

October 11, 2017

Dear Priorities Committee,

In recent years, the Graduate Student Government (GSG) Executive Board and Assembly have placed an increasing focus on the needs of graduate students with families at Princeton University. Reducing the challenges faced by graduate students with families remains a top priority for the GSG. We endorse the Graduate School's proposal to expand the Student Child Care Assistance Program (SCCAP) funding to a larger number of families, and to allow families to direct this financial support to their most pressing child-related needs. However, we want to emphasize that the SCCAP expansion proposal is only the first step towards improving the conditions of Princeton students with families.

The GSG—with significant input from Tigers with Cubs, a Princeton student group for students with families—has researched and published a white paper on proposed Family Support Initiatives, which details many of the issues these graduate students experience and proposes detailed policy solutions. These include: expanding current Childbirth and Adoption accommodation (CBA) policies to DCE students, introducing parental leave for secondary caregivers, increasing subsidies for dependents enrolled in the Princeton Student Health Plan, fully covering childbirth and delivery costs, and increasing the amount of financial support available to offset student housing and daycare costs.

The white paper demonstrates the economic hardships many graduate students with families experience. While the Graduate School's expansion of SCCAP policy would help those families who cannot obtain a second household income—for example, due to visa requirements or disability—this proposal only improves the conditions of a subset of graduate student parents, and does not go far enough to meet existing financial need. Additionally, the Graduate School's proposal does not include a mechanism to adjust SCCAP funding in response to future increases in the cost of childcare.

The University's daycare, UNOW, which the University just refurbished and reopened to significant publicity, is unaffordable for almost every graduate student. As the appendix to our white paper demonstrates, the annual tuition of approximately \$25,000 is out of reach for almost all graduate students. Even if a student received the maximum SCCAP reimbursement (\$5,000), UNOW tuition would absorb nearly 60% of a graduate student's annual stipend. While other

daycares are less expensive, the average cost of childcare in New Jersey (\$17,868) remains a significant financial burden on all graduate student parents.

SCCAP grant amounts have remained static since they were implemented in 2007, despite the fact that childcare costs have risen nearly 33% in the last decade. A decade ago, the maximum SCCAP contribution covered approximately 37% of the average cost of childcare in New Jersey. Today, the same maximum grant covers slightly less than 28% of the New Jersey average—or just 20% of the cost of one year of top-quality childcare at UNOW.

The white paper also notes that housing is unaffordable for many graduate students with children. The annual cost of rent for the cheapest on-campus housing with two bedrooms is more than 50% of a graduate student stipend. (New Jersey state law requires two bedrooms for a couple with a child over the age of two.) As described in the March 2017 [GSG housing report](#), half of graduate student families who live on campus spend over 50% of their income on housing expenses. Finally, the white paper notes the high cost of childbirth itself: a graduate student who has a child on the existing healthcare plan pays over \$2,000 out of pocket, even if there are no complications during birth.

Princeton has long been a recognized leader in family-friendly initiatives. We strongly support the Graduate School's new proposal, but we emphasize again that there is more that can and must be done to address graduate student needs. Improving existing policies would both allow current students to focus on their academic research, and also provide the Graduate School with new tools to recruit the best graduate researchers in the future. The GSG looks forward to further collaboration with the Graduate School, the Priorities Committee, and other University entities as we continue to work together to address these issues.

Sincerely,

The Graduate Student Government Executive Board and Assembly  
Approved by the Graduate Student Government Assembly