# 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* |
|---|---|---|
| MIT | $51,226–$60,293 | $51,226–$60,293 |
| Stanford | $56,348–$58,296 | $48,121–$49,785 |
| Princeton | $51,516–$54,216 | $65,837–$69,288 |
| Yale | $50,777–$53,372 | $65,096–$68,422 |
| **Harvard RAs** | **$50,000** | **$50,000** |
| **Harvard TFs** | **$26,300** | **$26,300** |

## 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!**