

Resolution in Support of Graduate Assistant Unionization

Whereas, graduate assistants provide critical work to the University of Vermont through excellent teaching of thousands of undergraduate students and innovative research that helps to win more than \$191 million per year in grants and contracts [1].

Whereas, the ability of the University of Vermont to achieve R1 status depends on UVM's ability to recruit and retain the best and brightest graduate assistants, as well as provide competitive and stable funding and benefits.

Whereas, the minimum graduate assistant (PhD) stipend at the University of Vermont does not constitute a living wage [2] in Burlington; and the University of Vermont ranks in the bottom third among PhD granting institutions when cost of living is taken into account [3].

Whereas, the cost of the comprehensive fee charged to graduate assistants ranks among the highest when compared to University of Vermont's peer and peer-aspirant institutions [3].

Whereas, 63% of all graduate students receive no stipend at all [3].

Whereas, the results of a survey conducted by the UVM Office of Student and Community Relations in 2017 found that roughly 20% of surveyed UVM graduate students are experiencing food insecurity [4].

Whereas, available data on the impacts of graduate unions support that unionization does not negatively impact on the University's bottom line and increased satisfaction in the relationships between advisors and their students [5].

Whereas, existing data also suggests that graduate unionization results in improvements in health care coverage for all graduate assistants, increased funding for childcare and parental leave, lower fees, and higher stipends that include yearly salary increases tied to costs of living [5].

Whereas, unionized graduate assistants report higher levels of personal and professional support, are better compensated, and report similar perceptions of academic freedom compared to non-unionized graduate assistants [5].

Whereas, unionization can also bring the added value of legally established, contractually backed mechanisms of transparency and accountability—in terms of a contract—and via direct mechanisms for mediation in case of work-related issues such as designated hours or sexual harassment [5].

Therefore, be it RESOLVED, that the Graduate Student Senate supports Graduate Assistants (including Teaching Assistants, Research Assistants and Graduate Advisors) in their right to explore the formation of a union to represent them and their interests at the University of Vermont.

[1] <https://www.uvm.edu/news/story/uvm-research-sets-new-191m-record#:~:text=In%20the%20pandemic%2C%20University%20of,Vermont's%20economy%20during%20COVID%2D19.&text=It%20eclipses%20the%20previous%20record,%241.3%20billion%20annual%20economic%20impact.>

[2] <https://livingwage.mit.edu/>

[3] Analysis of Graduate Student Stipends and Fees: Future Directions in Funding Equity University of Vermont Graduate Student Senate 2020-2021 Stipend & Benefits Committee

[4] Food Insecurity at UVM, 2017

[5] <https://www.epi.org/publication/graduate-student-employee-unions/>