



# HGSU-UAW: What We're Striking For

## 1. A Living Wage in a High-Cost City

Graduate student workers at Harvard earn roughly ~\$50,000 while teaching classes and researching in labs. Given the skyrocketing cost of living in Boston-Cambridge, most graduate workers are rent-burdened and struggle to make ends meet.

Our proposal: **raise base pay from \$50,000 → \$55,000 and hourly wages from \$21 → \$25/hour.** This brings us closer to peer institutions like our neighbors down the street at MIT (who earn [up to \\$60,293](#)) or at Stanford (up to [\\$58,296](#)). *\*Adjusted relative to Boston-Cambridge-Newton via the [MIT Living Wage Calculator](#), based on 1 adult, no dependents.*

Institution	Annual Wages	Boston-Relative Wages*
<a href="#">MIT</a>	\$51,226–\$60,293	\$51,226–\$60,293
<a href="#">Stanford</a>	\$56,348–\$58,296	\$48,121–\$49,785
<a href="#">Princeton</a>	\$51,516–\$54,216	\$65,837–\$69,288
<a href="#">Yale</a>	\$50,777–\$53,372	\$65,096–\$68,422
Harvard RAs	<b>\$50,000</b>	<b>\$50,000</b>
Harvard TFs	<b>\$26,300</b>	<b>\$26,300</b>

## 2. Inflation-Protected Raises

[Harvard has offered a 10% raise over 4 years](#) (~2.5% annually), below the national rate of inflation ([~3.3%](#)), and significantly lower than the Boston-Cambridge [living wage](#).

Our proposal: **inflation-tied raises over a three-year contract—5% OR the rate of inflation** whichever is higher. Without this, any raise we win will be eroded by rising living costs. Peer unions ([Yale](#), [Dartmouth](#)) have already won these cost-of-living protections. Why is Harvard lagging behind?

## 3. Pay Equity Between TFs and RAs

Teaching Fellows (TFs) and Research Assistants (RAs) are both contracted for 20 hours/week, but salaried TFs earn ~\$14,500 less per year. “Top-up” and summer stipends help TFs meet this gap, but after their 4th year, many TFs drop down to \$26,300/year, low enough to qualify for [SNAP benefits](#). Guaranteed funding in many programs lasts 5 years, but most [PhDs take longer than 5 years to graduate](#). This forces workers to take on excessive teaching loads, seek outside income, and delay research progress.

Our proposal: **raise TF pay to ~\$45,000/year to close this inequity.** Harvard has called this an unreasonable “74% increase,” but that reflects how absurdly low TF wages currently are, *not* an unreasonable demand.

**Our other economic demands include:** [expanded benefits for healthcare, childcare, and emergency support](#); fully covered dental premiums; a transition fund for workers between labs; and paid parental and family leave (up to 24 weeks). These are basic supports that many peer institutions already provide.

### Can Harvard Afford It? YES!

[Harvard's endowment grew 11.9% in 2025](#) to a whopping **\$56.7 BILLION**. While much of these funds are restricted, ~\$10.2B is flexible. Even with a future endowment tax, costs remain far below the \$3.7B annual return. This is a question of priorities and whether Harvard chooses workers over long-term profits.

**Want to learn more about our proposals? Visit [hgsu.org](#) for more info!**

**Want to support our strike? Sign our [petition](#), donate to the [hardship fund](#), or join us on the picket lines!**

