



AAUP-CSU NEWSLETTER

May 2021

IN THIS ISSUE

- AAUP-CSU Supports Graduate Students' Call for Swift Action on Stipends and Fees, p.1
- Proposed Legislation would Allow All Colorado Public Employees to Unionize, p. 2
- Support for CSU 's Vaccination Policy, p. 3
- Planning Ahead, p.3
- AAUP-CSU, p. 4

AAUP-CSU Supports Graduate Students' Call for Swift Action on Stipends and Fees

AAUP-CSU

Graduate student workers at CSU are key components of the university workforce without which our institutional commitments to teaching and research would be impossible to fulfill. Yet, the minimum stipend currently provided to these workers - \$1690 per month for nine months – is unlivable; it falls \$404 below the monthly income that is necessary for an individual to maintain self-sufficiency in Larimer county¹ and only \$7400 above the rock-bottom federal poverty threshold of \$12,880 per year² if it were paid on a 12-month basis - which it usually is not. Adding to the financial challenges posed by such poor compensation are the high fees that graduate students at CSU are required to pay – a minimum of \$880 per semester. This is normally taken out of the first month's salary, leaving students in a dire financial situation as they begin their studies at the university. Students report having to apply for SNAP, forego medical treatment, take out loans, and rack up credit card debt to survive.

Poor compensation is not only grossly exploitative, but also makes it difficult for CSU to compete with other universities in the recruitment of graduate students and for enrolled students to complete their degrees in a timely fashion. Last year the Graduate School officially recognized these problems and

¹Pierce, Diana and the Colorado Center on Law and Policy, 2018. The Self-Sufficiency Standard of Colorado, 2018. Colorado Center on Law and Policy.

http://www.selfsufficiencystandard.org/sites/default/files/selfsuff/docs/CO18_SSS_Web.pdf

² U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2021. Office of the Assistant Secretary for Planning and Evaluation. 2021 Poverty Guidelines. <https://aspe.hhs.gov/2021-poverty-guidelines>

offered a solution in its Graduate Assistantship Compensation Proposal.³ The proposal recommends a staged approach to increasing compensation, reducing fees, offering summer support, and providing tuition return on grants. Stop-gap measures would begin in fiscal year 2022, and changes that would result in parity with our aspirational peers would occur by 2029.

The Graduate Workers Organizing Collective (GWOC) was formed at CSU in the spring of 2021 with the goal of increasing minimum stipends and reducing fees. They support many aspects of the proposal but are calling for an acceleration of the timeline for proposed changes as well as a reduction of the fee burden on graduate students. Specifically, they are asking that the Board of Governors prioritize the stopgap measures beginning in the fall of 2021.

AAUP-CSU supports GWOC's demands for economic relief beginning in the fall semester of 2021 and calls on the Board of Governors to support this action as well as the broader program of change proposed by the Graduate School.

Proposed Legislation would Allow All Colorado Public Employees to Unionize⁴



Senate Majority Leader Stephen Fenburg and House Majority Leader Danaya Esgar are sponsoring a bill in the Colorado General Assembly this session that could radically affect the working conditions for more than 130,000 workers in Colorado including those in the state's 29 higher education institutions.

Draft language of the bill would allow public employees to form unions, collectively bargain, post information about unions at their employer's facilities, file grievances, and have far more agency in their working conditions. The bill includes higher education and charter schools. It would not exempt home-rule municipalities, school districts, and local control that

currently gives authority for officials such as public community college presidents to manage their own affairs.

The draft of the bill allows employees to join a union, but it is optional. An individual campus could be a bargaining unit, for example. The inclusion of higher education complicates the bill because Colorado's public colleges and universities have so many types of employees. They have classified employees who are already allowed to join Colorado WINS, the state employee union, the at-will employees such as administrators, and then the multi-tiered faculty comprising full- and part-time faculty (adjunct or contingent faculty).

If passed, the bill would be a game-changer for tens of thousands of part-time faculty at all throughout Colorado's 29 public colleges and universities.

The AAUP is behind the bill, as are the AFT, CEA, and the AFL-CIO.

³Colorado State University Graduate School, 2020. Graduate Assistantship Compensation Proposal 2020-2021. <https://graduateschool.colostate.edu/wp-content/uploads/2021/04/Graduate-Assistantship-Compensation-Proposal-2020-2021.pdf>

⁴ Our thanks to the AAUP Colorado Conference (of which we are an affiliate) for its kind permission to reproduce this from its May 2021 ALERT.

Please look for e-mails from AAUP Colorado in the coming weeks that will include links to petitions to sign and related materials to share in support of the legislation.

Notes:

State Sen. Stephen Fenberg (D-18), pictured above, of Boulder, attended the Univ. of Colo. and has served in the General Assembly since 2017. Contact: stephen.fenberg.senate@state.co.us

State Rep. Daneya Esgar (D-46), of Pueblo, pictured above, attended Colo. State Univ.-Pueblo and has served in the General Assembly since 2015. Contact: daneya.esgar.house@state.co.us

CSU Requires Students, Faculty, and Staff to have Covid-19 Vaccines for Fall

AAUP-CSU

On April 28 President Joyce McConnell announced that CSU will require all faculty, staff, and students to be fully vaccinated against covid-19 before the fall semester. CSU joins other Colorado institutions of higher education, including the University of Colorado, Fort Lewis College, Colorado College, and the University of Denver in doing so. CSU already requires new students to be vaccinated against measles, mumps, and rubella, and dorm residents to have the meningococcal vaccine, with exemptions for health, religious, or personal reasons. The new requirement is contingent on full approval of the vaccines by the FDA.

AAUP-CSU applauds this decision as it will help ensure the safety of the entire university community as well as that of the surrounding population. We hope to get back to “normal” – or even better – soon!

Planning Ahead

AAUP-CSU will hold public meetings as early as possible during the new academic year. At these meetings we will elect our officers and set priorities for the year. If interested in running for office, getting more involved in some other way, or would like to suggest a priority please contact our co-presidents (below). For more information please monitor our social media in late August and check our September 2021 newsletter. We will also share the newsletter and other information as widely as we can.

AAUP-CSU

Officers 2020-2021:

Ross McConnell, Co-President, rmm@cs.colostate.edu, 491-7524

Mary Van Buren, Co-President, mary.vanburen@colostate.edu, 491-3781

Vacant, V-P for Non-Tenure-Track Faculty Affairs

Dimitris Stevis, Secretary and Treasurer, Dimitris.Stevis@colostate.edu, 491-6082

Steve Mumme, Colorado Conference President, Stephen.Mumme@ColoState.edu, 491-7428

Anders Fremstad, at large Executive Committee member, Anders.Fremstad@colostate.edu, 970-820-8281

Bill Timpson, at large Executive Committee member, William.Timpson@colostate.edu, 491-7630

Facebook page: <https://www.facebook.com/CSUAAUP?fref=ts>

Website: <https://aaupcsu.org>

Email: aaupcsu@gmail.com

AAUP State Conference: <https://coloradoaaup.org>

To join AAUP and our CSU chapter, sign up at the national AAUP site:

<https://www.aaup.org/membership/join>

Also contact us at aaupcsu@gmail.com for more information and ways to join or become involved