



# Student Government

UNIVERSITY OF COLORADO **BOULDER**

## University of Colorado Student Government Legislative Council

12 May 2016

85 LC R01 — In Support of a Living Wage

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## **A Resolution in Support of A Living Wage for Graduate Students**

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### **Resolution History**

The cost of living in the Boulder area, especially the cost of housing, has in recent years been increasing more rapidly than cost of living adjustments to graduate student compensation. This is harmful to the University's goals in a variety of ways, but in particular has begun to inhibit the critical function of graduate student recruitment and retention, to such a degree that the problem is rapidly becoming a crisis for the University. On April 25th, 2016, the United Government of Graduate Students unanimously approved a Resolution for a Living Wage, calling on the University to treat this problem as a top priority. This Resolution is intended to demonstrate that CUSG recognizes the importance of graduate teaching and research to the university, and is therefore in full support of efforts to correct the cost of living problem.

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### **Resolution Summary**

The University of Colorado Boulder Student Government (CUSG) hereby affirms its support for an increase in graduate student compensation to a level consistent with the cost of living in Boulder and surrounding areas. CUSG requests that the University raise the minimum stipend for fully-funded (50% FTE) appointments to a living wage and guarantee adjustments based on the cost of living in the Denver-Boulder area.

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**Whereas**, graduate students, in their dual role as researchers and educators, are necessary to fulfill the University of Colorado's statutory mission of providing quality research and education; and

**Whereas**, graduate students who work as fully-funded teaching assistants, research assistants, and graduate student instructors typically earn stipends less than \$20,000

per nine-month academic year<sup>1</sup>, while in Denver County the living wage is \$26,589 per year for a single adult and \$53,799 if that adult has one dependent; worse, the living wage in Boulder County is \$29,665 per year for a single adult and \$56,837 if that adult has one dependent;<sup>2</sup> and

**Whereas**, costs associated with living in the Boulder area have risen faster than recent cost of living adjustments, which are not guaranteed, causing the real value of some classes of graduate stipends to decline for years; and

**Whereas**, the adverse financial climate for graduate students directly contravenes the Core Initiatives of the University of Colorado's Flagship 2030 Strategic Plan by harming recruitment and retention;<sup>3,4</sup> and

**Whereas**, the University must maintain a stipend package that is appropriate for the cost of living in order to compete with other leading research institutions in recruiting top candidates for prospective graduate student positions, and discrepancy between stipend and cost of living has been reported as a reason that top candidates turn down offers from CU Boulder in recent years; and

**Whereas**, the present discrepancy between compensation and cost of living causes some graduate students to take on second and third jobs in order to support themselves and their families, which decreases retention rates and increases the time to graduate.

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**THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED by the Legislative Council of the University of Colorado Boulder Student Government, THAT:**

**Section 1:** The administrators and Regents of the University of Colorado ought to treat the cost of living burden on graduate students as a top priority to remedy.

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<sup>1</sup> Summer funding is not routinely guaranteed, and is particularly scarce in some departments.

<sup>2</sup> [MIT Living Wage Calculator](#). Accessed April 2016. Includes required fees and estimated book and supply expenses according to the CU-Boulder Bursar's Office.

<sup>3</sup> Financial difficulty has been implicated in differentially harming recruitment and retention efforts for underrepresented populations.

<sup>4</sup> The Core Initiatives. Flagship 2030 Strategic Plan. University of Colorado Boulder. <<http://www.colorado.edu/flagship2030/key-deliverables/core-initiatives>>. Accessed April 2016.



**Section 2:** We urge the University to alleviate this burden without delay, by means including but not limited to: raising the minimum pay to a living wage and adjusting said pay annually based on regional cost of living estimates.

**Section 3:** The resolution shall take effect upon final passage in Legislative Council and upon either obtaining the signature of two Tri-Executives and the Legislative Council President or the lapse of six days without action by the Tri-Executives.


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**Vote Count:**

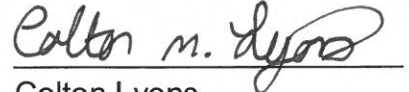
5/19/16  
6/2/16

Passed on 1<sup>st</sup> Reading  
Passed on 2<sup>nd</sup> Reading

Acclamation  
Acclamation



Lucas Larson  
Legislative Council President



Colton Lyons  
President of Student Affairs



Madalena DeAndrea  
President of Internal Affairs



Marcus Fatenos  
President of External Affairs