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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Organization: [The Forum on Graduate Rights](#)

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FORUM ON GRADUATE RIGHTS CLARIFIES STATEMENT OF DEMANDS

The Forum on Graduate Rights (FGR) would like to issue an update and explanation of the demands presented to the administration of the University of Missouri last week, as some of the demands have already been partially resolved and others need to be clarified.

- A guarantee that no graduate student employee be paid at a rate below the individual poverty line regardless of their appointment status, department, or college.

As many as 23% of graduate students at the University of Missouri are paid salaries below the individual poverty line (\$11,770/year). Graduate student employees at .25 FTE can earn salaries as low as \$6,000/year. We demand that all students be paid at or above the individual poverty line. To simply achieve this goal, we suggest that all graduate students be transitioned to .5 FTE appointments, which would also make them eligible for full tuition waivers and 100% insurance subsidies.

- A guarantee that all graduate student employees receive full tuition waivers, regardless of their FTE appointment.

In Fall 2016, tuition waivers for new .25 FTE graduate student employees will only cover half of their tuition costs. This loss of benefits adds another burden for already struggling student employees. Again, we believe all graduate student employees should be transitioned to .5 FTE positions with full benefits.

- Revised: A fully-subsidized student health care plan for all graduate student employees that is guaranteed for the full term of their graduate student employment.

This demand has been partially resolved. The university's announcement that the student employee health insurance subsidy will be reinstated for the 2015-2016 school year is good news, but it comes without a guarantee that the subsidy will be provided in future academic years. Chancellor Loftin's creation of a Task Force to pursue future student insurance options was met with skepticism, as the recommendations of previous Task Forces regarding a number of previous crises have often failed to provide lasting solutions.

- Immediate action on the part of the university to ease the burden on international students caused by the loss of their health insurance subsidy.

This issue has been partially resolved. Since international students must retain health insurance to maintain their visa status, FGR considered their health insurance subsidies a priority. These students, along with domestic graduate student employees, remain in a vulnerable position in regards to the 2016-2017 academic year, as no plan is in place for future years.

- More, and affordable, university-sponsored graduate student housing.

It has been more than half a century since new graduate student housing has been built by the University of Missouri. Additionally, there has not been any action on providing more on-campus graduate student housing since the demolition of University Village last year, even though many students and their family members were displaced by its closure. Furthermore, MU has demonstrated that it believes in the value of providing quality on-campus housing for some of its students, as evidenced by the ongoing renovation and expansion of residence halls on campus.

- A return of affordable, on-campus, university-sponsored childcare facilities for graduate students.

The average graduate student is over 30 years old, and many have families. In Boone County, childcare can typically cost \$7,592/year for a child over three years old, and \$9,620/year for children two years old and younger - more than the cost of a year's undergraduate tuition at Mizzou. The closure of the Student Parent Center in 2014 eliminated one of the few affordable sources of childcare for graduate students. Notably, a Task Force convened in March 2014 by Chancellor Loftin was meant to resolve the question of on-campus childcare, but has thus far produced no results.

- Revised: A waiver of supplemental fees imposed by colleges, schools and departments for all graduate student employees.

The supplementary (course) fees charged at the University of Missouri present a great financial burden on students. In the College of Engineering, for example, the Engineering Excellence fee (\$73.50/credit hour) that was created in 2014 can impose costs of up to \$1,323/year on a full-time graduate student, more than 10% of the minimum annual stipend.

These fees also do not provide the same benefits for graduate students as they do for undergraduates. Portions of these fees go to purchase equipment and materials for classrooms and labs as well as to pay for a course's graduate teaching assistant's salary. For undergraduate education, this makes sense, but many graduate credits are research hours, completed in the graduates' own labs. In addition, very few graduate courses have TAs. TAs should not be charged fees to receive their own paychecks.

Some colleges within the university already waive fees, but only for students within their own colleges. This practice discourages students from taking classes outside their home colleges, which encourages redundancy and discourages interdisciplinary education across the campus. It is our position that all tuition waivers should also include supplemental fee waivers as well.

The Forum on Graduate Rights continues to plan an all-day walkout and rally on August 26th if these demands are not adequately met. Graduate students will be invited to step out of their classrooms, laboratories, and offices, and a rally will be held at the Columns in front of Jesse Hall from 12 to 1 PM as an act of solidarity. Notices have been issued from over 40 departments, as well as the School of Journalism, the College of Arts & Science, and the College of Education, stating support for graduate students and promising no sanctions for those who participate in these actions.

Social media handles and hashtags: @MUGradRights #GradInsurance #MizzouUnited #GradsDo