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FOLLOWING BOARD OF GOVERNORS MEETING, CSU GRAD WORKERS DECRY LACK OF SIGNIFICANT PROGRESS TOWARD FAIR COMPENSATION

Colorado State University's Board of Governors, along with university administrators, met May 6th to discuss CSU's financial status and budgeting priorities for the upcoming fiscal year. The Graduate Workers Organizing Cooperative (GWOC) advocated heavily for an increase in stipends and a full subsidy of graduate worker fees in anticipation of the meeting. These demands build on recent funding recommendations from the deans of CSU's Graduate School, whose research found that effective income for teaching assistants, research assistants, and other graduate workers falls "below the level of reasonable compensation".

During the meeting, the board acknowledged receipt of an abundance of public comment in favor of GWOC's demands, and CSU Faculty Council representative Dr. Melinda Smith also expressed the faculty's strong support of the group. Though CSU administration announced their intent to recommend a broad 3% increase in faculty, administrative professional, and graduate worker pay as part of the upcoming budget proposal to the board, the meeting concluded with no further discussion of the deans' research, GWOC's concerns, or potential paths toward fee subsidies and fair wages. Following the meeting, CSU President Joyce McConnell announced the 3% increase as "an important step that brings us in line with our institutional peers".

GWOC's response is loud and clear: 3% is not enough. "3% shows you the priorities of our administration - crumbs is the worth and value of grad workers in our modern neoliberal university", said Rudy McCormack, a PhD candidate and Graduate Teaching Assistant in the Political Science department. It's been ten years since CSU last implemented a university-wide increase to graduate worker stipends. Taking inflation into account, effective wages have decreased by almost 25% over the past decade, and the average graduate worker pays about 15% of their total stipend back to CSU in the form of fees. Minimum stipends **would need to increase not by 3%, but by over 26%** to bring CSU in line with stipends at competing universities. Despite McConnell's assurances during a recent town hall meeting that the wellbeing of students and employees is the university's highest priority - their "north star" - it's clear that CSU administration is not prepared to put its money where its mouth is. "It's obvious to anyone who has spent time on this campus that there's money here to pay us fairly, it's just that CSU values buildings and infrastructure over people", said Stefanie Berganini, a PhD student and Instructor in the Department of Anthropology and Geography. Siwook Hwang, a PhD student and Graduate Research Assistant in the Graduate Degree Program in Ecology, added that "the 3% raise is way too little, way too late. It does not even come close to what we are advocating for, and what is needed for us to survive in Fort Collins. Honestly, it is insulting."

The Graduate Workers Organizing Cooperative (GWOC) is an independent, worker-run organization advocating for all graduate workers at Colorado State University. To learn more, visit our website at csugradworkers.org, find us on social media at @CSUGradWorkers, or email us at colostate.gradworkers@gmail.com.

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