Resolution on Payment of Mandatory Fees by Graduate Assistants

WHEREAS the faculty have the primary responsibility for advising the Chancellor regarding academic and educational activities (Act 55, 36.09[4]);

WHEREAS equitable working conditions attract and retain talented and experienced graduate assistants and enable them to fulfill their professional responsibilities more effectively, thereby promoting the quality of undergraduate education;

WHEREAS the faculty depend on the contributions of graduate assistants to fulfill effectively our own professional responsibilities;

WHEREAS past university policy has permitted graduate workers to pay mandatory fees after receipt of their third paycheck each semester;

WHEREAS new university policy would require graduate workers to pay mandatory fees at the beginning of the semester, before their first paycheck, severely exacerbating the economic burden placed on them;

WHEREAS graduate workers were not involved in the discussion of this policy as it was conceived, contrary to shared-governance principles promoted by the university;

WHEREAS graduate students have conveyed their opposition to the changes proposed by the Bursar’s Office through a petition signed by over a thousand graduate students and university-affiliated allies, including a third of all graduate workers;

WHEREAS current mandatory fee policies already place an undue burden on graduate workers, accumulating to at least 10.4% of the typical non-dissertator graduate workers’ income;

WHEREAS at least half of peer (Big Ten) institutions provide some amount of mandatory fee remission for their graduate workers;

Therefore, be it RESOLVED that the UW–Madison Faculty Senate commends and encourages the ongoing efforts taken by the Chancellor, the UW-Madison Graduate School, and the UW System Board of Regents toward an equitable resolution of these problems;

Be it further RESOLVED that the UW–Madison Faculty Senate respectfully advises the Chancellor to extend these efforts as follows: 1) ensure that the UW–Madison Bursar’s Office and other administrators consult with graduate worker representatives, chosen by graduate workers, before making changes to graduate worker payment policy that would increase the economic burden placed upon them; 2) allow graduate workers to pay mandatory fees after receipt of their third paycheck each semester and promote the revision of University of Wisconsin System Policy 805 to codify this practice; 3) take steps toward a policy of full remission of mandatory fees for all graduate workers at UW–Madison, as soon as practicable, with the university funding said remission, and without raising mandatory fees for undergraduate students or deflecting the costs of remission to departments or employing units; and 4) provide the Faculty Senate with an update next academic year on progress toward a policy of full remission of mandatory fees.