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SB29-21/22: Resolution Demanding Graduate Student TAs and RAs be Paid a Living Wage

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1 **The Associated Students of the University of Montana**
2 **Resolution Demanding Graduate Student TAs and RAs be Paid a Living Wage**
3 **October 14, 2021**

4 **SB29-21/22**

5 **Authored by: Canyon S. Lock, ASUM Vice President; Mary Melissa Glueckert, ASUM**
6 **Senator;**

7 **Sponsored by: Mariah McIntosh, Graduate Student; Chloe Boucher, GPSA Executive;**
8 **Marie Watson, GPSA Executive;**

9
10 Whereas, The primary purpose of the Associated Students of the University of Montana
11 (“ASUM”) is to advocate for the general welfare of the students;

12
13 Whereas, There are many graduate students at the University of Montana (“UM”) who provide
14 labor to the institution as Teaching Assistants (“TAs”) and Research Assistants (“RAs”);

15
16 Whereas, The research, scholarship, and publications produced by graduate students contribute
17 to the standing of UM;

18
19 Whereas, Not all TAs and RAs receive tuition waivers through UM;

20
21 Whereas, The average yearly salary for Master’s students at UM is \$8,743¹;

22
23 Whereas, The average yearly salary for Doctoral students at UM is \$16,103²;

24
25 Whereas, The pay for TAs and RAs at UM has not increased since 1995³;

26
27 Whereas, Unlike many institutions, UM does not cover the expenses of fees or healthcare for
28 TAs⁴;

29
30 Whereas, Fees for graduate students cost around \$2,350 per year⁵;

31
32 Whereas, Graduate student TAs and RAs are still responsible for paying out of pocket for the
33 student fees even when their tuition is waived, which increases their cost of living each semester,
34 resulting in some of them having to apply for student loans in order to attend;

35
36 Whereas, The cost of living in Missoula is an average of \$1,455 per month⁶;

37
38 Whereas, Graduate students at UM are not compensated in an amount that would reasonably
39 allow them to reside in the city of Missoula;

40

¹ Appendix 1

² Appendix 1

³ Appendix 2

⁴ Appendix 3

⁵ Appendix 1

⁶ Cost of Living in Missoula, MT. Cost of Living. (n.d). Retrieved October 15, 2021, from <https://costof.live/cost-of-living/in/missoula-mt>

41 Whereas, Poor pay for TAs and RAs affects the educational experience of undergraduate
42 students;
43
44 Whereas, According to a survey conducted by the UM Graduate Council in 2020, 34.5% of
45 respondent graduate students said that their financial situation is very insecure, and 53.2% said
46 that their financial situation is somewhat insecure⁷;
47
48 Whereas, According to a survey conducted by the UM Graduate Council in 2020, 92.1% of
49 respondents reported that their financial situations negatively affect their mental health⁸;
50
51 Whereas, According to a survey conducted by the UM Graduate Council in 2020, 61.0% of
52 respondents reported that their financial situations negatively affect their physical health⁹;
53
54 Whereas, According to a survey conducted by the UM Graduate Council in 2020, 57.6% of
55 respondents reported that their financial situations affect their living conditions¹⁰;
56
57 Whereas, According to a survey conducted by the UM Graduate Council in 2020, 45.2% of
58 respondents reported that their financial situations affects their food security¹¹;
59
60 Whereas, In April of 2020, the Faculty Senate passed a Resolution to Increase Base-funding
61 Stipends for Graduate Teaching and Research Assistantships¹²;
62
63 Whereas, The 2020-21 ASUM Senate body passed SB40-20/21 Resolution to Adjust Graduate
64 Teaching and Research Assistantship Pay to Market Rate¹³;
65
66 Whereas, UM graduate students are paid the lowest base salary in the United States, making
67 under \$3 an hour after paying required fees and healthcare costs¹⁴;
68
69 Whereas, Low wages for TAs and RAs hinder the recruitment and retention of graduate students;
70
71 Therefore, Let It Be Resolved, That ASUM requests UM pay the yearly fees of TAs and RAs;
72
73 Therefore, Let It Be Further Resolved, That ASUM requests that, in addition to payment of fees,
74 UM budgets for TAs and RAs to be paid at minimum a wage considered livable in Missoula;
75
76 Therefore, Let It Be Further Resolved, That ASUM endorses all efforts made by representatives
77 of the UM Graduate Council and the UM Graduate and Professional Student Association to
78 increase the wages of TAs and RAs;

⁷ Appendix 1

⁸ Appendix 1

⁹ Appendix 1

¹⁰ Appendix 1

¹¹ Appendix 1

¹² Appendix 2

¹³ Associated Students of the University of Montana S. Bill 40, 2020-2021 S. (Oct 7, 2020), https://scholarworks.umt.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1846&context=asum_resolutions


¹⁴ Appendix 3

79
80 Therefore, Let It Be Further Resolved, That ASUM requests that the wages of graduate students
81 be reviewed each fiscal year and scaled in accordance with the cost of living in Missoula;
82

83 Therefore, Let It Be Further Resolved, That this Resolution be sent to: Seth Bodnar, UM
84 President; Paul Lasiter, UM Vice President of Operations and Finance; Reed Humphrey, UM
85 Acting Provost; Scott Whittenberg, UM Vice Provost of Research and Creative Scholarship;
86 Ashby Kinch, Associate Dean of the Graduate School; Kelly Webster, UM Chief of Staff;
87 Clayton Christian, Commissioner of Higher Education.
88


89
90 Passed by Committee: October 17, 2021

91
92 Passed by ASUM Senate: October 20, 2021

93
94 
95 _____
96 Elizabeth Bowles,
97 Chair of the Relations and Affairs Committee

98

99 Passed 19Y-2N-0A.



Canyon S. Lock,
Chair of the Senate