



OFFICIAL MEMORANDUM

Voted & Approved by the E-Board: 04/10/2020

From: GRO Executive Board
Date: 10 April 2020
Subject: Update on COVID-19 Actions & GRO Advocacy

To the Homewood Campus,

As the COVID-19 situation has developed, we have continued to advocate on behalf of all graduate students on a variety of concerns and issues. Here, we wanted to give you a brief update about what our actions have included thus far.

Over the last two weeks the GRO has been building a broad coalition of graduate student groups, including our own organization, Teachers and Researchers United (TRU), and the Graduate Student Assembly (GSA, Medical School), in order to advocate for the concerns that COVID-19 has raised, including all of those listed in our previous correspondence to you on March 25th, 2020. Our approach has been three-fold: we have worked with this graduate student group coalition to advocate for a list of fundamental principles that Hopkins as a university should uphold in response to COVID-19 (top-down advocacy). Such principles could serve as a guiding document to the various schools to use as a template for their response moving forward. Second, we continue to meet regularly with administration from both WSE and KSAS in order to advocate from within the schools themselves about issues we have been hearing that are school-specific (lateral advocacy). Finally, we have supported the recent TRU petition, as written by your fellow graduate students, and have shepherded many questions to the administration that we have received directly in our inbox (bottom-up advocacy). We have been successful in finding resolution to some of the points we have raised with the administration, who have been understanding and receptive to our concerns, particularly regarding academic issues such as optional pass/fail, etc.

The main points we are currently pushing with the administration are related to the following fields:

1. Extending financial support for graduate students affected by COVID-19. This is a complex issue which will become more complex the longer the COVID-19 shutdown continues. We have been pushing for extensions of stipends and healthcare coverage, particularly for PhD students.
2. Ensuring no student faces departmental or institutional penalty for research delays connected to the COVID-19. This would include no retribution for missed research deadlines and leniency for students who are currently on probation.

3. Providing options to delay graduation or support PhD and masters students who are graduating, including advocating for waiving (or ideally eliminating) non-resident tuition, prioritizing hiring of current students for postgraduate research and non-research positions, and pushing for the dissemination of information regarding or internships and co-op programs to replace those that were delayed or canceled.
4. Eliminating the GRE as an entrance requirement for this upcoming year (and hopefully beyond).
5. Integrating graduate students more deeply into the decision-making process of the university, particularly for those decisions related to COVID-19. This could include feedback mechanisms for new policies or funding decisions with current graduate students before they are finalized and published.
6. Pushing for continued mental health and wellbeing resources and their transition to a remote environment. This includes the counseling center and how the associated translation to an online interface can be optimized and reach the most students possible.
7. Development of online social programming to help graduate students continue to feel a sense of community and connection.

The FAQ pages for [KSAS](#) and [WSE](#) students and for [general graduate student](#) information have been regularly updated with responses to questions like the ones that you have been forwarding to us, and we recommend browsing through them for your information. We will continue to provide updates on our efforts in the days to come.

Respectfully yours,
The GRO Executive Board