



Graduate and Professional Student Senate
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**Graduate and Professional Student Senate
 GPSS Resolution 2021-22U
 Resolution to Make Student Services More Readily Available for Graduate Students
 During the Semester and Summer**

First Reading by GPSS:	date
Second Reading by GPSS:	date
First Reading by Commission	date
Staff Senate Review:	date
Faculty Senate Review:	date
Undergraduate Student Senate Review:	date
Approved by Commission	date
First Reading by University Council:	date
Approved by University Council:	date
Approval by University President:	date
Approved by Board of Visitors:	date
Effective:	upon approval

WHEREAS, graduate and undergraduate students rely heavily on services provided by Virginia Tech (Schiffert, Cook Counseling, etc.) since many students have limited access to transportation or affordable care options outside of the ones their fees go to; and

WHEREAS, resources that Virginia Tech provides are especially valuable for graduate students because graduate students barely make ends meet during the semester, leaving graduate students with limited disposable income at the end of the month and often not enough to cover outside expenses such as health care, counseling, etc (Appendix 1); and

WHEREAS, if graduate students are to have their stipend increase from 9 to 12 months, as proposed in GPSS 2021-22B, graduate students will still have limited financial resources that may not cover outside expenses such as health care or mental health services; and

WHEREAS, graduate students, unlike undergraduate students, are generally required to work for the university or conduct research during the summer and as a result are required to be on/near Blacksburg or their satellite campuses; and

WHEREAS, the satellite campuses in particular already have limited access to student services during the semester and often have limited transportation and affordable services nearby, which makes this problem especially dire for those graduate students; and

WHEREAS, graduate students who do not register for classes during the summer or winter semester often have to pay a fee to be able to use services (such as Schiffert and Cook Counseling, see Appendix 2) which can add an additional financial burden to students whose stipend is not covered during the summer months; and

WHEREAS, currently graduate students lack meaningful avenues to voice concerns about fees, limited to the Board of Visitors representative who is often not given enough time during meetings to adequately convey complicated financial recommendations when it comes to fees such as those documented in the following statement; and

WHEREAS, in the spirit of community and *ut prosim*, the senate argues that some fees, such as the health services fee, should be paid even when students and graduate students don't personally utilize the service and even potentially increased to improve the quality of care available through these services. The senate also argues that other fees, such as the athletic fee, should be lowered to decrease the financial burden on graduate students. Currently there is no mechanism for advocating for fee changes along these lines or advocating for institutions through this pathway outside of the brief time the BoV representative receives; and

WHEREAS, graduate students working/studying at satellite campuses have fewer resources than those on main campus (Blacksburg) and are still barely making ends meet at the end of the semester; and

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that a task force will be created, potentially as part of the task force charged by GPSS resolution 2021-2022B, that will consist of graduate students, satellite campuses, and representatives from different resources (Cook Counseling, Schiffert, Libraries, Athletics, etc.) to determine the needs of graduate students during the summer and winter months as well as during the normal academic year; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that fees for summer and winter resources should appropriately reflect how much graduate students are being paid and not create unnecessary financial burden as determined by the task force. The spirit of this request, alongside resolution GPSS 2021-2022V, should be taken as trying to increase graduate student voice when it comes to advocating for fee changes through this policy; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that part of the charge of this task force is to give special attention to satellite campuses in order to ensure they have access to essential student services during the semester *and* during the summer as they report not having sufficient access at any time. The task force should complete its charge in a timely manner taking no more than two years to make recommendations to the university council and the board of visitors.

Appendix 1: Cost of Living Survey and Graduate Education Task Force Report

The cost of living survey can be found here:

<https://gsa.vt.edu/advocacy/2020-2021-advocacy/2021-cost-of-living-survey-results.html>

With the average take home pay and recommendations within the executive summary.

The Graduate Education Task Force Report can be found here:

<https://graduateschool.vt.edu/numbers/task-force-reports/2020-grad-ed-task-force-rept.html>

This Report recommends raising wages to be more competitive with peer institutions as well as points to our low grant application rates in comparison to peer institutions. When this was presented to the Board of Visitors, several members of the board commented on our low grant application rate and urged the graduate school to pursue strategies for increasing it.

Appendix 2: Student Fees for Virginia Tech 2021-2022 Academic Year

A list of student fees for the fall, spring, summer and winter semester for graduate and undergraduate students.

https://www.bursar.vt.edu/content/dam/bursar_vt_edu/tuition/2020-2021tuitionfees.pdf