Services	40	20.8%
College of Engineering and Mathematical Sciences	40	20.8%

Response	Count	%
Larner College of Medicine (not MD degree)	28	14.6%
College of Agriculture and Life Sciences	26	13.5%
College of Nursing and Health Sciences	19	9.9%
Rubenstein School of Environment and Natural Resources	17	8.9%
College Arts and Sciences	14	7.3%
Grossman School of Business	5	2.6%
Cross College Interdisciplinary	3	1.6%

## Housing challenges

Response	Count	%
Cost	118	88.1%
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## GSS news channels

Response	Count	%
Newsletter	183	95.3%
Instagram	21	10.9%
Website	15	7.8%

## Post-graduation goals

Response	Count	%
Industry	102	54.0%
Academia	102	54.0%
Non profit	71	37.6%
Government	51	27.0%
Other	18	9.5%

## Food support resources

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