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GSP Leads Low-Income Student Recruiting

- [Daniel Hind](#)

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University administrators are looking to bridge the economic gap on campus with the expansion of the Georgetown Scholarship Program and an increased focus on attracting students from various socioeconomic backgrounds.

Dean of Undergraduate Admissions Charles Deacon attributed the growth of GSP to growing alumni and parent donations.

According to Deacon, GSP began with the Class of 2009, when alumni and parents gave \$750,000 to support 50 freshmen. In its third year, with the Class of 2011, GSP raised about \$2.6 million and sponsored 70 students while continuing to fund the 125 current GSP scholarship students from previous years. Deacon said the program hopes to sponsor 75 students in the Class of 2012 and believes that donations could reach up to \$4 million to help fund financial aid for this year's record-setting number of applicants.

GSP scholarships reduce the loan component of a student's financial aid package, making the university more attractive to students who otherwise might not have been able to afford to attend.

"GSP does two things," Deacon said. "It takes down the loan and it tries to level the playing field based on socioeconomics."

He said GSP allows Georgetown to remain competitive with peer institutions amidst rising tuition costs and makes recruiting lower-income students a realistic goal for the university.

Assistant Director of Undergraduate Admissions Melissa Foy (COL '03)* said the program is crucial in ensuring an economically diverse student body.

"[Before GSP] We were losing great students because they weren't getting the financial aid packages that were competitive enough," Foy said.

Jose Gimenez (COL '11), a GSP scholarship recipient, said GSP allowed him to come to Georgetown.

“If it weren’t for the GSP program, my family would not have been able to afford Georgetown and I would not be here right now,” he said.

Foy said GSP, and the admissions office in general, aims to target first-generation college students.

“We like to think of it as breaking the cycle,” she said.

Sixty-four percent of GSP freshmen are in the first generation of their families to attend college, Foy said.

Georgetown also employs other methods of recruiting low-income students. They include visiting high schools and hosting information sessions in poorer areas around the country and teaming up with the Cristo Rey network of high schools to find top applicants from lower socioeconomic classes. Cristo Rey is a chain of 19 high schools across the US that works to give students, who may have not had the chance otherwise, a college preparatory curriculum and the opportunity for higher education. Five Cristo Rey graduates currently attend Georgetown.

“We hold [informational meetings] at place[s] that would attract students who are not the same type we’d see on campus,” Foy said. “You need more of these students [to come to Georgetown] to get more of these students [to apply].”

Foy said alumni in Chicago have been particularly active in recruiting low-income students.

However, Deacon said Georgetown has not been able to do as much recruiting of low-income students as other universities because of the volume of applications it has received.

“We [the Georgetown admissions committee] simply don’t have the time to recruit like that at this point — we’re a bit overwhelmed with the number of this year’s applications,” he said.

Foy said she thinks Georgetown is a “trailblazer” with GSP and that GSP is the only program of its type that she knows of among top schools.

“It makes me very proud to work in this office where [leveling the playing field] is the dean’s goal,” Foy said.

— Hoya Staff Writer Richie Frohlichstein contributed to this report.

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