



OFFICIAL MEMORANDUM
Voted & Approved by the General Council: 3/24/2020

From: GRO General Council (GC)
Date: 25 March 2020
Subject: Statement on the COVID-19 Advocacy and Support of the TRU Petition

To the Homewood Campus,

On Thursday, March 19th, we were made aware of a petition ([found here](#)) which was drafted by Teachers & Researchers United (TRU) regarding needs from the administration in regard to the security and wellbeing of graduate students on campus in light of the COVID-19 situation.

The GRO General Council (GC) has voted to endorse the petition and to express support for the items and spirit of the issues raised therein. We believe that many of the points raised in the petition complement our own advocacy efforts and the issues we have been hearing from graduate students. It is imperative that the administration continue to construct clear, concise, and decisive action regarding the needs of its graduate students in light of COVID-19. For those seeking available guidance and information, the university currently has FAQ pages for [KSAS](#) and [WSE](#) students and for [general graduate student](#) information, which are updated regularly.

We echo many of the needs raised in the TRU petition, including the need for extension of time to degree, funding security, modifications and support in non-resident tuition, and a shift to an option pass/fail grading system for the remainder of this semester.

In addition, the GRO Executive Board has been meeting regularly with the WSE and KSAS administration and has been advocating on issues such as those raised above and also including:

1. Regarding graduate students who have been marked as “essential” and are still on campus:
 1. Adequate biohazard material pickup.
 2. Continuation of security on campus.
 3. Continuation of JHU shuttles and buses.
 4. Continuation of facilities coverage (cleaning of bathrooms, common spaces, and labs) during the shutdown.
 5. Continuation of access to campus buildings and details regarding further restricted access to buildings.
 6. Guidance on how to appeal if you have been designated as “essential” personnel but you do not want to come to campus.

7. Alternative transportation options (either parking on campus or Lyft/Uber payment) for students who would ordinarily be required to travel using the Maryland mass-transit system and can no longer do so.
2. Regarding all graduate students:
 1. Clear guidance and leniency on academic issues such as: grades, incompletes, withdrawals, probations, time to degree, etc.
 2. Reporting graduate classes that were still taking place after the [mandate](#) to cancel classes two weeks ago and to move all future classes online.
 3. Reporting lab/group meetings that were still taking place in person last week.
 4. Establishing reporting procedures for students who were being pressured to continue to come to campus by their PI's despite not being essential personnel.
 5. Advocating for school-wide and university-wide statements on being more understanding and lenient towards graduate students as they are adapting to this "new normal".
 6. Pushing for continued mental health and wellbeing resources and their transition to a remote environment.
 7. Support and guidance for Masters students regarding finishing their degree on both essay and non-essay tracks.
 8. Development on online social programming to help graduate students continue to feel a sense of community and connection.

Please feel free to sign and distribute the TRU petition, as desired. Information is developing rapidly at this time and we will keep you as informed as possible as the days progress.

Respectfully yours,
The GRO