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Mary Stromberger
Vice Provost of Graduate Affairs
Dean of the Graduate School
Colorado State University

Dear Vice Provost Stromberger,

As the Faculty of the Department of Political Science, we would like to signal our strong support for ongoing efforts—both among the College and University administration, but also among graduate students who are speaking out and directly petitioning the University community—to increase GTA stipends, to reduce or eliminate graduate student fees, and to take other steps to improve the financial and personal situations of current graduate students, while simultaneously increasing the College’s ability to attract, recruit, and retain excellent graduate students in the future.

As one of the largest departments in the College of Liberal Arts, the Political Science Department depends heavily on having talented and well-trained graduate students in our M.A. and Ph.D. programs. Graduate students provide not only research and teaching assistance, but they also bring fresh ideas and perspectives, and they serve as valuable mentors and resources for undergraduate students in the Political Science major and beyond. The department simply could not function without their efforts.

Unfortunately, in recent years our students have reported greater levels of financial duress as our funding packages and stipends have failed to keep pace the cost of living in Fort Collins. Moreover, as you know, our students are subject to quite significant fees that significantly erode the impact of our GTA stipends and often force our students to borrow money or work a second job in order to continue in the program. Moreover, our relatively low GTA stipends have caused us to miss out on some of our top Ph.D. applicants over the past several cycles. To alleviate this increasingly unfortunate situation, bold action is necessary. While we are fully dedicated to the well-being of our graduate students, the department by itself cannot cover the cost of these fees, let alone address the broader concern of overall GTA compensation. Therefore, we appeal to you to take every effort in your pursuit of the “Competitive” and “Aspirational” funding scenarios as outlined in the Graduate Assistantship Compensation Proposal from earlier this spring. We express gratitude to those who have taken a lead on these issues, and we encourage you to continue these efforts to improve the situation for these incredibly important members of the CSU community.

On behalf of the Faculty of the Department of Political Science,

David W. McIvor
Graduate Coordinator & Associate Professor