

1 Resolution 15: Requesting a full, transparent, and
2 ongoing accounting of the effect of the COVID-19
3 pandemic on the funding of continuing graduate
4 students

5 **Abstract:** The COVID-19 pandemic, through delays of in-person research, reduced availability of
6 grants, and possible delays in students' graduation, will put additional pressure on all existing sources
7 of funding. Continuing graduate students facing funding challenges and uncertainty need the
8 support and leadership of the Graduate School to help mitigate the effects of the pandemic on their
9 academic futures. This resolution asks for a periodic report on the state of graduate student funding,
10 a plan for relief if that funding is insufficient in aggregate, and a yearly report on the state of the
11 cohort affected by this pandemic.

12 **Sponsored by:** David Kent, Tim Luttermoser, Morgan Eisenlord

13 **Whereas,** the COVID-19 pandemic has negatively impacted graduate students in nearly all aspects
14 of their academic and personal lives.

15 **Whereas,** the COVID-19 pandemic is continuing to impact research and teaching and is expected
16 to continue to affect these activities for months to come¹.

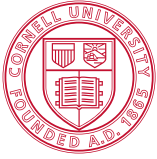
17 **Whereas,** students across the university are reporting concerns about delays in time to completion
18 and uncertainty in funding.

19 **Whereas,** sources of external funding that have been relied on in the past, such as the National
20 Science Foundation (NSF) Graduate Research Fellowship Program² and NSF Doctoral Dissertation
21 Improvement Grants³, have been significantly reduced in recent years both preceding and during the
22 COVID-19 pandemic.

1 See, for example, the pre-print [Johnson, R., Coleman, R., Batten, N., Hallsworth, D., Spencer, E. \(2020\) *The Quiet Crisis of PhDs and COVID-19: Reaching the financial tipping point*](#), addressing the impact of COVID-19 on PhDs in Australia. A quote: "It seems prudent to consider the current experience of doctoral students, and the long-term implications of allowing the current impacts to PhD students to go unchecked. If we do nothing, the potential disruption to research capacity may weaken our societal, public health, and economic recovery. Governments, universities, learned societies, and industry need to produce coherent strategies to address the PhD crisis before it diminishes our research capacity that will be so vital for a good COVID recovery."

2 <https://www.nsf.gov/pubs/2020/nsf20587/nsf20587.htm> vs
<https://www.nsf.gov/pubs/2016/nsf16588/nsf16588.htm>, item "Estimated Number of Awards"

3 <https://www.nsf.gov/pubs/2017/nsf17094/nsf17094.jsp>



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23 **Whereas**, many external grants, particularly those from non-profit organizations which are in many
24 fields relied on for early career funding grants to support graduate student research and postdoctoral
25 research shortly after graduation, were put on hold in 2020⁴⁵ and remain on hold at present,

26 **Whereas**, many students and faculty struggled to apply for grants and fellowships due to direct and
27 indirect challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic.

28 **Whereas**, the contraction of external funding and delays in time to degree completion will put
29 additional pressure on all sources of funding including teaching assistantships,

30 **Whereas**, the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on the academic outcomes of impacted graduate
31 students will evolve over time,

32 **Whereas**, graduate students from vulnerable populations are disproportionately impacted by
33 COVID-19 related impacts, both academic and financial, and these impacts frequently overlap with
34 social inequalities⁶⁷,

35 **Whereas**, the state of funding for graduate students is a collective problem in addition to an
36 individual problem,

37 **Be it therefore resolved**, that the Graduate and Professional Student Assembly (GPSA) requests
38 that the Graduate School collect a report on the current state of funding for graduate students
39 across the university for the upcoming Summer 2021, Fall 2021, and Spring 2022 semesters, AND

40 That this report includes, at a minimum: data on extensions filed to the Graduate School for time to
41 degree milestones (special committee formation, A exams, etc.) citing COVID-19 related delays for
42 Spring 2020 and Fall 2020 semesters, estimates of funding available to graduate students in aggregate
43 and projected funding needs for continuing students, taking into account an estimate of graduation
44 delays, with figures broken down by college and demographic information, AND

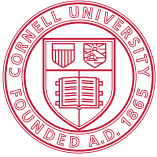
45 That the Graduate School shares this information with the GPSA and with all field Directors of
46 Graduate Study in June 2021 and June 2022.

4 <https://sr.ithaka.org/publications/the-impacts-of-covid-19-on-the-research-enterprise/>, section “Other Major Sources of Research Funding”

5 Rijs, C., and Fenter, F. “The Academic Response to COVID-19.” *Frontiers in Public Health* 8 (2020).
<https://doi.org/10.3389/fpubh.2020.621563>. In summary: “Nearly half of the researchers surveyed fear that the pandemic will have a long-lasting effect on funding.”

6 [Stewart, D., Davoren, A., Neumeister, J., Knepler, E., Grigorian, K., and Greene, A. \(2020\), *Graduate Schools Respond to COVID-19*](#)

7 Malisch, J., Harris, B., Sherrer, S., Lewis, K., Shepherd, S., McCarthy, P., Spott, J., 2020. “Opinion: In the Wake of COVID-19, Academia Needs New Solutions to Ensure Gender Equity.” *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences* 117 (27): 15378–81. <https://doi.org/10.1073/pnas.2010636117>.



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47 **Be it further resolved,** that if this report shows widespread concerns regarding funding stability,
48 that the Graduate School, the University, and each College pursue every possible avenue for
49 ensuring consistent funding for all graduate students impacted by the pandemic. Such measures may
50 include, but by no means should be limited to: offering additional Lecturer positions targeted at
51 unfunded graduate students; discussing novel solutions like the possibility of faculty trading a
52 reduction in pay for a reduction in teaching load to fund additional assistantships or instructor of
53 record positions; and the University working with regional educational institutions like State
54 University of New York colleges, Tompkins Cortland Community College, Cayuga Community
55 College, and other local institutions to determine if graduate students in need of funding may be able
56 to help fill instructional gaps at those institutions;

57 **Be it finally resolved,** that the GPSA requests that the Graduate School continues to collect
58 information on the time to degree and dropout rate of graduate students enrolled during the
59 COVID-19 pandemic, and share these reports with GPSA and field Directors of Graduate Studies
60 in June of each year through the year 2027.

61 Respectfully Submitted,

62 **David Kent**, Student Advocacy Committee Chair and Field Representative

63 **Tim Luttermoser**, Voting Member,

64 **Morgan Eisenlord**, Field Representative
