



11.30.2022

To President Gordon Gee, Provost Maryanne Reed, the Board of Governors, and other members of West Virginia University leadership:

Following President Gordon Gee's invitation to meet with the leadership of the Graduate and Professional Student Senate (GPSS), we want to express how grateful we are to have your support and that we earnestly look forward to working with you. GPSS is a student organization that serves to represent the interests and welfare of graduate and professional students at West Virginia University (WVU). GPSS also serves to communicate the needs and concerns of our students to WVU administration so that we can work together to ensure student success and an overall positive experience at WVU.

In the Spring of 2022, GPSS shared an open letter to WVU administration that outlined the effects of university fees, inflation, and pay disparities on our student's socioeconomic well-being. This letter was supported by the Student Government Association and signed by 317 faculty members and students (as of February 11th). On March 7th, GPSS met with WVU administration, where we learned that the minimum graduate stipend would be increased from \$ 13,500 to \$15,000 (over a two-year period) starting in Fall 2022. There was also a discussion about increasing the transparency of student fees, and we are still waiting to see this take effect. As of now, we have only seen the increase in the minimum graduate stipend, but we are hopeful that WVU administration will take further steps to help improve our students' welfare and well-being.

In the following document, we highlight some of the major concerns and needs of our graduate and professional students. This data was collected from an anonymous online survey conducted by GPSS this semester. The survey was conducted using Google forms which required a mix-account to access and was shared publicly through emails, social media platforms, posters, and word of mouth. The survey was designed to ask, "How do student fees impact your experience as a graduate or professional student at WVU?". We also provide several potential solutions that we can work together to explore and implement. We believe that by involving all relevant stakeholders (WVU administration, our colleges and schools, research units, and our students), we can explore multiple solutions that could help improve the overall experiences of our students.

Overview of the current graduate and professional student body

As of Fall 2022, we have 5,674 graduate and professional students at WVU. From this group, 2,877 are masters, 1,291 Ph.D., and 1,406 professional students (Medical, Nursing, Law, Dentistry, etc.). Furthermore, this group of students is composed of 2,396 in-state students, 3,278 out-of-state students, and 614 international students.

These graduate and professional students work to push the boundaries of information, technology, and services, every day. They serve the Mountaineer community through research, academic contributions, teaching, inventions, scholarships, service, and mentorship. Our students are the backbone of research and bear a majority of class hours teaching and mentoring students at WVU. It is important to recognize that this group of diverse, talented, and motivated individuals are both students and employees, so, besides their academic accomplishments, they are also dedicated workers. There is no debate that our graduate and professional students are a significant reason that WVU is a Carnegie Tier 1 Research University (R1) institution. Because they are both students and employees, our graduate and professional students must deal with different sets of issues and concerns.

Summary of issues and concerns

Despite our contributions and sacrifices, many graduate and professional students are unfairly compensated (stipends and salaries) and subject to extreme workloads and poor work conditions. There is a stark disparity in the compensation of our graduate and professional students in relation to Morgantown's rising cost of living; estimated to be at \$33,262¹, it is evident that most of our students barely earn a livable income to survive (Figures 04, 05, 06, 07, and Table 01). This financial burden is exaggerated by contractual restrictions that prevent students from having supplemental income. Furthermore, even if contractual income restrictions were lifted, graduate and professional students have such high workloads that it is nearly impossible to sustain multiple sources of income.

In addition to the disparity in compensation and cost of living in Morgantown, graduate and professional students are also expected to pay student fees (university and college fees) for resources and services that we do not have the opportunity to benefit from. While student fees are necessary to fund student-oriented resources and events, there are many things that a majority of graduate and professional students are simply unable to participate in due to their workloads (Figures 09 and 10). We also asked students how these fees impact different aspects of their academic and personal lives, and these results are presented in figures 11-20.

¹<https://livingwage.mit.edu/metros/34060>

Students also expressed the frustration of being charged fees for resources and services that were not even available, such as PRT services during the summer, the discrepancy between student fees and their supposed resources and services as COVID-19 restrictions were lifted, etc. (Please see student testimonials in Appendix B).

The financial burdens due to the disparity in compensation and cost of living and paying student fees has been expressed repeatedly to GPSS on numerous occasions. Please read the testimonials shared by our graduate and professional students to understand how they truly feel and the sacrifices they must make. It is heartbreaking that our students are forced to make sacrifices on food, housing, and healthcare because of these financial burdens.

Our international graduate students and scholars face the same issues described above and are disproportionately disadvantaged from the time they arrive in the U.S. They cannot have a supplemental source of income due to visa restrictions and do not have access to the financial aid resources available to U.S. students. To worsen this financial strain, our international graduate students and scholars were informed of an annual \$500 "SEVIS" fee by International Student and Scholar Services (ISSS) this summer. Thankfully, after numerous fervent complaints, ISSS removed this fee before the start of the Fall semester. But they did not assure that it would not be reinstated. This was an exorbitant financial burden to a small group of our students. These additional financial pressures do not even consider their impacts on students from nations facing geopolitical and economic turmoil. It is quite astonishing that the university resorted to supplementing the operating costs of an entire office by charging an additional fee to an already disadvantaged group of students. Especially seeing how many international students and scholars feel about the services that ISSS provides (see testimonials in Appendix B). If the SEVIS fee is reinstated, it is very likely that WVU will lose its reputation as a supportive and welcoming institution for international students and scholars from around the world.

The issue of the lack of on-campus parking spaces is an additional financial burden, especially for students with research and or teaching obligations. With the limited number of parking spaces, parking lottery system, and exorbitant parking ticket fees, graduate and professional students must sacrifice their living expenses to pay for parking to fulfill their research and teaching responsibilities.

Last but not least, the inability to include family members in our student health insurance plan. Graduate and professional students that support families find themselves in very unfavorable situations when they cannot include their families in the University provided health insurance plan. Students have expressed that they either must exclude themselves from their family insurance or pay higher costs through other insurance providers, which at times means that they must risk losing coverage of important healthcare needs.

In summation, based on the 408 responses (as of 11/17/2022) to our survey and numerous communications with GPSS, our students strongly feel that we are not fairly compensated for our

work and to meet the rising cost of living in Morgantown. The requirement to pay student fees further increases our financial burdens, and negatively impacts our welfare and well-being. All the issues described above, and more, hinder graduate and professional students from receiving an overall positive experience at WVU.

Our proposed solutions:

While we understand that the operation of an institution as large as WVU requires a lot of resources and finances, it is unjust that such a small group of hardworking individuals (who are both students and employees) is expected to bear such financial burdens while striving to accomplish their academic and career goals. Especially since our graduate and professional students contribute so much to WVU. We wish to ensure the smooth operation of our university, and therefore believe that the following solutions will help improve productivity, quality of work, and the overall experiences of our graduate and professional students.

Stipends and salaries

1. Follow Federal and State government initiatives to combat the impact of inflation by conducting indexation of stipends, wages, and salaries of graduate workers (GRAs, GTAs, and GAs) based on the consumer price index of each year. We recommend that stipends, wages, and salaries should be indexed at the end of 2022 based on consumer price index growth since 2019 (considering the financial impacts of COVID-19).
2. Actively work to decrease salary disparities between graduate workers and junior faculty (Assistant professors). The salary of a graduate worker needs to be at least ½ of the average salary of a full-time assistant professor in their respective departments.
3. Remove contract restrictions on students earning supplemental income. Communicate and enforce workload expectations campus wide, based on student's compensation (e.g. 20 hour work week).

Student fees (University and College fees)

The long-term goal should be to reduce student fees so that they are not a significant financial burden to our graduate and professional students. Until such time, we propose the following as cumulative and or individual solutions:

1. Provide a thorough outline of student fees, including an itemized list of what the fees are used for, and make them publicly available on the University website. A link to this should also be included in all graduate and professional program offer letters, as well as GRA, GTA, and GA contracts.
2. Re-evaluate student fees, especially at the University level, to determine if any current fees could be eliminated for graduate and professional students. Individual colleges and schools

should be required to do the same. Allow online students to pay student fees and utilize their services and resources.

3. Absorb the cost of student fees into tuition waivers so that they are not paid for by students.
4. Require student fees to be included in budget proposals when applying for funding sources (colleges, departments, research centers, grants) so they are absorbed by the funding source and not the students.

Student Health Insurance

1. Renegotiate student health insurance contracts to allow for graduate and professional students with dependents to include their family members.

Parking

1. Create free short-term parking spots across campus in proximity to department buildings. Graduate and professional students conducting research on campus or in need of frequent visits to campus can receive a short-term parking pass from their respective departments to display on their vehicles. Departments should be responsible to maintain records of parking passes (allocation and retrieval).

International Students and Scholars

1. Allocate additional appropriate funding and personnel for ISSS to operate and serve the needs of our international students and scholars.

We are happy to explore other options to help resolve the issues of our graduate and professional students. We are also happy to host a town hall with WVU administration and invite graduate and professional students to express their needs and concerns and have an open dialogue about how we can work together to help solve these issues. We respectfully request WVU administration take prompt action to address the issues in this letter and work towards improving the overall experiences of our graduate and professional students.

We thank you for your time and consideration and look forward to working together to find solutions that benefit all parties involved.

Sincerely,
Graduate and Professional Student Senate
West Virginia University

Table 01: Student responses to GPSS survey questions. Please refer to Appendix A for survey questions and complete responses.

| Question | Responses | | |
|--|-----------|----------------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| | Total | Minimum % | Maximum % |
| What is your annual net salary as a graduate or professional student? | 362 | 1.2% \$41,000-\$45,000 | 24% \$13,000-\$17,000 |
| If “other”, please provide your annual income. | 46 | 9% \$10,000-\$18,000 | 50% “No income” |
| Which of the following best describes your financial status? | 408 | 12.9% “Provider” | 82.1% “Independent” |
| If you selected “Provider”, how many individuals do you financially support? | 62 | 1 | 6 |
| What is your approximate annual cost of living? | 395 | 3.7% \$41,000-\$45,000 | 21.6% \$17,000-\$21,000 |
| If “other”, please provide your approximate annual cost of living? | 13 | 15% < \$13,000 | 61.5% > \$45,000 |
| If you need to take loans to fund your graduate education, how much have you taken out for the duration of your program? | 143 | \$500 | \$350,000 |
| How much do you pay for fees per year? | 372 | 9.1% \$3,000-\$3,500 | 22.8% \$1,500-\$2,000 |
| If “other”, please provide your total fees per year? | 37 | 18.9% No fees | 54.5% > \$4,000 |

Appendix A

Responses to the GPSS survey as of 11/21/2022:

[How do student fees impact your experience as a graduate or professional student at West Virginia University? - Google Forms](#)

Figure 01: What is your graduate or professional degree program?

408 responses

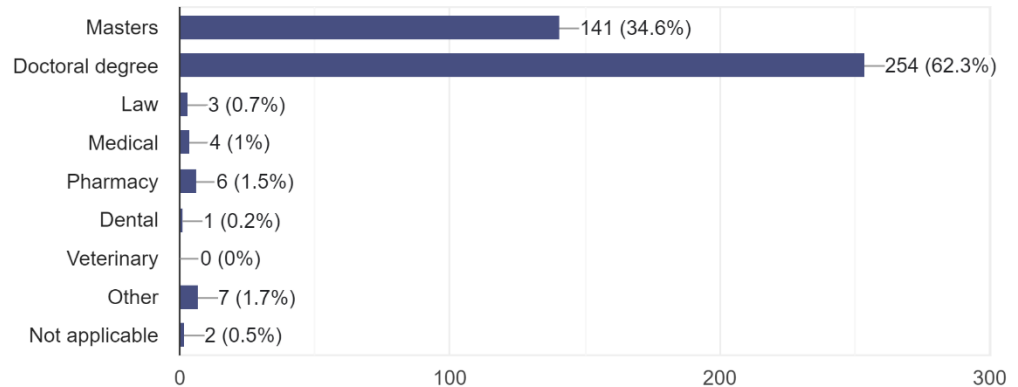


Figure 02: How do you fund your graduate education?

408 responses

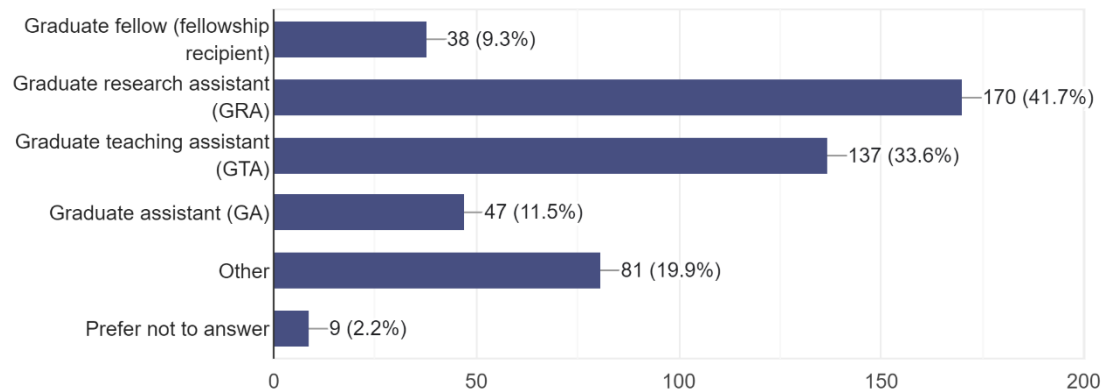


Figure 03: Which of the following best describes your financial status?

408 responses

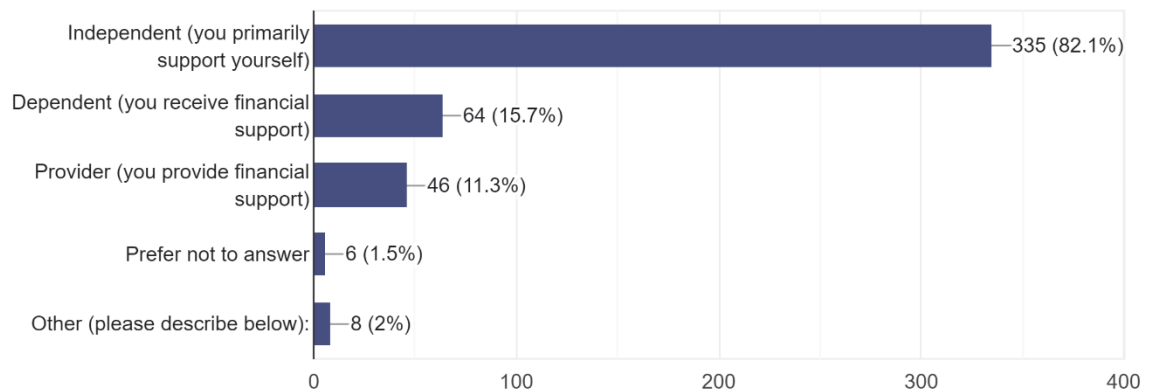
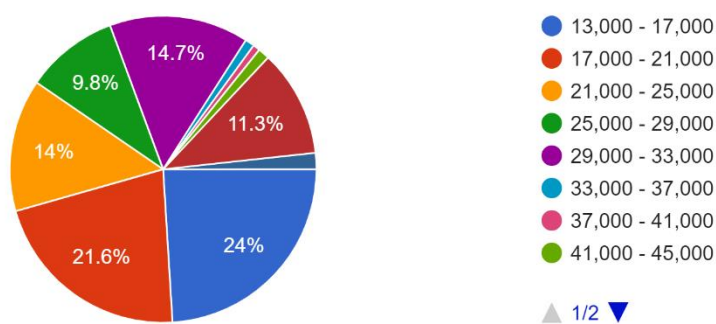


Figure 04: What is your annual net salary (before taxes) as a graduate or professional student at WVU? (Only include compensation for your duties as a graduate or professional student)
408 responses



The following responses were based on questions relating to compensation (stipends and salaries). Scale: 1 = Not compensated fairly, 7 = Very fairly compensated.

Figure 05: Do you think you are compensated fairly for your contributions to your program and the university?
408 responses

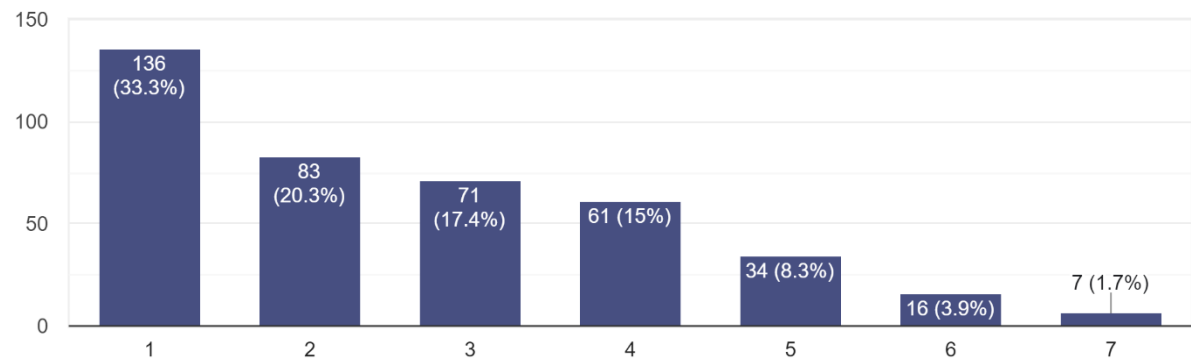
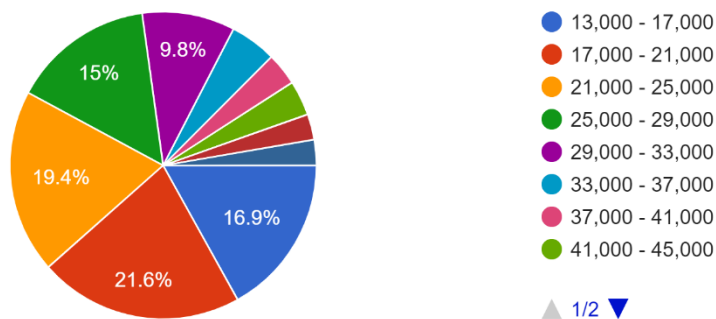


Figure 06: What is your approximate (or best estimate) annual cost of living? (If you financially support others, please include it in the figure).
408 responses



The following responses were based on questions relating to compensation (stipends and salaries). Scale: 1 = Not compensated fairly, 7 = Very fairly compensated.

Figure 07: Do you think you are compensated fairly to meet the costs of living in Morgantown?
408 responses

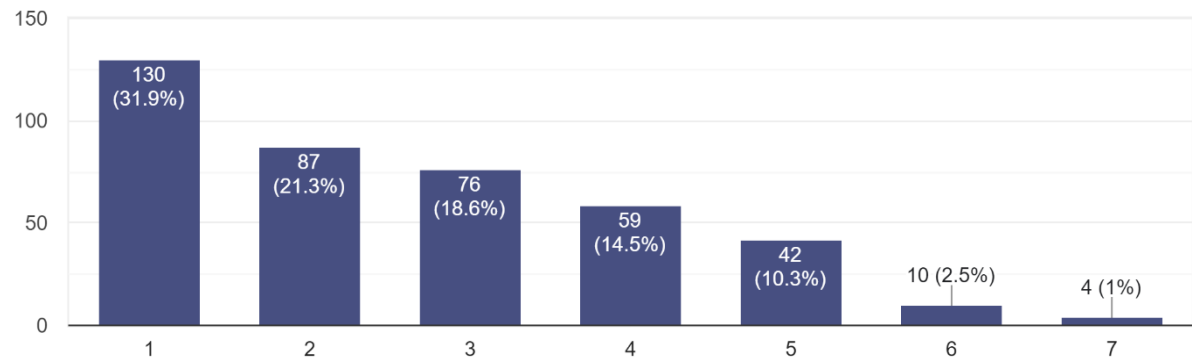


Figure 08: How much do you pay for fees per year? (Please total your fees for spring, summer, and fall).
408 responses

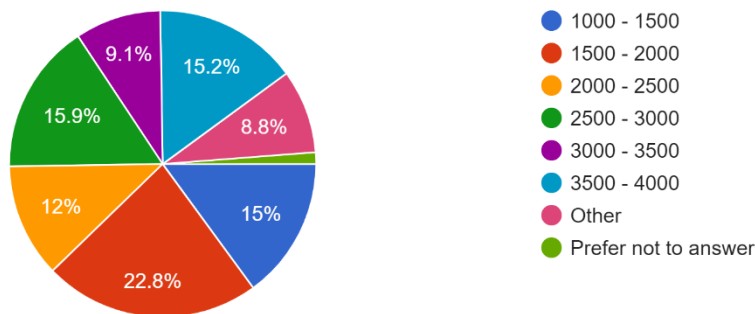
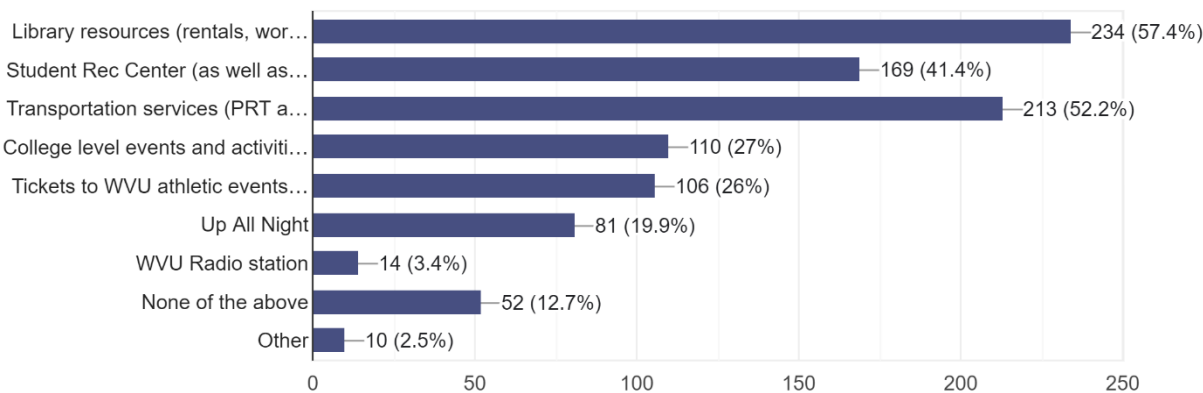
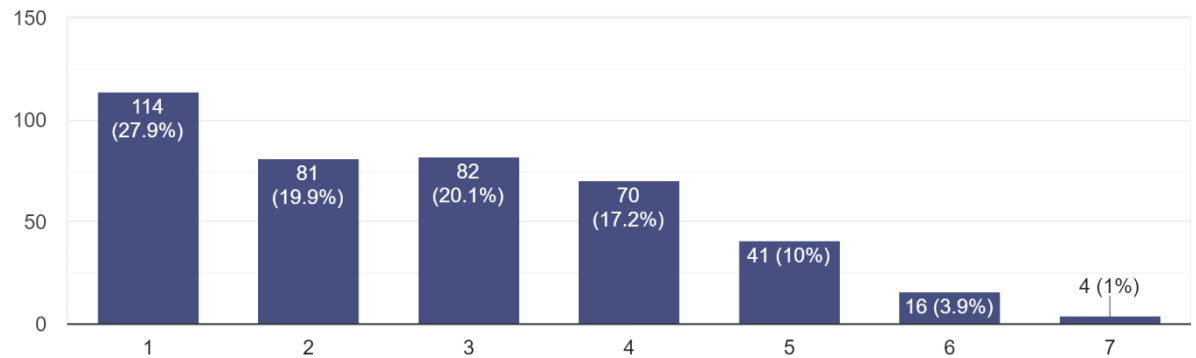


Figure 09: Which of the following resources and events (funded by fees) do you use/ benefit from?
408 responses



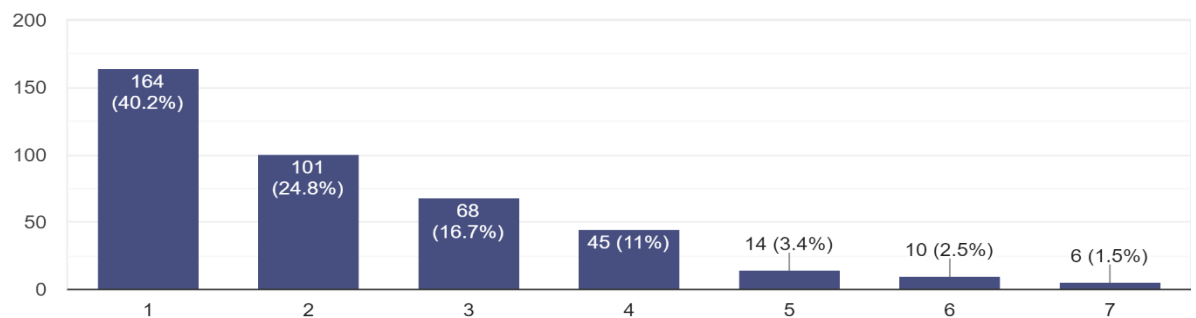
The following responses were based on questions relating to student fees. Scale: 1 = Negative, 7 = Positive.

Figure 10: How do you feel about paying fees and your overall experience at WVU? (Negative or positive)
408 responses



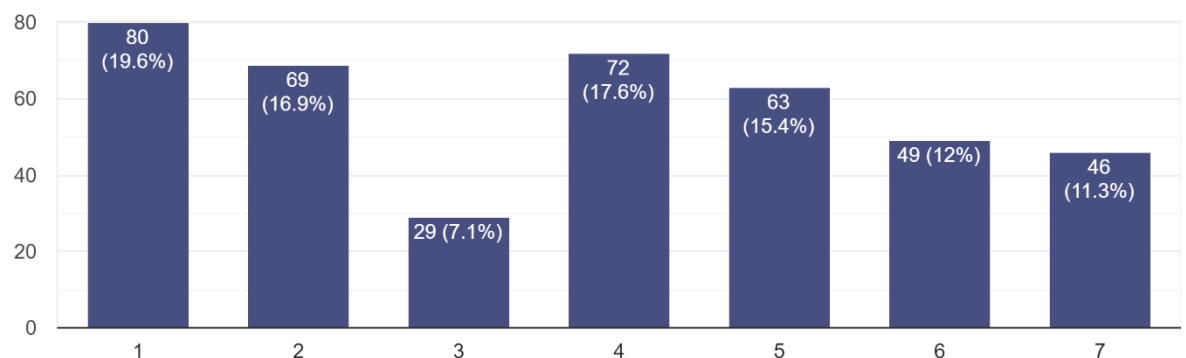
The following responses were based on questions relating to student fees. Scale: 1 = Negatively, 7 = Positively.

Figure 11: How do fees effect your mental health? (Negatively or Positively)
408 responses



The following responses were based on questions relating to student fees. Scale: 1 = Not impactful, 7 = Very impactful.

Figure 12: How much do fees impact your academic performance (class attendance, homework, exams, etc.)?
408 responses



The following responses were based on questions relating to student fees. Scale: 1 = Not impactful, 7 = Very impactful.

Figure 13: How much do fees impact your productivity (research, writing, etc.)?

408 responses

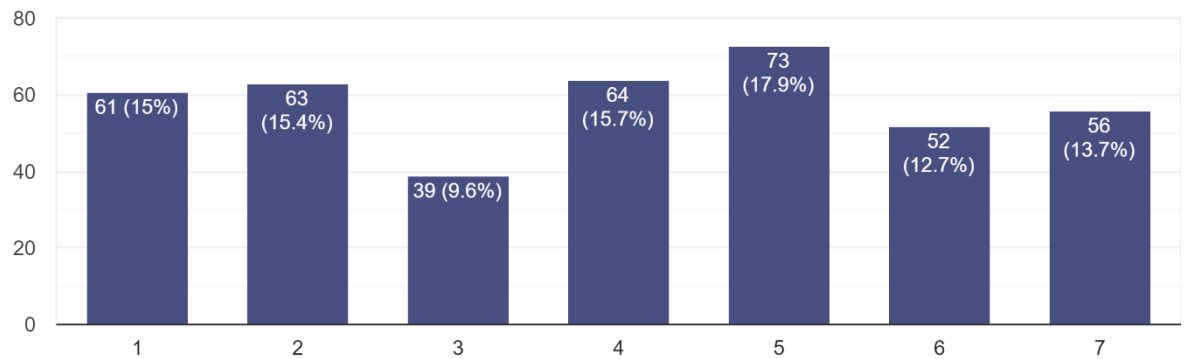


Figure 14: How much do fees impact your living conditions (choice of location, choice of conditions, etc.)?

408 responses

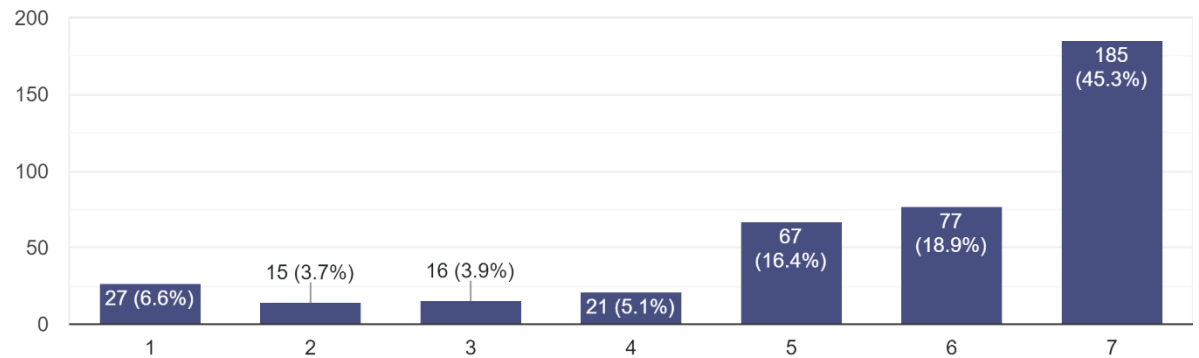
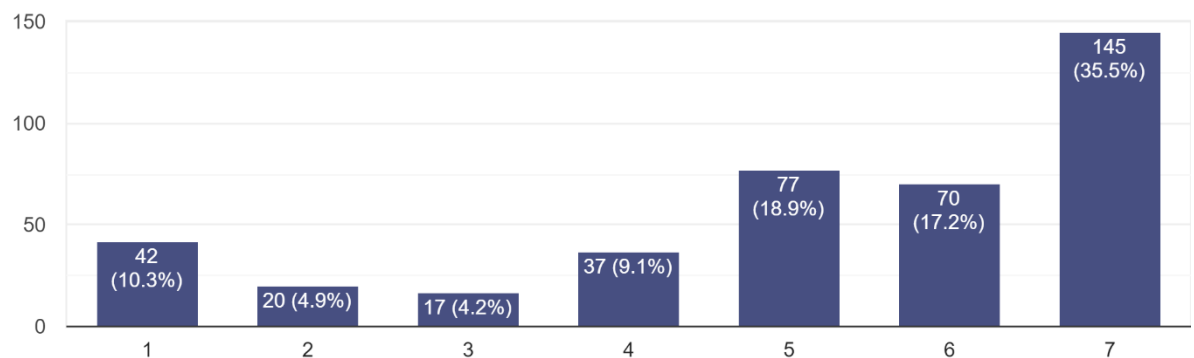


Figure 15: How much do fees impact your access/ options for food (do you have to make choices about what you eat and how often you eat because of fees)?

408 responses



The following responses were based on questions relating to student fees. Scale: 1 = Not impactful, 7 = Very impactful.

Figure 16: How much do fees impact your ability to access/ have options for medical assistance (being able to see a doctor, have a choice of which doctor, how... a doctor, choice of medication/ procedure, etc.)?
408 responses

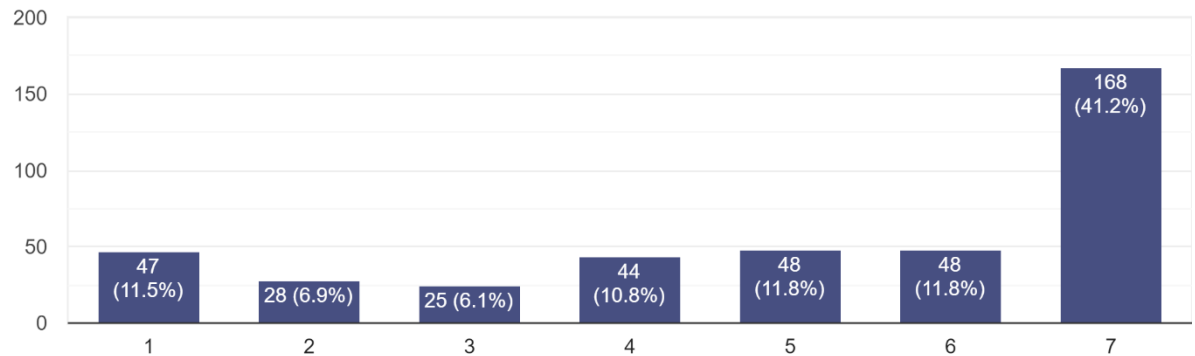


Figure 17: How much do fees impact your ability to visit/ frequency of visiting your family/ friends/ loved ones?
408 responses

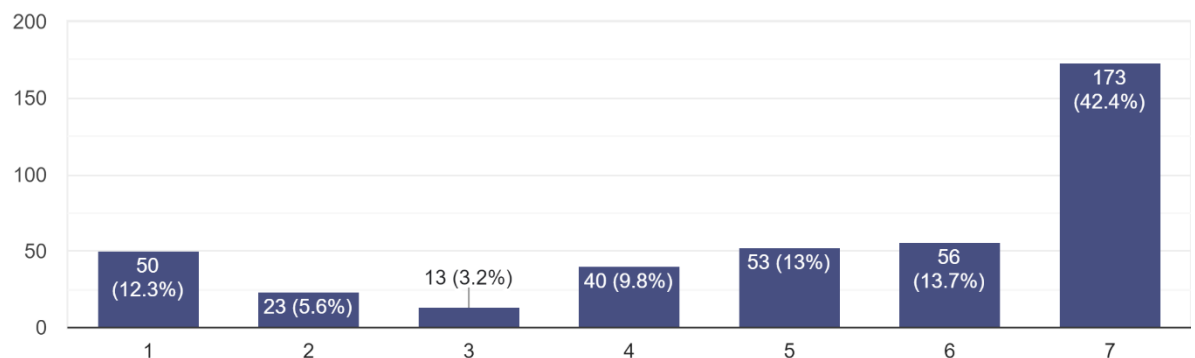
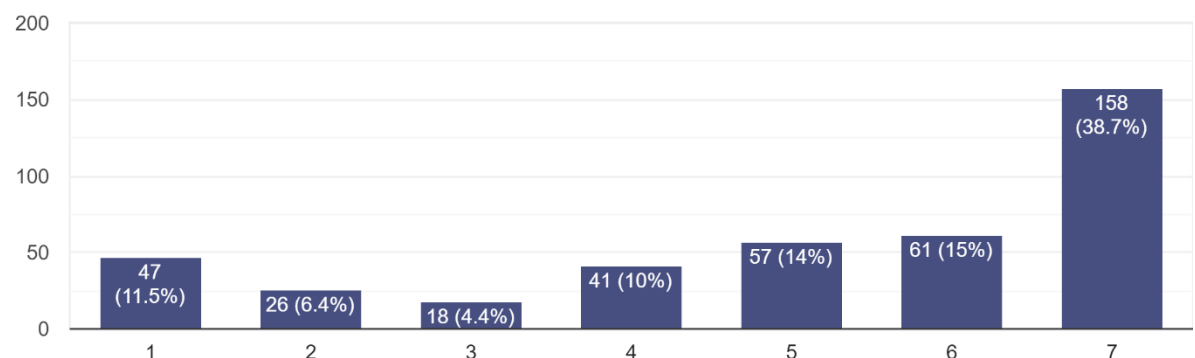


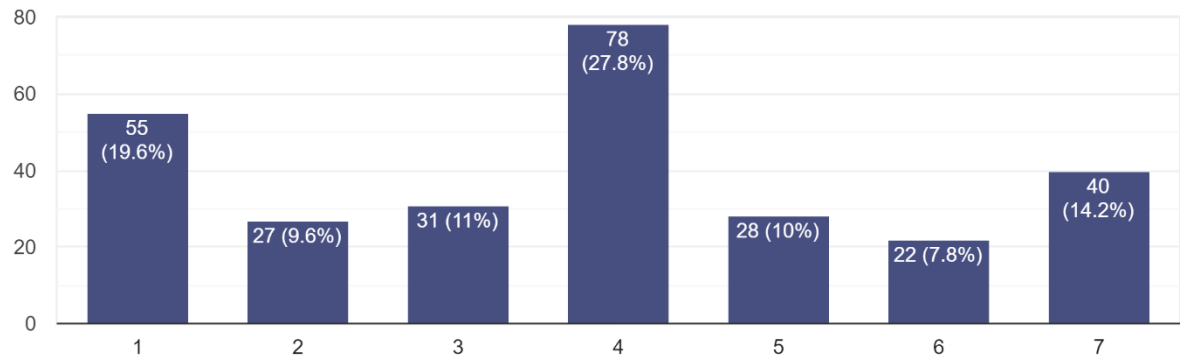
Figure 18: How much do fees impact your ability to take breaks/ duration of breaks during holidays?
408 responses



The following responses were based on questions relating to student fees. Scale: 1 = Not helpful, 7 = Very helpful.

Figure 19: If you have used a payment plan to help pay fees, how helpful are the payment plan options?

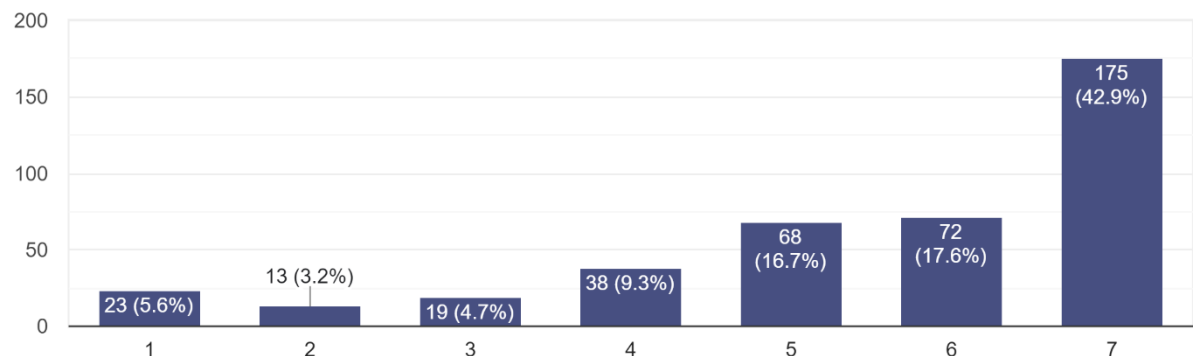
281 responses



The following responses were based on questions relating to student fees. Scale: 1 = Not impactful, 7 = Very impactful.

Figure 20: How much do fees impact your personal debt (Credit card debt, bank loans, asking for money from family, etc.)?

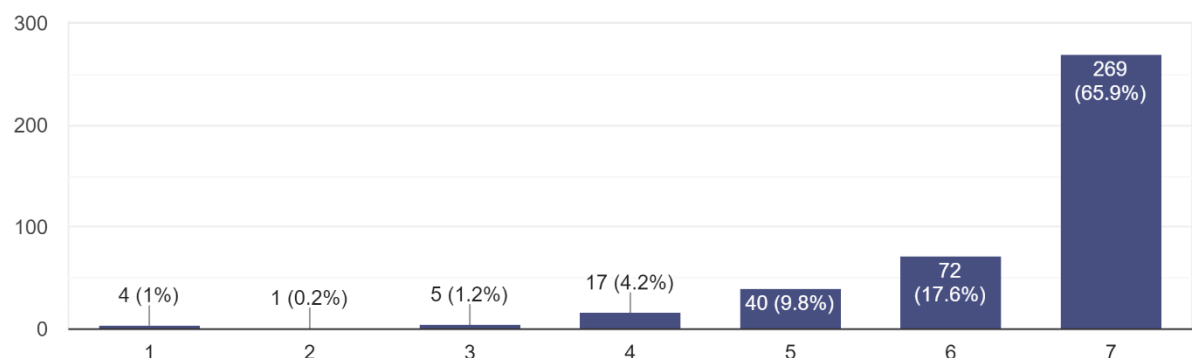
408 responses



The following responses were based on questions relating to compensation (stipends and salaries). Scale: 1 = Unlikely, 7 = Very likely.

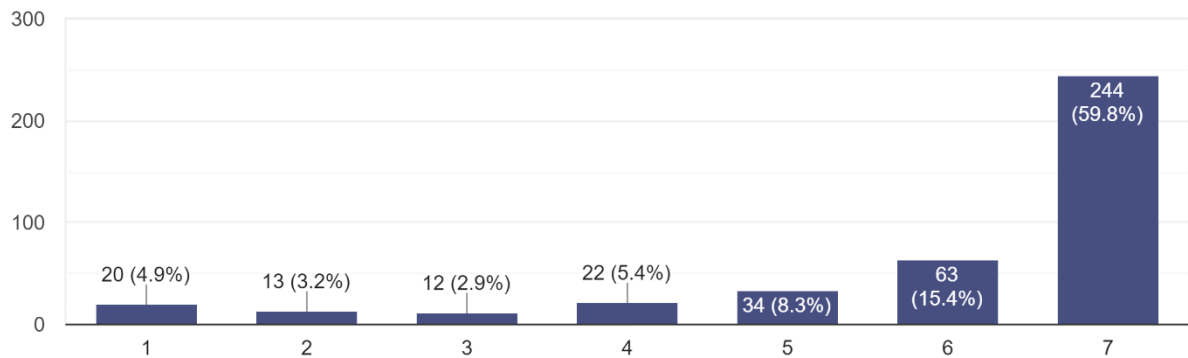
Figure 21: Do you think an increase in compensation will help reduce the previously stated impacts of student fees?

408 responses



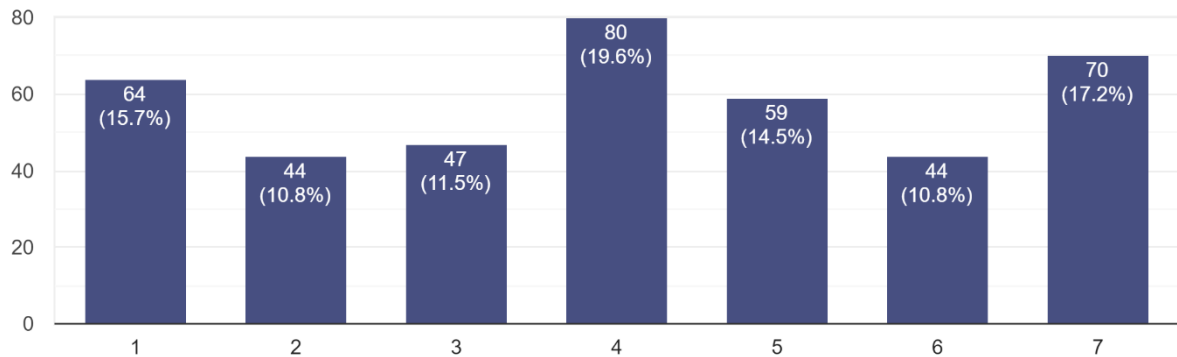
The following responses were based on questions relating to student fees. Scale: 1 = Unlikely, 7 = Very Likely.

Figure 22: Do you think having the option to select which fees you want to pay for (choose if you want to use the rec center, go to up all night, use the library, etc.) will help reduce the impacts of student fees?
408 responses



The following responses were based on questions relating to student fees. Scale: 1 = Not at all, 7 = Very likely.

Figure 23: Would you re-consider attending WVU had you previously known about the student fees and cost of living in Morgantown?
408 responses



Appendix B

Anonymous testimonials from graduate and professional students:

- When I was being paid via a grant stipend of ~\$34,000 for the first 3 years, my way of life and financial security was significantly better than what it is now. As a fellow, my college level and university fees were waived. Now, being funded via my department, I have not only taken more than a \$10,000 pay cut, but I also owe almost \$4,000 in fees yearly. These past two years of paying fees and living on a significantly lower income have been incredibly stressful. It is much harder to make ends meet, and I experience much more anxiety around money, knowing that my paychecks quickly disappear every month. From my personal experience, a fee waiver and higher pay significantly improved my quality of life here in Morgantown. All WVU graduate and professional students deserve to be fairly compensated.
- In my opinion, the problem is not the fees. They are very fair. The problem is how little GAs are paid.
- Particularly with events like FallFest I want to know the cost per student.
- In my opinion, tuition waivers should cover fees. I am working for my tuition waiver and I don't make enough to put away enough per year to pay student fees. I do not have an understanding of why this is not included in tuition if I do not have a choice to pay them. All of the things that fees benefit are important but why is tuition not covering the costs of the library. (This was not asked but parking passes should be provided to graduate students as part of these fees. I pay more for parking than I do for food every week and I have to be here, I do not have a choice.)
- I hope they don't try to increase the fees for international students again because I would be extremely scared about whether I can afford to stay here.
- At other graduate programs that I applied for, student fees were not covered by the student.
- As a GTA, health care is included as a benefit. However, there is no option to include my spouse on my insurance. He is a seasonal worker and immigrant who cannot get public insurance in the US. Therefore, we are forced to pay all of his medical expenses out of pocket. This is an extreme burden to us on top of my unfair compensation and student fees that were not properly communicated to me before agreeing to come to WVU.
- Departments in WVU claim to offer competitive compensation when advertising and offering PhD positions to potential students. This is assuming that the entire assistantship amount is available to the student. However, almost 3800 dollars annually go back to the university.
- Most graduate programs in the country do not require students to pay back such large sums of money from PhD students. Furthermore, while many people claim Morgantown to be a city with a low cost of living, this is only the case for a specific type of graduate student. Morgantown does not have the most reliable public transportation. While the PRT is very convenient to get from one campus to another, last mile connectivity is very poor and

unreliable. This is evidenced by the low ridership in buses. PhD students are working in their labs on all days of the week and during the summer and winter breaks. The university very conveniently forgets about this when the PRT is shut down. Therefore, most students in Morgantown need to own a car or use Ubers to get anywhere around the city. Therefore for international students and others who would normally not need a car while pursuing graduate studies in a university town, owning a car becomes a necessity. On a monthly pay that can range from 1000 dollars a month to 2000 dollars a month, graduate students at WVU end up incurring heavy debts because of the complete inability to save any of our income due to upwards of 3500 dollars every year that simply get taken back from our compensations. This is money that we still have to pay taxes on.

- Fees should be optional or completely waived. I pay for resources I do not use and have to budget the actual unavoidable expenses of my life (food, internet, transportation costs - car payment, insurance, necessities like gas/tires/repairs) according to whether I have a fee coming up. I've avoided getting medical and dental care because I could not afford it.
- As a first-year graduate student, I was very surprised to learn that student fees and college tuition weren't applied to my fully-funded GTA package. The cost of living in Morgantown is fairly affordable if you find the right place, but the amount of bills for an independent in this community, combined with the GTA compensation, simply is too much to afford without me having to take out additional student loans. Many universities don't require grad students to pay these fees, and I have heard from the Graduate Student Union that when students demanded accountability of higher-ups of what these fees specifically pay for, there was never a direct answer. The transparency of these fees is not clear in the slightest in my opinion. If someone asked me on the street what my student fees pay for, I would have no idea what to say -- reading this survey was the first time I have found out what these student fees pay for, and there is a lot of unrest within graduate students about this transparency. If our GTA contracts compensated us more for our 2:2 coursework, I would feel a little better paying these fees, otherwise it just doesn't seem clear or justifiable to me.
- It is especially harder for international students, since we are not allowed to work outside campus. Our only income is provided by the assistantships/scholarships. Therefore, between rent and fees, our payment is already spent.
- Considering the work I do in my department, I am absolutely not compensated appropriately. I am the instructor of record where I design my own syllabus, my assignments, and write my own lectures. This isn't a traditional teaching assistant in the sense of leading discussion groups once a week and grading papers for an advisor. My workload is no different than that of an adjunct instructor but I'm paid less because I'm a graduate student. I've had to use the food pantries numerous times since beginning my program and even that isn't adequately stocked for people who have families. Research is only funded through reimbursement so I have to have the 3,000-4,000 dollars upfront for research trips and then wait months to get that money back when I have kids to feed.
- estimate COA lists rent at 500 per month-- I don't think it is possible to rent for so little. It should be updated

- Student fees are definitely high, the cost of living is definitely high yet the compensation is too low. It means skipping lunch, staying indoors over the weekend and hoping the days pass quickly. Other than the high quality of education, I feel I made a mistake coming here. I don't regret it though. I am already here. My only motivation at the moment is the desire to stay afloat. It is tough, especially for international students. I shed tears as I completed this survey.
- I was completely unaware of the student fees before coming to WVU. Upon moving from Texas to Morgantown to attend grad school, I used my last few dollars for relocation costs. Shortly after arriving, I was sent an email by WVU stating that I owed nearly \$1500 in "fees" for the semester, and my first paycheck wasn't for another month! I signed up for the payment plan, but, needless to say, that was an incredibly stressful time. I ended up having to scrounge up money from family/friends and to sign up for TWO new credit cards over the next semesters to help pay for these fees. Coming from a family who doesn't have much money, it sure feels like these fees are inequitable to lower income students.
- Just wanted to mention that I qualify for and receive SNAP benefits with my income as described here.
- I think just based on the sheer number of hours we put in as GTAs, the emotional labor and the stress, the money we make is almost insulting. Other institutions offer more money for less work.
- I'm an international student from Russia, and I used to hold savings that were the sole reason I am able to attend graduate school in a Russian bank account. Due to Russia's war with Ukraine, access to my savings has been severed by sanctions. I do not have a local family that is willing to just toss me money. Inflation, impending recession, and overall rising costs of living have made it increasingly hard to be able to afford existing. I live in constant fear of having a car or medical emergency that will drive whatever savings I was able to salvage. travel and visa expenses are approximately the amount for me to go see my family, so that's out of the question. What has exacerbated the issue significantly are WVU Global Affairs. They claim to have support for Ukrainian and Russian students, but it's not being distributed. I received no reply from them when I attempted to contact them regarding their claim to the DA that they have aid available. Instead, Global Affairs attempted to raise international student fees by \$500 a year with a two month's notice. such a supportive group of people!
- I think that graduate students as a whole are underpaid for the amount of work and time that they put in. I think this is a national (if not global) problem and I know that it's not reasonable to expect WVU to give every graduate student a substantial raise. We're fortunate that the cost of living in Morgantown is lower than average, and despite not being paid very well, most graduate students can scrape by on their salary. I will also say that the compensation for students in my department is higher than average, and there are likely many graduate students in other departments who are struggling much more than I am. I think that increased compensation and/or reduction of student fees would be an adequate first step in trying to fix this problem, since as of right now, over a month's worth of my

income goes to student fees every year (and again, the problem is almost certainly worse for most graduate students at the university).

- I was going to come here no matter what, but I am frustrated that having a full tuition waiver does not cover such a large amount of my education per semester (comparing graduate tuition to the fees, the fees are a substantial percentage of the overall cost of attendance.) Why can't the tuition waiver cover the fees? It feels dishonest, like a scam. I also did not read anywhere about an additional fee- I knew there was a university and a college fee, but the third fee was a surprise. Because of this I budgeted about \$500 less than I needed for this semester, which was frustrating. I left teaching for this position, taking a \$22,000 pay cut in comparison to my GTA stipend, and my mortgage went up \$150 a month. Overall cost of living is higher here than most other parts of the state and owing \$1500 a semester on top of the salary loss hurts.
- HSC students are paid more than downtown bio department grad assistants (RA and TA) are paid which doesn't make any sense. My biggest complaint though is parking, as the university is going to charge grad students all these fees that primarily fund undergrad events and then ALSO not allow us to get reasonable parking passes so we have to pay outrageous amounts for private parking passes, park a significant distance away, or pay to park EVERYDAY (which could be about \$50 a week or over \$2000 in parking costs a year). If parking was available for grad students at reasonable locations and prices (or included in the cost of our fees so that we are actually getting something from the fees we pay) I would be more willing to pay the fees. (NOT suggesting fees go up to including parking cost, I am suggesting that with the CURRENT cost of fees, including parking in that so that grad students are actually getting things out of it like undergrads are)
- Graduate students should not have to pay fees. Our research brings in money to the university so why should we have to pay fees?
- There are often unexpected costs that students can't save up to address. Most graduate students I know have little to no savings. There's also a big up front moving expense for those from out of town. At one point in my first month on campus I had no more than \$30 to my name. If a pet were to fall ill, I have no savings to spend caring for it. If my car (a 2009 model) was to quit on me, I would have to take out a loan even to buy a car of equivalent age. I've monetized hobbies that once brought me joy and relieved stress because the extra income brings peace of mind, as little as it may be. I have dietary restrictions, I'm lactose intolerant and my groceries can be a bit pricier to accommodate this. My phone got wet in the field and stopped working. I am lucky enough that my mom (a single mom of three) was in a position where she could loan me a couple hundred dollars for a down payment on a new phone. I had just moved into town. I had thirty dollars to my name. The financial stresses of graduate school quickly become mental stress. I couldn't go out with friends, I had no money to do so and so I was isolated for the first month of school.
- Even so, my situation could have been worse. I nearly had to consider a long term hotel stay, as I was a late admission to the program and housing that was within my budget was sparse at the time I was accepted. I would have been paying 1200 a month, well above my budget

but the only thing I could find that didn't lock me for a full year into a lease that I couldn't afford.

- For me, fees have been a significant source of stress and make me feel less valued as a graduate student.
- Student fees for grad student cause undue stress on top of an already stressful degree
- The additional "fee" of parking at the coliseum is insane. I pay WVU tens of thousands every year and they need money to cover a lighting bill? I do NOT believe it. WVU does not care about students, only money.
- The fees equate to approximately 2 of my paychecks from the university every semester! So hard to try to save money to have a safety net for emergencies because of this
- These fees and low compensation has made me completely broke
- This is an inane argument. "Graduate student" is not a job and should not be treated as such. The fact we get paid for performing part time work that is effectively part of our education is already absurd.
- It's absurd that WVU charges so much for student fees and took away all the free parking on campus
- I am living in apartment which is insufficient to my family members and is impacting my study
- International students should be compensated more because they pay more fees.
- Although student plans to pay monthly fees are helpful, the extra amount they take every time of payment and the enrollment fees are unnecessary.
- The student fees I pay each year are essentially an entire month's worth of pay (after taxes). As a poor grad student this is literally crippling. I (and many other grad students I know) are deep in credit card debt to live. I would happily give up my sports tickets, not have access to Up All Night (who has time for that as a grad student???) and some other activities that are more geared toward undergrad students to reduce these fees. The library and Rec Center however are ESSENTIAL to my mental health and ability to do research. In all honesty, just pay us more. Also don't make us give back the money you pay us to be here.
- I'm a white guy from a relatively privileged background who is only able to attend grad school because I don't have to worry about funds. I am the exact kind of person the present system selects for. The asinine requirement that grad students pay >10% their salary off hand contributes to the great disparity we see in STEM. I don't even know a single other grad student who uses the services the fees pay for - I rode the PRT once for orientation, I'm in bed by the time "Up all night" starts and I'm too busy with research, classes and outreach to even know what the other amenities are.
- Lots of talented people leave academia every year because they can't take the poverty any longer. I've personally dissuaded friends of mine from coming here due to the exploitative bait-and-switch of the salary offer, which deliberately leaves registration fees to appear larger than it is. It's really despicable. I don't know how university administrators go through their day to day life with any sense of pride or purpose.

- The school has a program that currently covers childcare to the tune of ~800\$ a month (per child). IDK if student fees cover this program at all, but it's basically been what's allowing me to stay in school.
- After paying the fees, we hardly have anything left after rent and basic food! This tremendously affects our mental health and productivity. I do not know how this is not brought under consideration that after hefty fees we hardly have anything left to cater to our basic needs. I am imploring the university to reconsider the fees and understand our helpless situation as grad students.
- It pays more to get an entry-level job immediately after receiving a bachelor degree than the stipend for graduate school. This is especially unfair to international students as they may not have access to more streams of income or financial programs. It would also be useful to know the itemized fees that are deducted from salaries to go to the City of Morgantown (e.g. what these funds impact), as well as the local tax imposed in addition to the state tax (7% tax in Morgantown vs. 6% tax in surrounding towns). The increase in stipends was not increased enough to the level of inflation.
- I wish my GA tuition waiver covered my additional fees
- The student fees can be crippling. I feel lucky because I make more than most in my department, and still need to take out loans to help make ends meet. It's also insane to me to offer a payment plan that charges a fee to set up the payments, overtime this just exacerbates the costs (as I recall it's \$25 each time you enroll, so \$75 each year across a 5-7 year span for PhD students is absurd given that very few grad students can afford to pay the fee's off in a lump sum each semester).
- Students, adjunct professors & WVU workers are not paid enough for their labor. Any labor deserves *adequate* compensation.
- Compensation for all graduate students should be increased to cater for increased inflation. They should not be charged any kind of university or college tuition/fee. Better health insurance should be provided to graduate assistants that includes dental coverage and ability to add dependents. The stress of parking is also big for graduate students. They should be allowed to purchase parking permits in faculty parking.
- Students can receive more for Teaching Assistantship because the duties are not only in the classroom.
- I simply don't believe my fees are going towards what the administration says they're going to, when they can't give us percent breakdowns. I'm also supporting my own stipend on a predoctoral fellowship, and I was unable to ask for more funds from the funding organization to cover my fees due to university rules(even though they were available).
- Abusive fees, or the unexplained imposition of them, deeply affects me. I am an international student putting a lot of work into my research. I have qualifications for the job and sometimes I feel like I am being used and underpaid since my peers, who are American citizens, do not have to go through the same challenges that the university imposes on international students. In addition to all the challenges that I have to deal with, being a foreign student, I have to produce the same amount of work with the same quality as my

American peers that do not have to worry about being overly charged by fees; fees that do not translate into actual improvements in our lives! When I think about this fact, I feel like I am being used, instead of being appreciated by my work. I have to spend extra hours on planning and budgeting to avoid feeling stressed or anxious about paying bills. Better explanation of how fees will translate into actions would go a long way.

- The international fees are higher but the service has declined in recent years.
- My student fees consume 5 entire paychecks annually. This is 2.5 months of paychecks out of the year that is consumed by fees. I am disgusted to see that these fees, which are VERY disproportional to my income, are used for stupid events and not for funding the labs and classrooms. I don't plan on pushing my children to pursue college due to the insane fees. I cannot believe anyone ever thought it was acceptable to charge someone making 18k after taxes, which is already living paycheck to paycheck in the cheapest housing in Morgantown, a whole \$1,300 PER SEMESTER. DISGUSTING. I pay \$2,700 per year. That leaves me with \$15,300 to pay for a year of housing, food, gas, etc. I haven't bought myself anything "fun" or "extra" since I've been here. I have only eaten out 2 times this year. How am I supposed to have children if I were pursuing a PhD?! I would straight up have to choose between the two. What a shame that women have to make this decision between her career and having children nowadays, because she is in child-bearing age and cannot afford to support her family through her up to 8 years of higher education.
- Students should be made aware or reminded that fees are not covered by stipends and must be paid out of pocket prior to the start of the semester and should be given an estimate of how much the fees will be. Fees were a surprisingly large amount to me, and while I paid them, they were a large unexpected cost and a big blow to my budget. There are many things fees pay for that I don't use or would rather save the fee money than participate in (sports tickets and the student rec center especially)
- I cannot believe my fees pay for me to attend Up All Night. I would never. Choosing which fees would be very helpful, as well as generally more transparency regarding what fees are for. The parking fee at the Coliseum this semester and moving forward is completely unreasonable - to go from a free lot to the same price as the most expensive/convenient short term lots is ridiculous. And I don't have a smartphone, so I have no way of paying/accessing that lot.
- I currently make 10,000 more than I did last year and I have noticed a big difference in my stress level related to finances. Last year my ratings for the impacts of fees would have been even harder. Paying roughly 1600 in fees a year when you make 17,500 before taxes is really challenging.
- Paying extra "nursing tuition" and getting nothing from it. Paying parking to go to the clinic because it's too early to use public WVU transport and parking passes are hard to get so paying hourly for parking.
- The fees make the student life a little harder for all of us, being from another country and having to pay the fees with no family financial support make it really difficult to have anything else other than paying rent and food, the quality of life is limit and as a consequence

my mental health is also going through difficult situation, impacting in my student life and social life.

- Grad students are being exploited and abused at WVU.
- It is ridiculous to me that graduate students have to pay fees. They are essentially paying us less for services that don't benefit us.
- While the cost of living is relatively affordable so I understand a slightly lower compensation in comparison to other locations, with current graduate stipends myself and the vast majority of my peers are most often just able to make ends meet. Even a small increase would be a huge benefit.
- Parking is too expensive
- My biggest issue is the disparity of fees between Eberly and other colleges. At one point Eberly's fees were twice that of other colleges and for what added value? Also the annual stipend for Eberly is not high enough. My department supplements the stipend to make it more livable but the fact that Eberly thinks it's appropriate to pay students \$14,250 and then has the audacity to require us to pay nearly \$3,000 back is absurd. That means that Eberly grad students are paying over 20% of their pre-tax salary amount back to the college and university. Eberly should be ashamed of themselves especially given how reliant they are on graduate students to teach their classes and labs.
- I'm a faculty member working on my PhD. I do not use a large majority of the resources that come with the fees. I think it should be looked at per individual as to what they should pay
- I would love the option to pay more student fees to get access to the rec center, PRT, and athletic tickets. Even though I'm working full time I'm still very much a student still and all my friends who are GA's or have class in person get all the amenities that I do not get, even though I didn't choose for my program to be online it is only offered online.
- These fees effectively reduce the graduate student salary to well below the necessary cost of living. This fee should, at the very least, be reflected in the graduate student salary offer. I would not have accepted a position at the wage I am earning had I known beforehand. Ideally, wages should reflect and be slightly above the mean cost of living for the area and should include any necessary fees when determining this number. Graduate students are not asking for the moon, we simply want to be paid enough to not have the added stress of being forced to choose between living in an unhealthy, unsafe environment or foregoing our physical or mental health (doctor visits, therapy, dentist, etc.) in addition to the extremely taxing and difficult process of working towards a degree.
- I believe that online students should have the opportunity to opt into on-campus fees if they live locally.
- I think it would be helpful to know why students, especially those who are funded in GA positions, etc, are expected to pay the fees? Is the rationale to keep students invested/taking some responsibility for their education since they are funded in other ways? If so, that is completely illogical at the grad level because this degree is optional in many cases which demonstrates an investment. If it is because this is an optional degree, I think it shows bad

faith on the part of the institution that ambition of seeking a grad degree is being punished by paying thousands in fees every year/semester.

- The fees are approximately 20% of my yearly salary. I have accrued an insane amount of credit card and medical debt because I do not make enough money here at the University and have not been able to make payments on these debts because I have to pay fees. I have not been able to make payments on my medical debt since May of 2021. This year, because I have not yet gotten my taxes which I usually have to use to pay my fees, I had to wait until September to start my payment plan. My payments are now \$462 a month. That is almost an entire paycheck (which I only get every two weeks) a month. Additionally, enrolling in a payment plan costs an extra \$40. Why are we charging students who cannot afford to make a lump sum payment extra money? If we had the money to make a lump sum payment, we would. The University wants us to work for poverty wages. The fees adjust to the rising cost of living every year, and our salaries and contracts stay the same.
- I know for a fact someone in my department is experiencing housing insecurity and homelessness. There are no resources for this and no one cares. Increased compensation is necessary for the lives and safety of graduate students.
- I maintain an extremely frugal lifestyle but still am not able to afford my student fees. I have borrowed money from family members to pay student fees and don't know when I will be able to pay them back. I eat a vegetarian diet because it's cheap, so I eat a lot of rice and beans. I bought my car for a few thousands dollars over facebook, i never go out and i use the PRT as much as possible to reduce the amount of gas I'm using.
- College fees need to be reduced. For statler college, I had to pay \$1818 per semester. That's huge even though I am GTA.
- I feel like if we have GA positions we should not have to pay tuition or fees at all. Although my university tuition is waived, I am still responsible for college tuition and fees. I am only making \$1400 per month and a large chunk goes towards those expenses. Our stipends should be \$2000 monthly especially if we have to pay fees. In addition, we are not guaranteed financial support for the summer. That is another reason why our stipends should be higher.
- Many graduate students are not going to attend events or use resources primarily designed for undergrads and it's unfair they have to pay for them.
- Many graduate workers are not paid a fair wage at this school. Most semesters, I teach two sections (I am the sole instructor of record). While our department says that these duties should take 20 hours a week, that's just not accurate. Even with the time-saving tips offered by our department it is not possible to complete that work in 20 hours. Furthermore, according to our contracts, we are not supposed to do outside work, which is a joke. Almost no one can live in Morgantown (or anywhere, frankly) with our wages. There seems to be no recognition that given recent inflation, everyone has essentially received a drastic pay cut, and graduate workers and adjuncts are most affected by this.
- Not only are the student fees oppressive, but they are essentially asking us to pay to work here. It seems like the university could waive fees for graduate workers as a show of

appreciation for our labor. In some departments (like English) graduate workers teach the majority of classes, and the vast majority of classes required for most undergrads (freshman comp & rhetoric). This is a money maker for the university, yet we are among the lowest paid instructors here. Had I truly understood how untenable student fees and wages are, particularly taking into account our workload, I would not have come to WVU.

- It is also discouraging to know that the university is reluctant to give students a thorough breakdown of student fees. If they are going to take back such a huge percentage of our wages, it is at least fair to tell us exactly where they are going.
- Another problem with student fees is timing. We are expected to pay fees before the semester starts, yet we don't get a full paycheck until the second half of September. The university might argue that we can use the payment plan, however, we have to pay a fee for the payment plan. And this fee does not go to the university, rather, it goes into the pockets of a for-profit company. Why does WVU feel as if it's necessary to nickel and dime their workers in order to line corporate pockets? How is that just or fair?
- Our stipends are not at federal poverty level (which is an unrealistic calculation), but make no mistake, some of us are paid poverty-level wages. This affects our abilities to do our jobs well, to complete our own coursework and research. Time and time again, it has been shown that being poor has negative impacts on mental and physical health. The fact that the university does not pay us living wages shows an utter lack of care for our well being.
- My financial situation has really soured me against an institution I was excited to attend. If stipends are not raised and fees are not cut, I would not recommend WVU to anyone seeking the same degree as I am pursuing.
- I just want to note that the PRT does not run in the summer. I'd also like to note that it's difficult to get to other places from Morgantown, and that a frequent shuttle to Pittsburgh for flights and to Cumberland, MD for trains, would help out a lot of students. I also want to note that faculty and staff have to pay fees to use the rec center. If students are already paying, why do they have to pay, too? What's the actual operating cost?
- At GTA orientation I was told that we are the backbone of our department for how much GEF courses we teach, which really rubbed me the wrong way because we aren't paid nearly enough (16k!!!). It made me want to leave WVU because I could tell too much would be placed on us with not enough compensation. But by then it was too late.
- I do not use many of the services. I am an independent adult living and working in Morgantown. I would rather not pay the fees. As a non-traditional student, the fees do not give me any benefit other than the library, which I would expect to be appropriate for an institution with the reputation of West Virginia University.
- Had I known about the fees, I would have attended another university.
- Students should have preference to pay for facilities. For example, I do not go up all night, so I do not want to pay for it.
- Can we at least get an itemization of the fees or are they content to keep it a black box? How much of my money are they wasting on sports tickets I'm not going to use because I hate crowds or on the Rec Center I don't use? Also, they could at least mention the fees when

departments are sending out the offer letters. I don't make 30k a year if I end up having to pay ~1.5k back directly to the university. I'd expect this level of smoke and mirrors from a used car salesman, not an R1 university.

- If the fee is waived or reduced that will be a great relief for us. Thank you for your consideration.
- Student fees for graduate students, especially those of us in online courses, match the level of resources and programs we have access to.
- If the student fees are reduced, it will bring out the best in me regarding my research based on my commitment
- I understand the fees are important for resources all students have access to and I appreciate having them. I do believe the questions in this survey are broad in terms of how I feel. I love attending WVU but my allotted salary with the cost of living has made saving up for fees each semester a big stressor. I wish there were programs we could apply for to have fee adjusted or money to cover the cost due to living costs. Saving up \$2000 each semester while covering basic necessities, health care, and even emergency expenses such as car repairs leaves me feeling overwhelmed and contemplating another job while getting my graduate degree.
- With inflation, our graduate stipends should be increased. It is incredibly frustrating that tuition has been increased, but not graduate stipends. Many grad students live in poverty, yet grad students are the ones maintaining the R1 classification. Not to mention that grad students are usually older, and often have higher expenses.
- My program requires GTAs to be lead instructors for two courses every semester. Learning that other programs have their Masters level students being the more standard assistant to a faculty member but get similar pay to those of us who are literally the lead instructor of our classes is not right. We should be compensated for the level of work we are expected to do on top of our own studies.
- Health issues are the biggest problem. We do not try to go to see doctor
- should offer more scholarships and not charge so much for textbooks.
- Please increase our GTA salary
- I recently had to choose between going to the doctor and paying my bills. I chose to pay my bills. Now I have to hope my health doesn't impact my ability to teach and take classes. As a transgender person living in a deeply transphobic state, I also worry about not being able to access the resources I need in order to keep myself healthy and safe.
- I will never understand how the university who pays me then requests to have some of that money back every semester in "fees." How can you pay my tuition, but not cover fees? Seems like a way to scam those who pull in the money for the university. I make less than \$20k after taxes, but have pulled in a lot of money in grants for what? To continue being poor while the university makes more and more money. I make too much money before fees and taxes to apply for food stamps, but after taxes and fees I would be able to qualify for food stamps. The university is screwing me (and numerous others) with these fees in more ways than they even realize.

- I use the student services a lot, so I know that my opinions of the fees are not as significant as those who do not. I am also privileged to have a vehicle that allows me to come to campus to utilize some services that others cannot. I get 2 meals a week from campus, and usually "get my money's worth" for the fees. I will say, the summer fee was really devastating this year for me. It was \$450 and there was absolutely nothing offered except the Rec Center access for students. I carefully plan out my meals and visits home around student offerings so that I am getting the most use of my fees, and while I feel I do that well, it should not have to be that way.
- I feel the main problem is a lack of compensation to cover living in Morgantown and not adequate health/ dental/ vision insurance. The fees add to the problem but are not the main source of my concern. I have mental issues that come about during my graduate career at WVU and other health problems and if it wasn't for my parents insurance I would be in severe medical debt. Along with having to pay out of pocket for dental cleanings and for getting eye appointments. So yes the fees definitely impact a lot because they are like .5% of my gross income but they along with other financial hurdles need to be addressed.
- Having the option to select which fees I pay for would make a huge difference. I rarely use the Rec Center, and I never go to Up All Night. If I can cut those costs it would help a lot. Thank you so much for this survey; I hope it helps with new and better decisions for the university and students.
- GA's are not being paid enough to live
- I knew about the fees and cost of living before I made my choice to come here (It was part of my research on which school to accept), I still wish it were slightly different though.
- I get tuition reimbursement from my employer but this does not cover fees. I have to pay the fees myself and they are a lot more than I expected.
- From conversation with peers who are in graduate work positions on campus, assistants, researchers, instructors, I know they are not compensated nearly enough for the work they are required to do. There are no standards holding faculty to the 20hr work week expectations so graduate students regularly exceed the boundaries of their compensated time and are not offered additional compensation for their overtime.
- You can't ask a GA to work 80 hours a week and only pay them \$26,000/year. Insane.
- As an online student, our fees do NOT reflect the services we receive. We are not given the same access to high quality programs and resources as in-person students even though the university feels that we deserve to pay these fees.
- It's very difficult to save money- anything I accumulate in savings typically goes directly to my fees each semester.
- It would be best to have the option to select which fees I want to pay for.
- I understand that the university is a business and needs to make money to survive. Activities provided by the university are a great way to attract students and stay in business. That being said, the activities that are funded by university fees primarily benefit undergraduates and are meant to attract future undergraduate students to the school. Graduate students are typically not participating in these activities, they are not at college to have another

undergraduate experience full of excitement and school sponsored activities. Most graduate students are here as professional individuals seeking professional degrees. Many have more serious financial responsibilities and need to be able to support themselves (and others) on the compensation they receive. It is difficult to balance the expenses of being an independent adult when, doing the math, graduate students are making roughly \$7.25/hour even if we work more than 40 hours a week. Adding hundreds of dollars of fees to fund primarily undergraduate activities on top of that is putting almost too much financial pressure on graduate students at this university.

- I was previously in a doctoral program and elected to drop out with masters due to financial reasons
- I'm not sure how it's ethical that I can write a grant that brings in hundreds of thousands of dollars to my lab to buy instruments that cost a Mercedes Benz, while I then have to go home at night and worry about how I'm going to feed myself. Likewise, some of the faculty here have inflated salaries and it's infuriating to see them drive off in Corvettes or other high end vehicles when we have grad students who literally rely on a food pantry to survive and yet it's their labor and hard work that affords the faculty members the ability to buy a Tesla or a Corvette.
- For the first year of my program, it makes sense that I will not be compensated. However the second year is entirely clinical rotations and a stipend for living, and especially moving every 6 weeks, would be EXTREMELY HELPFUL and allow me to be less concerned about my living expenses in the second year.
- Fees being included within GTA's would help financial strain immensely.
- "The fees literally make the stipend I receive feel inadequate to prevent me from living paycheck to paycheck. The way the payment plans are set up, it is often impossible to take advantage of the longer term schedules because of 1. when the fee amount is released versus when I have to start the plan or 2. because then I am paying for 2 sets of semester fees (e.g., starting spring plans before fall fees are paid). Furthermore, I don't mind paying fees for things I use, or even for low-cost items I don't regularly use but would want available to me (PRT, bus pass), but I do not want to be forced to pay for costly items I do not intend to utilize (sports tickets).
- Finally, there needs to be far more transparency in what fees are being used for. As an undergraduate, my fees allegedly paid for the equipment I would use in biology and chemistry labs. This was fine then, but as a graduate student, this should be paid for by departmental grants. However, it is not possible to see an itemized list to confirm that graduate student fees are not being utilized this way, let alone to see what the majority of my fees pay for in general. This feels deceptive and should be addressed promptly. "
- The cost of living has steadily risen since I moved to Morgantown, while my compensation has not kept up. I would benefit from dental insurance included with the sponsored medical insurance.
- Rent increases every year, so should compensation

- I don't live in Morgantown, I live outside of the state. I am not able to utilize all of what WVU has to offer, so it would be helpful to pick/choose/exclude fees if you are 100% out of state
- Fees would be more manageable for me if they were yearly instead of by semester since we get paid less in the summers and those paychecks need to stretch farther
- Even if my grad classes are online, I should be able to work out at the Rec and go to a game as a wvu student. I pay college tuition and fees, and my GTA position covers my university tuition; yet, I have to pay out of pocket to attend sporting events or go to a community gym. Absolutely awful when coupled with substandard pay.
- Being told ahead of time about the fees would've been great to know especially that it came as a surprise when I started the semester.
- The cost of college is absolutely ridiculous. I would not still be here if I didn't need this degree to do well in my career. I am trying to graduate early in order to avoid paying one more semester's worth of fees and tuition.
- I have to pay approximately \$1500 in student fees each semester. It takes me all semester to save up enough to meet that figure (on my annual stipend), and I am left with nothing to put into personal savings. This makes me anxious in the event of having emergency expenses.
- As a GTA we were given a raise and at the same time school fees were increased. The raise just went towards the fee increase and we lose more money to taxes on top of that for making more money.
- I was not certain of the additional fees before accepting the GTA position as it was not disclosed to me until I had to pay for it. Also, I do not find it fair for graduate students having to pay for activities that we do not have time to take part in. The stipend also barely covers my living costs, and being an international student and not able to work outside the campus does not make it easier to survive. The additional fees really make it tougher as an international student here, and I hope something is done about it.
- I work to receive a tuition waiver from the school yet I still have several thousand dollars to cover on my end. The marketing to graduate students is somewhat devious when mentioning a full ride if you work as a GRA or GTA
- There is NO compensation.
- Fees are not included in employee tuition reimbursement
- I am still trying to dig myself out of the hole created by having to pay fees and not being paid for a month after I started working. Fees essentially ate up my entire first paycheck, meaning that for my first month and a half of work and school I went without pay. I cannot feasibly be in grad school without a second job.
- It would be helpful if student fees were itemized. We have requested this multiple times and it has not been provided.
- Strongly requested to increase the stipend and waive the university fees.
- They are bleeding students dry
- I would like to be paid a livable wage. I do the work of a professor and would like to be thriving, not barely surviving.

- There isn't a lot of support from the university when first moving to Morgantown as a graduate student so things to supplement living expenses (like having a roommate) are difficult.
- it should be 'pay-to-play.' If you use it, you pay for it. So many do not utilize the rec center, the mental health services, 'free' sporting event tickets, etc....if you want to have that---pay for it at that point! Don't make everyone pay for things they don't use or want to use. Every semester I just pay \$\$\$ for other people to have access to services.
- A little bit goes a long way, if student fees could be reduced by a couple hundred a year that would be helpful. An option to have each assistantship paycheck slightly reduced because of the fees would be fine too, it's easier to not have to stress about the fees if I know a little bit is paid off without having to pay extra the fees of the payment plan.
- It is obviously hard to live in Morgantown with GTA payment with a dependent (child).
- As a single person I have found that working to support myself as a grad worker without a second income as part of my household is nearly impossible. My thoughts are consumed with stress over budgeting: how can I keep my grocery bill for each week under \$50; how low can I keep the heat; can I balance a part time job on top of my work for WVU? I recognize the tendency to dismiss graduate school living as traditionally 'lean;' but there is a distinct difference between living on a tight budget and a context in which it is mathematically impossible to make ends meet. As GPSS's letter outlines, the latter is blatantly the case for WVU grad workers. I wholeheartedly support this effort for more institutional transparency and livable compensation for WVU grad workers.
- As an International student supporting myself without any possibility of receiving loans from the government, having to pay student fees takes out a significant chunk of money that is much needed for my survival.
- Despite having a full tuition waiver, due to the exorbitant university fees, I had to ask my parents from outside the country, since I am an international student and the university fees to be paid are huge when converted to the currency where I am from.
- Due to rise in prices of everything and paying 1800-2000 \$ per semester
- During my time here financial constraints have caused me to rely on food banks at times when I have large expenses such as medical bills or car trouble.
- I agree with the letter that the burden is large. All of the money that I was able to save in my first semester of graduate school was taken back in University fees that amount to over 10% of my income after taxes. I expect the same to happen to my savings from this semester come August if no change is made.
- I am a graduate student that works 20 hours a week as a biology teaching assistantship to obtain funding. I make less than \$7,000 a semester and \$1,380 goes to the university. I do not get funding over the summer. It is impossible to expect a student to live on a roughly \$5,600 budget every semester. I additionally have field work, writing, data analysis, and class to take. It is impossible for me to obtain an additional job and living off of roughly \$11,200 from August-May has created extra hardships for myself.

- I am a single mother and a PhD student in the Behavioral Neuroscience program. I have no family within an eight-hour radius and do not receive government assistance. Despite earning funding through a fellowship, I make below the federal poverty threshold for a family of two, which is currently set at \$17,420 (Department of Health and Human Services, 2021). My unique experience further exacerbates the difficulties of covering basic living expenses as a graduate student. The propositions set forth in this document would greatly relieve the financial burden faced by many, if not all, graduate/professional students- myself included. As an institution we are responsible for establishing a precedent of equality, and the income disparities that we are subject to are simply unacceptable. Please, consider this proposal and work towards a resolve with the same assiduous effort put forth by your graduate students.
- I frequently have difficulty paying bills, worrying about money is the most significant source of stress in my life and greatly detracts from my ability to fully focus on my research and schoolwork.
- I have an increasing amount of medical bills that I need to pay for my family, covering doctor's visits, treatments, and prescriptions plus the average cost of living on a 13,000+ stipend is stressful and it leads to a lot of difficult decisions about where to spend money and where to save money.
- I have denied myself necessary health related care that is needed during my time in graduate school because the cost associated with visits or said care is burdensome. This is not only sad but affects mental and physical wellbeing.
- I have friends that are Graduate students and come from low income households. It would mean a lot to them if they weren't held by such a financial burden.
- I need financial support from the University in order to be successful. This semester, I was not provided with any financial support from my department to continue working on my research and attend classes. Most of my success, unfortunately, has come at my own financial expense, and my PI (normally the person responsible for providing financial support) has frequently faulted me on items that are well beyond my control. If anything, their lack of financial support for me as a student has been detrimental to me. The lack of adjustments made for cost of living in Morgantown have become extremely burdensome for me, and I am very concerned with other graduate students in my department who have also continued to lose financial support due to factors beyond their control.
- I believe that WVU has a responsibility to graduate students that finances should be covered, and distributed so that a student can live comfortably in order to do research. The proposed changes outlined by GPSS are a fantastic start, and I believe they address many of my financial struggles I face as a WVU student."
- "I pay ~\$2900 in fees yearly which is ~11% of the salary which could have gone towards my emergency savings. This is even harder for us internationals who have dependents (and most graduate students have one or more - spouse or/and children) who can't work due to visa restrictions making it so that there is only one source of income.

- Fees have been one of the key issues since I joined WVU, and whatever pay increase we have gotten hasn't kept up with inflation at all. To add to the misery of everything, covid-19 pandemic (which we haven't come out of, yet) has led to increase in prices of so many things - one way or another. Not to mention that it has also slowed down the progress towards graduation, for most of us. Reducing fees would benefit me on a personal level, making it so that I, like most of us, won't have to penny-pinch every time we go for groceries!
- I'm a mother of two and my stipend is already too low to support my family, and it hurts to try and pay fees out of it. I tried to do so one year without taking out extra student loans and I found myself in a position where I struggled to pay my rent, feed my family, and afford the fees (even on a payment plan). I'm moderately fortunate to have a partner that has income enough to supplement some of the loss but it is still a struggle to make ends meet in Morgantown with two incomes, two kids, and university expenses. Consider as well, in addition to fees, there are parking costs, childcare (for many), purchasing books, necessary technology, research trips (as we are expected to pay for research trips upfront and then be reimbursed), and even conference attendance (Eberly only offers funding for one conference a year). The financial burden on a budding scholar is immense without the added stress of being dropped from the university due to an inability to pay fees. We already work for way less than we are worth— for example, I'm the instructor of record on the classes I teach. This is not a traditional teaching assistantship. I design the course, I write the syllabus, I teach the classes, essentially an adjunct instructor but paid significantly less than adjunct faculty. There are even caveats in the contracts we sign in my department that specify that we are not allowed to take on additional work beyond what averages to 10 hours a week. So not only are we expected to leave on meager stipends, we're expected to pay the fees out of it, and are compelled to sign a contract for our positions that clearly states we are not allowed to take on additional work to make ends meet. It's frustrating, it's stressful, and it has significantly impacted my ability to be as successful as I would like to be because I'm constantly worried about my finances, if I can afford rent, to clothe my children, and finish my dissertation.
- It is mandatory to help low income students like myself. In the current situation, things have become even more difficult.
- More than 10% of my paycheck goes to university fees. So our gross pay is 10% less than expected which has thrown off my living budget.
- Over the course of my 5 years at WVU as a graduate student, I have only been financially able to return home 3 times. Everything is getting more expensive and yet my salary has only increased once due to other graduate students in my department speaking up and saying we don't get paid a living wage. We still do not get paid a living wage. Each semester I must work a month before earning the cost of fees each semester, then in April I have to pay taxes on an income that does not reflect this loss in wages. Graduate students are the backbone of Universities: we teach a significant fraction of classes, our research is the foundation of grants received, our hard work is the basis of the prestige WVU touts. We deserve a wage

high enough to be able to live in the place we work. We deserve to be able to afford trips to visit our families.

- The cost of living expense increases in combination with rising inflation make our current stipends non-competitive with other R1 institutions. At the same time most graduate students are forced to cover the cost of student fees from savings, private loans, and in many cases through the help and support of their parents if that is even an option. Such barriers to higher education are in themselves wrong when we preach that higher education is attainable for everyone when that is clearly not the case because of the outrageous financial barriers that have been put in place.
- The fees required by the University are excessive in that they push what is realistic for graduate students to pay. In no way is it doable to live even remotely comfortably on a graduate student salary and still pay school fees.
- University + Eberly college fees are 15% of my net stipend and place a significant financial burden on professional and graduate students who are not allowed to supplement their income by other means according to their TA/RA appointments.
- We get paid about \$2/ hour below livable wage for WV. Though I don't expect a high-paying position as a grad student, making at least the livable wage so that the external stressor isn't as prominent would be appropriate.
- While I have testimony to give on the ridiculous scenario which the WVU ISSS put me under in May, 2020 when I was trying to get hired, and ultimately led me to working without pay until the last week of July. I believe that it is not in line in representing the core of the student fees and salaries message this letter is focused on.
- I, as an international student, will be affected with this addition of SEVIS fee from fall term. With the inflation going on, this additional cost will only increase the financial burden on me and my family.
- The addition of SEVIS fee is not a student-friendly decision to any extent. WVU already holds a semester fee of around 2000\$ per semester for full time graduate students, which is absent in other universities. Those who are fully funded graduate students, work really hard to keep the pace of research of WVU and also the teachings. The inflation in the US is hitting everyone really hard. All the owners are increasing the rent, and the food price is increasing. However, we are getting the same salary but with increasing fees. This is not a proper way to treat international graduate students who came thousands of miles away from home to do something good for mankind. I strongly oppose the decision to add SEVIS fee.
- The cost of living in Morgantown has gone up and though increasing student stipends would be nice. Especially since in the last few months gas has almost doubled. We already have to pay for a parking permit or pay hourly (which are both extremely expensive) but now gas is crazy expensive. Even if the university allowed grad students to purchase an employee parking permit or provided one for us, that would significantly help. Also a cost of living raise seems reasonable. (I don't know how that would work for graduate research assistants paid on grants, but we deserve raises as well, not just TAs. Additional funds allocated to us would be nice as inflation has put a burden on all.)

- I strongly protest the decision by WVU administration to increase fees of graduate students. This is just not a small fee, it's almost 500\$ per year which is clearly not possible for many graduate students. I want to appeal strongly against this decision. I am with the GPSS in this regard.
- Adding the SEVIS fees doesn't make sense to me. The living cost has increased but the salary of the Graduate Assistants hasn't increased. University fees for the Engineering students is already too high. 1792 USD for minimum 9 credits and it will be more if I take online courses. This fee is too variable. WVU Medicine charges only around 600 USD for this fee. Even some departments of WVU give a waiver to the GAs for this charge on behalf of the department. No university charges this much for university fees. 1792 for one semester and then they are asking 200 more for SEVIS fee, making it 1992. If I pay it in installments 35 USD more will make it 2027 USD. Can you imagine this? They are giving full tuition waiver along with full health insurance coverage but taking 2027 USD per semester from us. I can bet on this that no university in the US charges this much fees. It's a burden for the international Engineering graduate students. I feel disappointed thinking that university doesn't think about us, the international students who are Graduate Assistants. The inflation is high, the living cost has increased, the house rent has increased, the fuel cost has increased. Whether the university should have decreased these charges for us rather they are increasing it for us. This is utterly disappointing and now I firmly believe that the university doesn't think about the international graduate students. This is not good for my mental health.
- I don't support the increase in university fees. I don't think any university collects the SEVIS fee from the students.
- "I am grateful that I hold a graduate research assistantship that is above the minimum standard (\$18,500), and even more grateful that I have a supervisor who cares about my well-being and health over my position. Even with these privileges I worry constantly about being able to afford my basic health expenses, as well as pay for my basic needs and undergraduate student loans. We have to consider as a university that we are employing students who have families, health issues, and other financial responsibilities. We have students who are forgoing their basic health needs (counseling, yearly eye and dental check ups, medication, etc.) in order to have their best chance for professional and academic success. What sacrifices should students give to achieve this? Their mental and physical health? Is a graduate degree and experience in the job field worth that?
- Personally, I am not against the \$200 International student fee, however what I am against is the university taking this money from our already struggling international students and not providing support. Our graduate students in my program frequently state that they are unable to get support regarding visas and other International student related issues. They are often told their issue is not ""urgent enough"" to get a meeting, yet their are facing serious financial and time repercussions (extended enrollment, loss of visas, etc.) due to this lack of support. We cannot bring international students here for financial selfish reasons and not provide the extra support they need in the transition. It is hard enough facing discrimination in the United States, yet alone managing the systemic barriers these students

experience that could be solved by the people they are paying to help them. If these students are going to be paying the \$200, I fully expect an outline of what services these students are entitled to with guidelines and procedures the staff are required to follow. For example, office hours, trainings, resources, guidelines, housing and transportation services, etc."

- The additional SEVIS fees and increased living expenses are causing unhealthy and unbalanced lifestyle especially for graduate students who are working as GRA or GTA. We're barely surviving with the work/study pressure. Now, I don't know how we are going to deal with such additional financial pressure. In this light, we requested whether a university fees waiver or at least some reasonable reduction in other fees.
- Due to pandemic and wars, there is already an increase in life standard and livings. But we haven't provided any increase in our stipends. In such circumstance it will not be a wise decision rather it will be a burden for all international students. Please don't increase it.
- I think the University is being extremely insensitive to the sentiments and struggles of international students. Graduate life is hard enough already, leaving our homes and families to seek a better future for ourselves is even harder, and an educational institution that we consider our own being dismissive of our struggles is downright disappointing and a disgrace. That said, I think it is a global problem that graduate students get paid poverty wages, to be honest, even Burger King pays more these days. Instead of joining the bandwagon, it would have been a matter of real pride if my institution had actually stepped up for me.
- Increases in university/SEVIS fees and living expenses, even if 'incremental', put a significant financial and mental burden on grad students, esp. international ones. GAs already tend to be paid very less compared to the amount of work they do as assistants, researchers, and instructors. Grad students are assets for any university, and they should be treated as such. Increases in fees should either be frozen on grad students or they be provided more funding to cover these increased costs. The University has enough resources to do the right thing for grad students, including international ones.
- "As a member of the Graduate and Professional Student Senate, I believe I am responsible for speaking on behalf of graduate students about the situation related to their well-being at WVU. University is giving us many opportunities to develop our professional skills and grow as individuals. We have a lot of resources for study and research, sport, and recreation facilities. But to fully experience student life at WVU, we need financial stability. As it has been mentioned in an open letter, graduate students' fees are rising while the salary remains comparatively stable.
- As an international student, I admit that recent fees on the international students are not only burdensome but affect overall socio-economic conditions and students' life. International students are only allowed to work on campus, and they cannot exceed 20 hours/week during the semester. Since International students are already facing a lot of restrictions in terms of employment and work, I don't think it's particularly reasonable to put these additional financial obligations on international students. As a Ukrainian graduate student, I appreciate the help provided to the Ukrainian students at the time of war and

financial hardships. However, my Ukrainian colleagues and I are concerned about the expenses for the SEVIS fees for the upcoming years.

- We kindly ask for your support and understanding.
- The fee is going to be increased yearly by \$500 on top of the already existing high semester fee. The grocery items prices are increased, my house rent will also be increased from this August. I am really concerned about this additional fees.
- For the last two years in my graduate program, I've had the privilege of receiving small scholarships from my college. Being selected to receive these scholarships was a great honor, and of course, the promise of some extra money is always a relief when you're living paycheck to paycheck. On both occasions though, the scholarships were deposited into my account at the beginning of the semester, and both times a significant portion of the scholarships was automatically used to pay my university fees. It was ridiculous to me that the college would award me money only to then immediately take it away. In a way, it felt like the university was just paying itself back, which is a bleak way to view a scholarship. Of course the bigger issue is graduate students being forced to pay fees when they don't have the comfort of award money to fall back on, but I offer this testimony because I think it demonstrates how insincere the university can be when it comes to "valuing" graduate student work. On one hand, our work as graduate students is celebrated, but then every semester when we have to pay our student fees we're reminded that the university doesn't understand or care about the cost-of-living pressures we're forced to produce that kind of "celebrated" work under.
- The already bad situation is now becoming worse. \$500 increase in an already high tuition fees along with the 24% increase in rent I would be seeing for the next lease year, which when added to the 2 or 3 times increase in usual grocery items (such as eggs, milk and bread) is making living in WV feel like living in a much developed state. The stipend increase wasn't already matching inflation and adding more burden to students who are already living paycheck to paycheck is cruel, tone deaf and feels just exploitative. Behaviors like this is why we are already seeing mass migration away from academia - money may not be everything but at least it's better for one's overall mental health when one doesn't have to write testimonials every other month to administrators making 6 figures.
- "University should not introduce new fees after accepting graduate students into the program. If the university needs to increase existing fees for objective reasons, this should be covered by the increase in the pay to students or the college funds. New fees or increases in existing fees should not cause disease in the net pay to students.
- Rather than increasing fees, which becomes an unbearable burden for students, especially for international students, the university should rather cut the salary of sports coaches that receive millions of dollars. Robert Huggins got in 2020 \$4 mil, Neal Brown 3,1 mil."
- I am a Ph.D. student in Computer Science in WVU. As a Ph.D. student I had to consider financial costs, which could not be less important than academic prospect, before choosing the institution. Based on multiple considerations, I had to make my financial plans way ahead of my arrival as I will be living in a foreign country for at least 5 years to complete my Ph.D.

However, recent changes in the semester fees have put me in a very difficult situation as I hardly am saving anything after bearing my regular semester fees and living expenses. If the university stays put with the decision to increase the fees, it will be unbearable for me to cover my expenses while pursuing my Ph.D. in this reputable institution. Thereby, I do request the authorities to reconsider the changes, and if possible lessen our burden with decreasing the fees, not by increasing.

- "University fees subject graduate and professional students to a significant financial burden, especially during this time of high inflation in the United States. The university and college fees are not made clear to incoming graduate students. Many students assume their degree is ""fully funded"" by the university, however, to be required to pay thousands in fees over the course of many years is not a ""fully funded degree."" These fees are a deterrent to current and prospective students. I personally felt very blindsided by these fees, as I did not expect to have to pay anything for my Ph.D. However, now I am expected to pay ~\$1700 a semester to work for my department.
- Graduate students should be treated as employees. We are not undergrads simply going to class. We work upward of 40+ hours a week to produce research and scholarship for WVU. Which directly influences the amount of external funding WVU receives from grants and donors. Our work is the reason WVU is R1. A PI or tenure track faculty cannot be successful without the hands of their graduate students working day in and day out. What other jobs expect their workers to pay their employer a fee every 4 months so they can work? Only academia does.
- Lastly, the costs the international students must endure in their visa process to attend graduate school in addition to the new SEVIS fees systematically put international students at a financial disadvantage. If WVU wants to strive to be a diverse and equitable university, it should not impose additional fees on international students."
- University fees are detrimental to my financial well-being. In order to pay university fees, I have to budget carefully for the months following the payment. Increasing these any more could make graduate school flat out unaffordable. Especially for international students, who already have increased financial burden, this could be inhibitive to proceeding at this institution. The cost of living is increasing constantly, with a notable increase in the past year. There have been no university-wide increases in graduate stipends. It is not viable to increase the financial burden to graduate students.
- It's going to be a lot of burden and mental pressure if the fees increases by \$500. Apartment expenses and grocery expenses have already raised sharply and with the additional university fees make life terrible no matter with the small increase in the stipend.
- First and foremost, I recently signed a contract to remain as a teaching assistant in addition to my field work, lab work, and graduate courses. I signed this contract because the tuition waiver from the teaching assistantship is the only reason I am able to (barely) make ends meet while pursuing higher education. I will make \$13,500 over 9 months next year (because the raise to \$15,000 is a two year period and my position will not be giving an increase this year from what I have been told). Assuming my student fees are the same as the last two

semesters, I will be paying \$1,800 a semester. This means, I will be living off of \$9,900 for 9 months or \$1,100 a month. With the continued increase of housing costs, gas skyrocketing, and food cost increase I will barely be able to live. The university claims a need for all of these fees, meanwhile I watch the university pay to plant the same mulch bed 4 times in a year because there always needs to be pretty flowers. How is that relevant? Well, I feel like one of those flowers that is past bloom and being replaced. WVU uses everything they can from its students and then replaces them. As an R1 institution, WVU should be appalled in their financial support for the students that produce research that allow the university to boast about their research. WVU's lack of financial support is a leading topic of discussion with my peer group and directly relates to severe mental health concerns. I hope WVU stops talking about mental health concerns and begins to address the roots of the problem.

- The excessive burden of Sevis fees for the office of global affairs will not only affect my day to day food/ travel expenses but also my mental health and well being. Occasional steps I take for well being (yoga/ exercise classes) will be affected due to rising costs and lack of an adequate budget for such activities. The office of global affairs is a mostly online service since the pandemic. Accounting for such fees towards a barely used service is detrimental for my success at WVU.
- I am a PhD student working in the history department. I write this testimonial imploring the authorities to see reason of the plight of the graduate students. We pay a huge amount of college and university fees (double for the arts departments) and after that we are left with almost nothing after paying out rent and just buying basic supplies. This puts immense pressure on our mental and physical health. Over the years our stipend has not increased but now additional sevis fees have been added to this. Please understand that this affects our work immensely. I know that the work of every PhD student is valuable to to the university. As an international student- we are living away from our homes and have no further support. Even after insurance- the medical copay and hospital visits cost us hundreds of dollars. Please understand that this will put immense pressure on us. I am writing to you reconsider this additional fees and ensure than students are able to continue to produce good quality work which can only be done if they can maintain a certain quality life.
- The timing of the SEVIS fee raise for graduate students is unnecessarily cruel. Raising costs during a time of high inflation and general global turmoil on a group of students already mostly unable to take second jobs due to visa conditions reads most optimistically as willfully oblivious and most pessimistically as deliberately cruel. This is in addition to the pre-extant university and college fees that bleed an extra few thousand dollars a year out from students already grappling with rising costs of living, loan debt from relocation to West Virginia or undergraduate loans, and healthcare costs not covered by the subpar graduate health insurance (namely vision and dental). The money I burned in one semester to fees I'm not even allowed to see an itemization of could have paid for routine dental and vision checkups for a year. Then I did it again in Spring. Then I did it again in Summer. Something has to give. If the administration does actually care about graduate students as something other than

the equivalent of exploitable academic minimum-wage labor, it would certainly be nice to see them do something to indicate it other than lip service like the Appreciation Week.

- "I didn't know about the addition of SEVIS fees until recently. Before, I was happy to hear that I will be receiving slightly more money per academic calendar for my stipend because I was struggling with my living expenses the past year (I was barely getting by, and any additional expenses that may come up I would have to spend from my savings from my previous job). However, after finding out that I will be paying more for the university fees and the SEVIS fees, I didn't know if I should laugh or cry! Not only will the increase in stipend be meaningless, I will actually be paying more each year now than what I had to in the previous year.
- I hope something can be done to fix this and to allow us international students to live a more comfortable life financially while we're studying here. Academic stress is enough; I hope we won't have to stress over financial needs as well next year."
- "Rising prices are pretty awful right now. Not only am I a graduate student, but also a husband and father to three children. Every dollar counts. Including every dollar I have to spend in University and college fees. I understand the reason of fees, and I don't think they should be abolished; the services provided are wonderful (rec center, Caruth center, etc.) but to raise them at a time like this is a hardship for me and my family. It is especially frustrating as I have not seen an itemization of how fees are broken down. I would at least like to see how my fees are being used to benefit me.
- Also, what would be wrong with allowing students to select the services they want and not pay for those they don't want? Obviously some fees still need to be paid by each student, but some need not be. For example, I am a commuting student. Because of this I do not frequent the rec center. I would be willing to forfeit my right to use those facilities if I could choose not to pay that fee. Similarly with the PRT. I would be willing to forfeit my right to use the PRT if I could choose not to pay that fee."
- As inflation continues to rise and our wages stagnate an increased financial pressure has been placed upon myself and many of the other graduate students I know. It's impossible to avoid the painful notes of conversations where people discuss how they've been dealing with rising cost of living and how they feel the university doesn't care about their situation. I have personally forgone needed medical care which is not covered by my university insurance in order to make ends meet. Naively, I believed this to be an extreme case, unique to me. Unfortunately this seems to be an all too common reality for many graduate students. Tough decisions have to be made when we are on such a tight budget. Additionally, the burden of increased fees on international students have placed a palpable strain on every international student I know I'm my program. This at a time when COVID travel restrictions and sparse research funding are already a hefty burden on these critical professional students, many of whom help the university run by teaching labs and grading. I would encourage the administration to consider how far graduate students can be strained before their breaking point is reached. Preventative action needs to be taken.

- "I was very happy when I learned that the administration decided to raise our stipend. I am an international student and I live and support myself without the help of my family, this means that everything I earn goes into housing, food and school expenses. 13k a year is already not much given that nearly half of it goes into housing only. University fees are always challenging to me as I never have enough money to pay them and I need to use a debit card and pay them throughout several months. I am still paying back the Spring and Summer term fees. I work during the summer, but my courses are small and what I will earn will barely cover my rent for the rest of the summer. As an F1 visa owner, I am not allowed to work in other facilities, even if owned by the university, with the result that my only way of financially support myself depends on this stipend. I thought that the raise in stipend would help me struggle a little less, but with the addition of the SEVIS fee each semester I am really concerned that I will not be able to pay my debit card back while paying for everything else. Prices in Morgantown are slowly raising - next year I will pay 50€ more in rent only, basically an extra month, fees excluded.
- One of the main reasons why I chose WVU and this program is that it gave me the opportunity to earn enough money to not depend on my family, if I had known from the beginning about these extra costs I would have considered everything in a different way and I am not sure if I would have accepted the offer. This is a great opportunity and I am glad I was offered it, but focusing on school and working at the same time already provide a lot of stress, struggling financially definitely does not help and affects my work-life balance. I am already cutting down as many expenses as I can and I do not want to think that next semester the fear of not being able to support myself financially will add up to all of this. I understand where this request comes from, but I feel like it would have been more honest and correct to know about extra costs before coming here, and not in the middle of my university journey."
- As a graduate and as an International student, these fees have caused a disappointment for me regarding WVU. I was told in the very beginning that I should pay 600 per semester. Even though that is a great amount of money, I accepted. In Spain, I had to pay 600 a year not a month. So, I am not used to spend this quantity of money because also, our salary there is not very big. I am being paid 1500\$ per month as a GTA, but I have to pay the house rent (which is quite high for me), food, transport (the flight from Spain is 800\$), etc. Moreover, I paid for a medical insurance from Spain that covers big issues that the insurance from WVU may not cover. Added to this, many of us do not receive help from our parents back home because life here is more expensive. So, we are Doing a great effort to be here. If I had known that I had to pay these fees beforehand, I would have consider the application to this master's. I really think this is a great opportunity that has been given to me but I am afraid that there are some issues that need to be considered. International students always contact others that are coming in the future and as people in the same situation, I would tell them everything they need to know so that they make the right decision. We made a letter so that our salary could be raised and we did have a good response. I hope you can also take this issue into account and support international students and especially, GTAs.

- As an international student utilizing the wvu provided health plan(which dose not cover dental or vision) I had to spend a significant amount out of hand on getting dental care. The addition of the SEVIS fee is an extra burden which has made me think about moving out of my current housing facility due to the increased costs and think about moving further away to save up on rent.
- "Reading the notification of an increase of the SEVIS fees shocked me! I am originally from a country with good education quality that is free and I would never have come here if I would have known how hard it is to live off of the salary while paying the fees. I was working for months in advance of coming here to save the money for the fees. International students, such as me (but I know a lot of other internationals who are feeling the same), are already struggling a lot because they are alone in a foreign country, they are not allowed to work more than 20 hours per week to make some extra money and they are often without any financial support from home. It is very stressful to constantly worry about money while giving my best at work and in grad school. Therefore, increasing the fees for internationals, is a devastating and incredibly disappointing action! My savings are gone since last semester and I have no idea, how I can save a couple hundred dollars more for the increase of fees. Notifying students in May about an increase of fees in August is, in my opinion, too short notice and generally unacceptable considering the amount of fees that are already paid by us and other grad students. Coming to a different country for grad school could be beneficial by exchanging perceptions, expertise, cultural aspects and so much more but with all my experience I cannot recommend anybody to come here to go to grad school to WVU, which makes me really sad.
- The university fees increased more that double this year, it is a insane that international students how just live with the university found have to pay again SEVIS, and it is again because we already did when we pay our visa! The rent and all the groceries are increasing their costs, so now we have to adjust our groceries monthly money to pay the SEVIS. Please consider that we are international and we are not allowed to work in other areas that is not university, and we are allowed to work just 20 hours.
- Trying to find housing within my budget in Morgantown has been incredibly stressful. This coming year, I will be living in an apartment that costs \$780 a month, and my biweekly pay is approximately \$790. I will have to take on a second job while also teaching and attending classes and working on my thesis in order to keep up with rent, utilities, and university fees.
- I am an international student at WVU. The news of the additional SEVIS fees has affected me deeply. I have had episodes of anxiety including obsessive thoughts, increased worry about the future, problems to sleep and a continued feeling of restlessness. My situation in West Virginia was already financially delicate. The money I receive I spend carefully on food, rent, personal hygiene necessities and anything that I might need for school. Last semester I had to get some tests done at the student clinic and even when I am covered by Aetna insurance, I was still billed for some of those exams. This extra expense unbalanced my finances greatly. I had the experience of having an unexpected expense added to my semester and it was very difficult to cover. I still don't know what I will do to cover this extra fee. Needless to say, I

am deeply concerned about if I will have to go back to the hospital this next semester. My performance in school is very good, and I fear that this situation will affect this. I now refrain from recommending WVU to international students. I know of fellow TAs that have accepted great opportunities from universities in Ohio, Indiana and New York with far better conditions than the ones offered at WVU. I am aware that I am still a student, I do not intend to get rich from my years at WVU, but I do need to have a living wage that allows me to do my job and be a student without spending nights worrying about how I will cover my basic needs. It is important for the administration to understand that just by being an international student we are in a vulnerable position, living far away from our support networks, what is known to us. We cannot keep adding hardships to what is already a challenging position to be in.

- I joined WVU as a grad student in 2016 fall. At that time I paid \$1200 as college and university fees. Each year it went up now I'm paying \$1370 to college and university. Same time food costs, rent went up but my stipend remain same. I cannot agree for charging a \$1370 per semester as fees. Adding another \$200 as a sevis fee is totally unacceptable. In my opinion, WVU never cares about its grad student population. They only need us to teach undergrad classes and labs. International graduate students, we are more neglected group. Nobody is there to talk about our problems, economic hardships. if any International student ask me about WVU. I will tell them not to come to this wretched place.
- Since my first semester at WVU university fees have always been a burden on me economically. I don't understand why I have to pay for so many services I will never use like the PRT, the rec center, and sports events. The pay increases have been incredibly marginal compared to the increased cost of living, which makes the burden of the university fees more clear.
- Hi, I think this fee is completely unfair. I am a graduate student and my only source of income is the GRA stipend. My money is dedicated to rent/college fees/ food. I need to rent a very cheap apartment with very low quality so I can manage to live. A little is left for me to buy books/clothes/etc. Having to pay the extra \$200 would completely compromise my financial situation. If I knew this fee was obligated beforehand I would strongly consider other University, since the graduate stipend here barely cover my living expenses. Please consider taking actions like that to the incoming students only, so they will come prepared and aware of the fee. It is unfair, specially to graduate students living on GRA/GTA stipend, to find \$200 all of a sudden from our budget. Please consider the request.
- Given the inflation in living expenses, housing and so on, I cannot think about a worse moment for charging the graduate students the SEVIS fee each semester. Especially given the fact that our stipends did not follow the inflation! For international students that already faces challenges when moving abroad, it is very disturbing that this additional mental hardship is imposed on us. We are essentially, becoming underpaid if this fee becomes applied. I sincerely hope that this is reverted.
- Given the inflation in living expenses, housing and so on, I cannot think about a worse moment for charging the graduate students the SEVIS fee each semester. Especially given

the fact that our stipends did not follow the inflation! For international students that already faces challenges when moving abroad, it is very disturbing that this additional mental hardship is imposed on us. We are essentially, becoming underpaid if this fee becomes applied. I sincerely hope that this is reverted.

- I disagree with the charging of the compliance SEVIS fee for graduate international students. Firstly, we are passing a moment of high inflation which leads to price increases in groceries and related. Secondly, the cost of housing is high, when we add this cost to others, such as university fees, groceries expenses, utilities, and internet, almost 90% of our stipends are compromised. Finally, as international students, we need to save some money for emergencies or to visit our home countries, then how we are supposed to have money for this if we can't even save money?. Therefore, I repeat that I disagree with charging us with the SEVIS compliance fee since compromises our finances and lead to mental hardship.
- I am an international Student living in the USA and as an International Student expenses are reaching its peak. I request the university to give us some financial support. I am a Dean's and president Award holder and love studying in WVU. I request WVU to release us from this financial burden and create a program that could give more financial support to the bright students. Thank you
- The increase of the SEVIS fees will impact not only my life but my kid's lives as well. My decision to move with my family to Morgantown was carefully calculated based on expenses, life quality, study quality and how we could manage life with the GA payment. With this increase I will have to rethink some of our expenses, much probably I will have to take out from my children's food or clothing money. The GA offered by WVU is barely enough to give a family a decent life, now we will have to live with even less. It is a shame that those decisions rarely consider the impact on the students and their families.
- As an international student, I write this testimony to express my deep concern with the University Fees and SEVIS fees. From the moment we decided to study abroad we faced many challenges, such as social and cultural differences, homesickness, and emotional and financial difficulties. The rising university fees and SEVIS fees only exacerbate the challenges that we encounter daily. We already live precisely measuring the expenses with housing, transportation, groceries, debts, and trying to save partially to an unexpected bill. Moreover, this does not only affect us as individuals but also our professional development as many of us face mental illness coupled with a rough quality of living and a lack of work-life balance. We respectfully request that the WVU administration reevaluate the graduate students' fees to the wealth of our community. I appreciate your time.
- As international students we are subjected to certain expenses that US residents are not. These are direct expenses related to our non-immigrant status like SEVIS and visa application fees. But, we can also have other expenses related to our situation. For example, a car insurance could be more expensive for us since we don't have a driving history in the US and we are not included in a family-plan like most of the US students are. Other possible expenses include paying a larger security deposit when renting a property since we cannot

relate on a US guarantor, and we can be subjected to large interest rate loans since we don't have any credit history when first coming here.

- "I am getting a PhD at WVU, so the university fees that I pay are already quite high. I am lucky that I have a GTA position, but the stipend that I get is enough to survive. And I am in the lucky fews where my stipend is better than other GTAs (language department, for example). For them it would be an even bigger blow.
- To be completely frank, I have never felt supported by ISSS. In fact, they have been quite mean when replying to questions I have had as if I was expected to know the answers. And sometimes I wouldn't even get an email back. The fact that they want to raise fees to ""better support us"" is very ridiculous because I never felt supported in the first place. And these fees are adding \$400 to our total fees which is a lot. If they want to get some money from us, I suggest \$50 at most, but \$200 seems excessive, especially when they do (pardon my French) a somewhat poor job."
- I work a very low wage, because I love what I do. It's hard, mentally taxing work, that usually includes working long hours. Hours I don't get paid for, or compensated. Because I like what I do. Work that contributes and brings income to the university, and enriches the diversity of intellectual merit. I barely have enough each month to pay rent + food, and save a little more for my future self. But it's not much....honestly it's barely anything, and with living expenses going up, things are getting even tighter. We do so much, we are the grunt workers of this college. You can and should be doing more to make things more affordable, and sustainable for our futures.
- "The introduction of the SEVIS fee is not about capricious and dramatic cries about having to pay more money - this is a massive increase that ostracizes a specific group of already financially marginalized people that will be forced to make significant lifestyle changes that will adversely affect their living situation. As an international student limited in employment hours and options, I am unable to randomly procure money for a \$500 annual increase of student fees I am already struggling to pay. The fees I paid before comprised 11.4% of my stipend before taxes, and now they will comprise 13.4%, all the while rental properties are increasing in price, gas is more expensive than ever, groceries are getting more expensive, so are utilities. International students do not qualify for subsidized internet, which can be \$100/month. It is cruel and unusual to expect that international students will just give up buying clothes, healthcare, or any kind of entertainment to pay these fees. We are not just a cheap workforce, we are people too.

With a two months notice, considering I already renewed my lease with my current apartment complex. I live alone and have minimal contacts in the state of West Virginia, as my primary social circle is in Florida. I rely on my own transportation, groceries, and tending to my own home - I can't afford to drop everything and move halfway across town because the university suddenly decided to increase fees. Although I have a vehicle (that I may have to give up, because I am financing it and with the \$500 annual increase and no access to funds in my country of citizenship, I don't know if I will be able to afford to keep it), current gas prices and extremely unreliable public transportation in Morgantown, as well as

expensive delivery fees, I am confined to living close distance to campus and have limited housing options. If the fee increase persists, I will be forced to move out of my current apartment. Is \$200 a semester worth getting a student evicted? The university did not inform neither my employer (my academic advisor), nor the department chair, of these fees, leaving international students responsible for asking for departmental help - without any support from the university. Additionally, being a Russian citizen, I have been affected by sanctions imposed on Russian banks. I am unable to receive financial help from family to make up for the new fees, nor I can access savings that were previously my primary source for paying for tuition fees. The university claimed publicly that they will establish some sort of help fund for Russian and Ukrainian students, but it looks like instead they just want to scalp more money from us with no regard to the impact of international students' work on community progress. My personal issues are just the tip of the iceberg when it comes to how ridiculous this increase is. For students on assistantships like myself, summer fees are inevitable, because we cannot just stop working or randomly switch jobs, or pick up a shift at McDonald's. We are in this country to study and get our degrees, not to scramble to find a job for a livable wage. Many students are forced to relocate here with families - what are they to do? If the university can't afford to do an already terrible job at helping its students, then there is a clear need for internal restructuring, not just forcing people to pay more."

- "I want to share my view on both the existing and potential impact of the university fees, the increase in living expenses, and the addition of SEVIS fees. Before adding the SEVIS fees, I was still trying to cope with my daily and monthly payments on food, housing, stationary, and other contingency costs. But with the new additional SEVIS fee charges, I feel the pressure will be too much as I'll have to constantly think about the impact of the additional SEVIS fees and consistently think about an alternative solution or means of making up for the extra cost as a result of national inflation, additional SEVIS fee and also the possibility of paying more in the nearest future for my rent. All of these may cause mental distress, affecting my overall academic performance if not properly managed. In this regard, I would like to plead with the management to assist in beating down my cost as much as possible. Kindly assist.
- I won't be able to make this fee because I'm facing financial difficulties especially when I'm the sole provider for myself and wife with family. I will sincerely appreciate we look into this matter through the email I sent earlier. Thank you!
- The 500 dollar per year increase in the fee in the midst of an ongoing degree poses a large unexpected financial stress on a student like myself who already has planned their education expenses on a budget. This scenario has potential to detriment the quality of life of students in many ways. Hence it would be of great help if the extra fee incurred in the name of Sevis Compliance fee is kindly rescinded.
- Please reconsider increasing this fee, it has already been very challenging given the price hike and inflation. We don't earn much as GAs to pay extra after the college fees and daily living costs.

- The increase in these fees will definitely affect my other important expenses as since last one year all the essential things prices have soared and due to pandemic we are facing a lot of other financial stress. Any unwanted increase in these fees will have a detrimental effect on our daily expenses. It would be great if the university can retract back these unnecessary fees.
- My life will be affected in every way. In addition to my research, I really need to find a position that pays for my expenses. As a Ph.D. student, I should be more focused on my study to achieve my goals.
- I am a graduate student doing my Masters 2nd year. Being an International student is the most difficult part and now coping with the expenses is a whole different story and when I heard about the SEVIS fee I am shocked a bit. I have never heard about SEVIS fee from any other universities.
- It's too much. As an international student, it's becoming a burden for me. Only the semester fees are well enough, and now additional sevis fee. I would not be able to pay anymore. I don't need UpAll night every week and even I visited very few times. However, I paid a lot of money for that. It's like waste of money for me. In a nutshell, I'd request WVU to waive not only additional SEVIS fee but also semester fees. Thanks you.
- It is really hard for me to pay extra fees every semester, given my graduate salary.
- Burdening international graduate students with a SEVIS fee - totaling \$500 over the course of one calendar year - introduces yet another significant barrier for students hoping to complete a graduate degree at WVU. The University recently increased the minimum graduate stipend from \$13,500 to \$15,000; while this is a notable reform, it falls well short of a livable wage. West Virginia is a state stricken by the sixth-highest poverty rate in the country, at approximately 16%; yet here in our city, the academic capital of the state, the rate is more than double that. Yes, one in three people in Morgantown lives in poverty. With those numbers in mind, even after the wage increase, the minimum graduate stipend lies approximately \$3,000 below what a minimum wage worker in West Virginia would make in a single year. It's approximately one third of the state's median household income. And yet this is what is touted as a reform. I say this to suggest that perhaps the University has a skewed view of graduate student finances and the effects of levying additional fees. For me - a domestic, unmarried student with no dependents - \$500 is easily several months of food. It goes much less further for those with spouses or children - not to mention the international students at whom this is targeted, who must contend with even more financial difficulties due to a lack of benefits available to American citizens. I strongly, strongly suspect that most, if not all, of those who made the decision to add the SEVIS fee face a different financial reality. How many of them struggle to pay rent or groceries? How many deal with the job insecurity or inherent nomadism of academia? How many have had to put off plans for the future for the sake of staying afloat in the present? The answer is almost certainly none. While I am not an international student, I would strongly recommend that the University listen to their voices and concerns and act accordingly, removing the soon-to-be levied SEVIS fee. Though the harm may have been unintentional, the measure is nonetheless

indifferent at best and callous at worst - and only those who must pay it truly understand how harmful it is." Since the first moment of my arrival, balancing funds and school have been a difficult task due to the obstacles posed by the COVID-19 pandemic. Now, this additional SEVIS fee will put more stress and worrying in my life, affecting my ability to work and to study. With my current stipend it would take more than a whole month of pay to be able to meet the costs with tuition, university fees and now this SEVIS fee that will be charged every semester.

- Due to the price hike of necessary things and also the salary of TA is very low, it will be very difficult for me to manage the addition of SEVIS fees.
- Living costs have increased, now fees are increasing but my very small stipend stays the same. I don't understand how the WVU administration thinks we can survive like this. I am actually scared about being able to pay my bills. As internationals we cannot work extra jobs to make more money. We are so limited in our options. I want to do well at WVU but the stress of the increased costs is really affecting my mental health. Please please please don't increase our fees.
- This fee is inconsiderate of the plight of international students on WVU campus. International graduate students are already facing a lot of hardships in this pandemic period and the Russian-Ukraine war, which have had implications on fuel and consumer products. Meanwhile, not much has happened with regard to helping our concerns. Although there are scholarships in the departments, most of them are connected to FAFSA, which international students are ineligible. Thus, to add to our already overburdened fees is outrageous, and need to be reconsidered.
- This just adds additional burden to the already existing limited available funds for international students. Each year, with it being a struggle to find appropriate funding, such fees only aggravate our problem. So, kindly consider this plea and waive these fees.
- "Hello, as a resident graduate student who already has to pay ~\$700 per semester in student fees, I know that paying additional fees on top of that would make it incredibly hard for me to justify continuing my MS degree at West Virginia University, even with my \$15,750/year stipend. International students being asked to add another \$500 on top of the university fees is incredibly unfair, especially for international students who do not have generational wealth or access to funds beyond their stipends. The lack of transparency about these fees to the school community is also abysmal. My faculty advisor had no awareness that this was happening until they received an email from the international programs list because he had received help from them in the past. Faculty not being made aware of significant financial changes that impact whether students join their research groups is horrifying, and they should be made aware that these changes are happening. Please reconsider making this SEVIS fee change, and please be forward with the larger university on financial changes that impact anyone who receives a paycheck from the university--Anonymous"
- I earn \$6500 in fall and spring semesters, and \$5000 in the summer semesters. To be on full course load (9 credits) costs me around \$1300 for my college or near %20 of my term stipend. Adding another \$200 on top of this puts this percentage around 23% of my stipend

before I have had taxes withdrawn. Why should it be an immediate financial detriment to my existence as a international grad student at WVU that the institution can't provide sufficient funding towards the office of global affairs? Why must I be punished for the lack of funding allocation to the office that is meant to be supporting the group of students of which I am part of? As a whole international students at WVU have complained about response times, availability, and accessibility to the international office and services, especially during covid. So I ask again, why must we, a group of students BELOW THE POVERTY WAGE LINE be deemed the funding source for new advising and technological 'improvements' that likely will not improve efficacy or efficiency? Don't push our financially difficult existence further than what it is while salaried decision-makers deem what is best for us.

- As a graduate assistant at WVU, I already struggled to pay my most basic bills with the stipend that I am paid by WVU for the last years. This struggle has only increased since the rise in cost of food, gas, and other goods in the last few months. This strain has caused me to pick up a second job just to afford these expenses. I am now working over 60 hours a week regularly, and still living paycheck to paycheck. My mental and physical health have both taken a toll, and I have become increasingly upset with WVU's part in this burden. My father, sister, and I are all WVU alum and WV natives. During undergrad, both my sister and I served the extravagant parties hosted at the Blaney house, so it is not lost on me where some of our money goes. How can the administration continue to act like tiny monarchs, throwing pennies at dedicated, legacy students and not see this as a problem? If WVU really cared about helping educated folks stay in West Virginia, they would not make us feel like they are shaking us down like thugs in a back alley. They would not force us to test the limits of our health to get an education while working second, or even third jobs. They should not force us to pay taxes on "income" that is mandated to go straight back into their own pockets. They SHOULD abolish the university fees as a bare minimum in support of workers rights. Without changing with the times to account for inflation and national-global view on worker's rights, WVU and WV are going to lose out on intelligent, dedicated students and fail to create a solid community. WVU currently has the opportunity to make things right. Do the right thing- care about us.
- I am a Ph.D. student at WVU, and like many others, I am also struggling financially. In recent times, the price of everything has increased, gas prices are almost doubled, everyday food items like milk, egg, and bread have risen more than 50%, and the rent is also high. The only thing that hasn't increased is my stipend. I am still paid the same as last year, but I have to spend almost 50% more now. It is unfortunate that our university is not considering the challenging situation that international students face. Instead of providing financial aid during these difficult times, we are now seeing an increase in university fees. As international students, we can't work additional hours to balance the increased living expenses. We also don't get federal assistance, so it becomes a tremendous mental pressure for us when we see an increase in university fees, and we can't think of any way to pay this additional fee. I always believed WVU is an inclusive institution and cares a lot about every student. We have

seen a lot of support from the administration during the pandemic. But we should not forget that things are still not normal, and with the increasing inflation rate, the situation can get worse in the upcoming days. I would humbly request our administration reconsider any increase in university fees. I would request to increase the graduate student stipend so we can maintain a dignified living standard.

- "My life has been negatively impacted by the fees that exist with the so-called "fully funded" assistantship. Most people I know weren't fully aware of what these would be until after registering, and have struggled to meet this payment that are well over an assistantship paycheck. Additionally the fact that these fees aren't itemized is infuriating - I have no idea what exactly my money is going to, and no option to opt out of fees I don't use, like sporting events for example. Fully funded should mean fully funded, and this hidden expense makes life difficult for us grad students that are already scraping by. Additionally, the failure of the University to unilaterally raise salaries for grad workers is a disappointment. While groceries and rent have gone up, my pay remains the same. The administration and decision makers are well off and can't really identify with how dramatically an immediate \$1500 raise would impact my quality of life. The workers that make this university function on a daily basis deserve much better. Last, abolish the SEVIS fee. This fee is rooted in a xenophobic bureaucracy that penalizes folks from around the world who want to further their education at WVU. These students have make sacrifices constantly, and deserve to have one less financial burden.
- Even +50\$ payment each month will immensely affect my monthly budget and already stressed mental health. I could cents due to the raging inflation and increased living costs. I feel and calculate that the purchasing power of my monthly stipend has decreased by 20% at least.
- I am petitioning the administration to reconsider the decision to make international students pay an additional SEVIS fees. The rising cost of living has made life a lot difficult and additional fees will only worsen the difficult financial situation we are trying to navigate as international students.
- "I graduated with a Masters after 3 years of life in Morgantown, and I consider myself fortunate to not have taken on additional debt for this schooling. My GTA position in the honors college paid more than was standard for my department - as much as \$400 extra per month. That is no trivial amount in absurdity of a graduate student income. I lived extremely frugally to be able to afford a tiny 1B apartment. Every semester, an entire month's salary went to student fees, when I already had to put about half the month toward rent alone. Graduate school is a choice professionals make to further their education and seek advanced opportunities in their field. I am happy to say I found a job to start immediately after graduating - but I had been unable to save any money during my graduate career to go toward inevitable moving expenses. For a university which prides itself on groundbreaking research and student innovation, the lack of financial support of graduate students whose work is the ONLY reason WVU is a R1 institution and produces quality professionals in jobs, conferences, and leadership positions, is counterproductive. I couldn't afford to eat out or

get takeout, which meant cooking all my meals. But that means grocery and cooking time - while conducting research, analyses, writing a thesis, teaching undergraduate classes for my GTA position, attending my own classes, while applying for research grants, conferences, and jobs. There are only 24 hours in a day, so i often had to put work above food and skip healthy meals in favor of something cheap and quick in the microwave. My mental health tanked so hard I became a permanent fixture in the Carruth Center. Worse, even if we had extra time, it's made very clear graduate students cannot have a second job. I had one anyway in order to put gas in my car, pay for dental insurance (another shortcoming). When I sustained a back injury, i was fortunate to find a physician willing to work with me on payments for longer term care than our Aetna insurance would cover. One physician nearly laughed when i told him what insurance I had, and earned me it wouldn't cover anything. So on a salary that paid out about \$1400 a month - again, that's \$400 more than almost all of my cohort because of my highly competitive uncommon GTA position - i had medical bills, on top of regular expenses, I paid for things on credit and hoped nothing bad would happen because I'd be \$100 bad luck (that's one ER copay) from not being able to pay off the card. And then I graduate and am offered a job on the other side of the country. After three years of work I have no additional savings to show for it and I've burned through a chunk of what I had saved when working in environments that take less advantage of their employees. If I worked full time at Sheetz gas station I would make almost twice as much money as a graduate student. Does that make any kind of logical sense? Does administration convince itself that students are being paid in knowledge? In experience? I'd like to see any administration employee live for a month on a grad student salary and see how possible it is to exist - let alone for 35 more months of that.

- I dont have any delusions that this letter and these testimonials will actually make a difference. WVU is a corporation that prioritizes income over the well-being of the individuals who comprise it's most valuable population. But I hope, if anyone reads this, you feel ashamed of how bloated and corrupt and exploitative an institution founded to advance the knowledge of humankind has become. I'm one of the lucky ones who made it out in a position that wasn't impossible to get out of. But when you see students throwing themselves off parking garages? Overdosing on stimulants? Getting into car accidents because they're too tired to drive? Ignoring treatable symptoms because they can't pay copays and non-covered treatments that then balloon into severe illness or injury that prevents the progression of their education? Everyone knows that money is the greatest source of stress in the modern world for 99% of the population. You, reading this, I'm sure have had financial woes, whether it was uncertainty about your next meal or disappointment your hedge fund made less than you expected or anywhere in between. But you are in a position to relieve graduate students from this intense pressure, this division between students with means and those without, to make education the equitable environment it was promised to be in the pamphlet."
- I am in my first year as a grad student in the Recreation, Parks and Tourism Resources program. I am having a great opportunity studying in a different country, learning a new

language and a whole new culture. The student's life is not easy, that is for sure, and being a foreign the challenges can be even bigger. Most International students that I know go through similar situations as me. We need to manage our finances really well to have the basics: groceries, rent and university fees. The salary of a research assistant has been the same for years and the prices of groceries and renting had increased a lot through the years. The university fees are already a lot for the students during their years studying, increasing the price of the SEVIS fee, would take out the opportunity of diversity for the University. As an international student I need to share that the financial situation is a big a concern for most of us, increasing the prices of the fees will exclude a big part of research society

- It is already so hard!! I had to pay this university fee on summer in full and there were no aid from ARPA fund too... The amount I save to pay for this university fee, you would think is enough to pay the full fee, but it's not and then I have to manage it by saving it from essentials... I don't know how will I even pay for fall term after just paying for Summer term!! I had to pay for 6 credits where I had no classes! This is also university requirements! With increasing oil prices, price of everything increased and I am accumulating balance on my credit card which I don't know how to pay for!! And now you are adding this SEVIS fee! University is robbing the students from every aspect they can think of. It should stop. GRA paycheck should be increased as our university is so caring about our mental health!!
- Addition of SEVIS fees for international students will negatively affect my financial statue while we have already struggled with hiking of living expenses as the baseline of fairly living.
- The fact that international students are already limited in their ability to apply for certain scholarships and fellowships and are also limited to working only 20 hours a week and now the school is increasing our fees is such an attack on the well-being of international students. My colleagues who are not internationals can get scholarships every year in my department but I can't only because I am an international. It's so ridiculous that I now have to pay \$400 dollars more per year simply to support the international student office. I feel so stressed about this situation. It's very clear that WVU does not care about us.
- As someone who works alongside multiple students from international locations, I am appalled this would be something considered. Students are already restricted from accessing critical financial resources and now face increased tuition fees to cover a service essential to support their education. Additionally, the optics here are disgraceful. We want to encourage diversity within our very very white state, not continue to give reasons for students to avoid our area. Do not punish opportunities to learn. And notably- While I recognize funding doesn't cross boundaries easily, it seems poor taste to ask students to pay more in fees when the football team has special edition, one time jerseys for a backyard brawl. Consider prioritizing learning rather than entertainment.
- My partner is an international doctoral student at WVU, and several of our colleagues are international students as well, and I am writing on their behalf to express my belief that the increase in student fees for international students is unequivocally unfair--for several reasons. First of all, as an international student with an F1 visa, my partner can only earn income on campus through her graduate teaching assistantship. While the stipend is

appreciated, it still only allows for a modest living. I am also a doctoral student, though I am an American, and I have the opportunity to work in the community outside of my work for the University in my doctoral program to earn extra wages. My partner is legally not allowed to do that to help support herself financially. Second, I have been on a fellowship for the last three years. The support this fellowship has provided has helped me considerably from a financial perspective; my partner would undoubtedly be eligible to receive a fellowship based on her academic achievements and contributions to her field, but the University provides few (if any?) fellowships to international students who might benefit financially from its' support. Finally, her/our experience with the International Student Office has been quite poor, especially compared to the previous universities we have been a part of. It seems that WVU's International Student Office is dreadfully understaffed and under-informed about the needs of its students from abroad. Do these fees go toward hiring more people? If so, is it really fair that international students, who are already at a disadvantage financially due to the constraints laid upon them from their (mostly) F1 status, must carry even more financial burden? I don't think so. I recognize that higher education is an investment--physically, psychologically, emotionally, and financially--but the rising fees for international students add undue pressure and stress to an already difficult endeavor. I and my American colleagues vehemently support our international colleagues against the increase in student fees for international students.

- International students already cannot work legally outside of the university. Raising fees is going to force students into greater debt or into the grey economy. How else are they supposed to come up with these funds? Given the choice between additional university support and having that \$800/year I think most could do better with that \$800 themselves. The university already makes a lot of money off of international enrollment. I oppose this additional fee.
- The economy in this country is crashing, and families are struggling to make ends meet let alone send their children to college. The university and scholarship companies make it hard to obtain and maintain scholarships, especially with the increased need to hold jobs in the current economic climate. Raising tuition and forcing unnecessary fees onto students is insidious to students and their families, and must be reversed. College should be about students getting their education and not worrying about if they will be able to afford to eat while studying.
- I'm a graduate student and professional at WVU. I'm getting a second masters next year. I'm 43 years old and I found it difficult to share an apartment with young graduate students, as they do not want to choose me as a possible roommate. Therefore, I have to live by my own with a very short budget, paying around \$800 rent, out of less than \$ 1200 a month I received. When I heard about the news of a salary raise, I considered it as a blessing. Unfortunately, now I have to face a new and more challenging reality, more fees. Then, the salary raise will not cover new expenses, which means more hardships for me to face. I do appreciate the opportunity to improve my academic career, however, I do not see how these more fees can be part of the scholarship I was offered and I signed up for. I honestly will

struggle way more than I did for my first masters. I work hard as a GTA, as well as a student, which I consider as my biggest asset and qualification to get the opportunity to be a head TA for this upcoming year, and regardless of the fact I struggled financially. Therefore, please consider my case as someone who needs financial support and not more obstacles to get her goals in life. Thank you