

Cornell University
Graduate and Professional
Student Assembly

1 **GPSA Resolution 9: Resolution Concerning Graduate**
2 **Student Lecturers and Clarity of Admission Letters**

3
4 **Sponsored by: GPSA Student Advocacy Committee**

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6 **WHEREAS**, many Graduate Students at Cornell, particularly research PhD students,
7 reside in Ithaca during the summer term,
8

9 **WHEREAS**, rental property leases in Ithaca and surrounding areas are frequently 12
10 months long, overlapping the summer term,
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12 **WHEREAS**, the academic year minimum stipend level, currently \$25,152 for 2016-17, for
13 Teaching Assistants (TAs), Research Assistants (RAs), Graduate Assistants (GAs) and
14 Graduate Research Assistants (GRAs), is inadequate to cover standard costs of living for 12
15 months, according to calculations made by the Graduate School, and presented to the
16 Graduate and Professional Students Assembly on November 23, 2015,
17

18 **WHEREAS**, admission letters sent to prospective Graduate Students are written by
19 individual departments, and directed by the Cornell Graduate School “Admission Letter
20 Best Practices” guidelines,
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22 **WHEREAS**, the information provided on said admission letters regarding stipend levels,
23 their sources, and their availability, particularly as for summer terms and additional years in
24 programs, is sometimes unclear,
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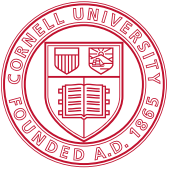
26 **WHEREAS**, many Graduate Students, or departments working on their behalf, seek
27 additional sources of income for the summer term,
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29 **WHEREAS**, it is often difficult to obtain temporary work outside of Cornell during
30 summer terms, particularly for international students, as F-1 and J-1 students visas prohibit
31 many types of off-campus work,
32

33 **WHEREAS**, many Graduate and Professional Students are able to find summer
34 appointments at Cornell as TAs, GAs, RAs, GRAs, or as Graduate Student Lecturers through
35 the university’s School of Continuing Education and Summer Session (SCESS),
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37 **WHEREAS**, Graduate Student Assistantships are covered under Cornell University Policy
38 1.3 (see attached 3),
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40 **WHEREAS**, Graduate Student Lecturers appointed through SCESS are directed by the
41 SCESS Faculty Handbook (see attached 4), and addendum to the University Faculty
42 Handbook,
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44 **WHEREAS**, there is a distinction between a Graduate Student Lecturer and a TA with
45 lecturing responsibilities, particularly during the accelerated Summer Session,

46
47 **WHEREAS**, Graduate Student Lecturers and TAs for courses offered by SCESS may be
48 paid based upon course enrollment, with the possibility of course, and appointment,
49 cancellation due to low enrollment (see attached 5),

50
51 **WHEREAS**, Graduate Student Lecturers may not be aware that they are not covered under
52 Policy 1.3,

53
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55
56 **BE IT THEREFORE RESOLVED THAT**, the Graduate School’s “Admissions Letter Best
57 Practices” include direction for departments clearly detail a schedule of expected stipend
58 support throughout the planned course of the degree, explicitly including the summer
59 terms, subject to satisfactory academic and assistantship performance, and continued
60 availability of funding, where appropriate,

61
62 **BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED THAT**, in cases where stipend support is uncertain, such
63 as for summer terms and additional years in research degree programs, etc, the Admission
64 Letter Best Practices document should direct admission letter to make explicit this
65 uncertainty, and where appropriate, include information about the likelihood of receiving
66 such support,

67
68 **BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED THAT**, Cornell University Policy 1.3 be changed to
69 include a paragraph explicitly directing Graduate Student Lecturers appointed through
70 SCESS to the SCESS Faculty Handbook,

71
72 **BE IT FINALLY RESOLVED THAT**, this resolution be sent to the Director of Graduate
73 Studies and the Graduate Field Assistants in all graduate fields.

74
75 **RESPECTFULLY SUBMITTED,**

76
77 **GPSA Student Advocacy Committee**

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79 **ATTACHMENTS**

- 80
81 1. <http://gradschool.cornell.edu/costs-and-funding/stipend-rates>
82 2. <http://isso.cornell.edu/students/working-us>
83 3. https://www.dfa.cornell.edu/sites/default/files/policy/vol1_3.pdf
84 4. <https://www.sce.cornell.edu/sce/handbook/index.php>
85 5. <https://www.sce.cornell.edu/sce/handbook/appointment.php>