

From: Lauren Robel, Provost

To: Graduate Worker's Coalition

Re: GWC Concerns

Date: February 19, 2021

I am grateful to the Graduate Worker's Coalition (GWC) for the opportunity to discuss funding for graduate education and, relatedly, the purpose of so-called "mandatory" fees. We are in a national political conversation right now about funding for higher education writ large, and of course graduate education is a core part of our mission, so the questions are timely. But the GWC also raises troubling claims, to which we owe close attention, that the university is behaving immorally towards our graduate students. In particular, the GWC has made three claims about Indiana University Bloomington's approach to graduate funding. Two of those claims focus particularly, as the GWC's name suggests, on Student Academic Appointees (SAAs): (1) That SAAs are not paid a "living wage" and that therefore IUB is placing them in precarious financial conditions; and (2) that SAAs should be exempt, because they are part-time employees, from the obligation to pay the five core fees---for transportation, the Student Health Center, technology, R&R, and student activities---that all students pay, no matter which program they are in.<sup>1</sup> Finally, the GWC claims that IUB has behaved heartlessly, by ignoring these claims, and by failing to address concerns about the amount of graduate stipends, even in light of a report in 2019 by a College of Arts & Sciences Taskforce that raised concerns about graduate stipends.

I ultimately reject all of these claims. They cannot withstand careful analysis. They are, at the end of the day, premised on a number of unarticulated assumptions, each of which I will surface and discuss. However, I appreciate the GWC raising these issues. By doing so, we have been able to get a better and more comprehensive understanding of how graduate funding works on the campus, and have been able to push for some positive changes that I will talk about at the end of this long report.

I proceed in four parts. First, I explain and outline the scope of this analysis, which focuses on PhD students who have received student academic appointments. Second, I discuss funding for PhD SAAs from all sources by school. Third, I discuss mandatory fees: what they are, what they fund, and who pays them. Finally, I address particularly the GWC arguments. I apologize in advance for the length of this report, but the GWC claims require that I walk carefully through the underlying factual predicate that can permit me to analyze these claims accurately. I appreciate your patience.

## **I. Scope of Report**

The mission of IU Bloomington includes undergraduate, masters, and doctoral education, the latter designed to prepare students to participate at the most highly-skilled levels of their disciplines, whether in academia or in other sectors. This report focuses on PhD education. It therefore excludes discussion of funding for professional masters students, and professional doctorates, such as JDs, MDs, DMs, DPHs, or EdDs. While IUB provides significant fellowship support to these students, and some of them receive stipends, the GWC claims do not focus on them, nor does the College report. I suspect this is so because there is wide agreement that those pursuing professional degrees are investing in a

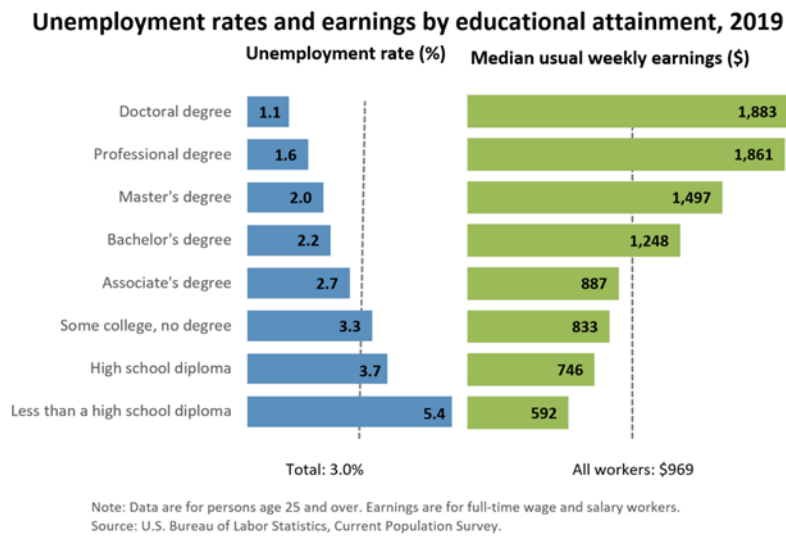
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<sup>1</sup> The GWC has also raised the question of the international student fee, which I will discuss as well.

professional credential that will return lifetime dividends. According to the Council of Graduate Schools, the decision to seek advanced degrees is indeed a wise economic investment:

[T]here is [strong evidence](#) that advanced education levels continue to be associated with higher salaries. A study by the Georgetown Center on Education and the Workforce showed that across the fields examined, individuals with a graduate degree earned an average of 38.3% more than those with a bachelor’s degree in the same field. The expected lifetime earnings for someone without a high school degree is \$973,000; with a high school diploma, \$1.3 million; with a bachelor’s degree, \$2.3 million; with a master’s degree, \$2.7 million; and with a doctoral degree (excluding professional degrees), \$3.3 million. Other data indicate that the overall unemployment rate for individuals who hold graduate degrees is far lower than for those who hold just an undergraduate degree.”<sup>2</sup>

The federal Bureau of Labor Statistics<sup>3</sup> makes similar points, as the chart below illustrates:



Careful readers will notice that both of these sources suggest that PhD students are not exempt from these earnings and employment dividends. Faculty believe that PhD students do, however, have different claims for support from the university than professional students, because those pursuing PhDs include both students heading to the private sector or government and those who will take the

<sup>2</sup> Council of Graduate Schools and Educational Testing Service. (2012). [Pathways Through Graduate School and Into Careers](#). Report from the Commission on Pathways Through Graduate School and Into Careers. Princeton, NJ: Educational Testing Service.

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.bls.gov/emp/chart-unemployment-earnings-education.htm>

place of current faculty in academia.<sup>4</sup> High-research institutions like IU Bloomington share a commitment to be strong partners in providing support for our PhD students. This paper focuses on those students, and how they are funded.

## II. Funding for PhD SAAs

In order to meet our mission, all schools provide support for Ph.D students, often through the appointment of these students as research or teaching assistants. The following is intended to answer questions about the sources and levels of support provided to those PhD students at Indiana University--Bloomington who have student academic appointments.

- **What are Ph.D SAAs?**

Student Academic Appointees (SAAs) are Ph.D students who are appointed to, *at most*, half-time (.5 FTE) employment requiring 15-20 hours of work each week. Not all Ph.D SAAs are half-time; some are appointed to .375 FTE. SAAs are full-time students who receive SAA appointments to support them in their degree programs. The work they do as SAAs does benefit the university. But is also benefits the SAAs by facilitating their training as researchers and teachers by giving them opportunities to teach, or to support the teaching and research of experienced faculty members as they learn their professions from them. In order to ensure they make progress toward their degrees, they are therefore restricted by policy, with very limited exceptions, to working at most half time.<sup>5</sup> SAA appointments are typically for the two 16-week semesters of the academic year at half-time, that is, 15-20 hours/week.

- **How does IU Bloomington contribute to SAA support during the academic year?**

During the academic year, SAAs on the Bloomington campus receive the following support, worth on average **\$51,775**:

- a monetary stipend for serving half-time as a graduate assistant, teaching assistant, or research assistant;
- additional monetary support from graduate fellowships and other departmental or grant funds;
- a tuition remission and remission of some program-specific fees; and
- health and dental insurance.

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<sup>4</sup> The number of PhD students who will go into academia, as opposed to industry or business, is a matter of debate. See, for instance, Katie Langin, "[In a first, U.S. private sector employs nearly as many Ph.D.s as schools do.](#)" *Science* (March 12, 2019);

<sup>5</sup> There are exceptional cases where SAAs appointments may exceed .5, but such an appointment must be approved by the student's advisor to ensure it will not affect progress towards degree.

The following chart shows the academic year support for Ph.D-intended SAAs in the academic units during FY2020:<sup>6</sup>

	Number of PhD SAAs	Average Compensation (Stipend + Fellowships)	Average Tuition Remission	Average Health Insurance Premium	Average Total Package Funding
College of Arts & Sciences	1345	\$20,878	\$28,500	\$3,252	\$52,630
• Arts & Humanities	346	\$18,327	\$23,605	\$3,252	\$45,184
• Natural & Mathematical	678	\$22,900	\$29,182	\$3,252	\$55,334
• Social & Historical	321	\$19, 527	\$25,315	\$3,252	\$48,094
Hamilton Lugar School of Global and International Studies	40	\$22,456	\$19,250	\$3,252	\$44,958
The Media School	38	\$18,508	\$19,250	\$3,252	\$41,010
School of Education	147	\$19,571	\$20,920	\$3,252	\$43,743
Kelley School of Business	60	\$25,908	\$34,900	\$3,252	\$64,060
Luddy School of Informatics, Computing and Engineering	236	\$21,399	\$21,772	\$3,252	\$46,423
Jacobs School of Music	40	\$17,120	\$31,266	\$3,252	\$51,638
O’Neill School of Public and Environmental Affairs	52	\$19,929	\$21,939	\$3,252	\$45,120
School of Medicine	25	\$22,500	\$31,932	\$3,252	\$57,684
School of Public Health	74	\$19,262	\$19,669	\$3,252	\$42,183
School of Optometry	11	\$21,500	\$24,881	\$3,252	\$49,633
<b>IU Bloomington</b>	<b>2,082</b>	<b>\$21,175</b>	<b>\$27,348</b>	<b>\$3,252</b>	<b>\$51,775</b>

- **Do SAAs receive any other support?**

Yes. Many PhD students receive additional summer stipends that support their research in addition to the academic-year support detailed above. SAAs and fellowship recipients (and household members) are also eligible for a variety of other benefits through IU HR, including the employee assistance program, [SupportLinc](#), which provides counseling services and [Care@Work](#), which provides financial and logistical support for caregiving.

<sup>6</sup> FY 20 covers the academic year Fall 2019 and Spring 2020.

- **Is the support IU provides intended to cover all expenses for PhD SAAs?**

No. As noted above, while IU Bloomington provides substantial support to its students, worth on average over \$50,000 annually to each student, PhD education also confers a life-long benefit on the student. Students who have SAAs are part-time employees. This part-time status is necessary in order to ensure that they are able to complete their course work and their required research. The part-time limitations on student employment recognize that SAA appointments are not the reason students attend IUB. Rather, they attend IUB to complete degrees. As do other students, students pursuing doctoral education must rely on other sources of funding, such as educational loans, summer employment, and partner and family contributions, in addition to the funding supplied by IUB. In Section IV., I will discuss what this individual contribution would typically be using average compensation amounts from the table above.

### III. Mandatory Fees

While Indiana University is a public institution, state funding accounts for only 16% of the funding for our academic and student-support programs. Mandatory fees are those fees approved by the trustees to support common-pool services, and that are paid by all students, no matter what program they attend. These fees are the taxes our students pay for the common goods and infrastructure of the university.

- **How Much Are Mandatory Fees?**

Mandatory fees include:

[2020–2021 Combined Mandatory Fee Per Semester, By Enrollment](#)

Fee	< or equal to 3 credits	3-6 credits	6 or more credits
Student Activity	51.05	109.72	109.72
Technology	51.00	102.09	202.02
Repair and Rehabilitation	50.00	100.16	200.32
Student Health	0	122.54	122.54
Transportation	17.14	34.29	68.57
<b>Total Combined Mandatory Fee</b>	<b>173.13</b>	<b>486.80</b>	<b>703.19</b>

- **Have fees been adjusted in light of restricted campus access during COVID?**

Yes. Students taking a fully-online set of courses who are not living in Bloomington pay discounted mandatory fees. This discount recognizes that students are unable to physically access transportation, health, and other services.

- **What Do Each of these Fees Support?**

1. **Student Technology**

University Information Technology Services (UITS) uses student technology fees to support the services that it provides to students, such as the Student Technology Centers, instruction

and classroom technology, the Support Center, and specific technology needs within students' schools of study. UITS relies on the annual survey and other key inputs from students to identify which services to support with the fees. Items include (largest categories): Student Technology Center; Instruction & Collaborative Technology; IT Support Services; Research Technologies; IT Systems; Software & Administration; and IT Training

## **2. Student Health Center (SHC)**

The Student Health Center provides student-centered health services and education on campus. The student health fee lowers the cost of these services for all students, including graduate students. SHC not only treats students with illness, but also helps educate students to empower them to live healthy lives across their lifetime. Our providers and staff bring expertise on college health to have a real impact on the lives of the population being served. Below are some of the highlights of funding uses:

- One (1) intake or Counseling and Psychological Services (CAPS) Now session and two (2) free counseling sessions each semester.
- One (1) free nutrition counseling session each semester.
- Discounted medical services.
- Access to counseling and psychiatric services available from our Sexual Assault Crisis Service (SACS).
- CAPS workshops and support group sessions
- Tobacco/vaping cessation services.
- Outreach and educational programming for physical and mental well-being.
- Discounted massage therapy.
- Prescription delivery to residence halls.
- Access to WellTrack, an online self-help therapy platform.
- Free Lyft Health transportation for SHC referrals to non-SHC area providers.
- After-hours call service for emergency medical, mental health, and sexual assault services.
- Campus/public health services or benefits that are essential for either the personal health of an individual student or the overall health of the campus. For example, support for the COVID-19 pandemic campus response.

## **3. Repair and Rehabilitation**

Repair and rehabilitation (R&R) projects are vitally necessary to the teaching and research mission of all Indiana University campuses. These projects ensure safe and effective learning and work environments while seeking efficiencies and planning for future needs. The R&R fee goes toward the improvement of the infrastructure of the Bloomington Campus. Examples of the types of investments made with the student R&R fee in FY 20 include: Building (envelope, structure, roof, and windows); Steam Production; Interior Construction (including classroom); Hardscape and Landscape; Utilities & Water Updates; Electrical, and Mechanical & Plumbing.

#### 4. Transportation

The transportation fee provides 95% of the funding for the Campus Bus Service and related student-centered transportation on campus. The Campus Bus Service is linked to the City of Bloomington routes and provides transportation to get to and from class, labs, activities, and libraries. The fee covers operating costs and bus replacements. Diesel buses are typically \$500,000; electric buses are twice that cost.

Campus Bus provides efficient transportation for Bloomington campus students, faculty, and staff whether they commute or live in IU residential housing. Access to all Bloomington Transit routes is provided by a portion of the student transportation fee. Service is provided throughout the year and all days of the week. Students and families without personal vehicles rely on Campus Bus to get to classes, work, and groceries. Campus Bus provides safe transportation, especially late at night when students have evening classes or on campus jobs. This includes the Night Owl service that operates on weekends until 3am. Annual ridership is between 2-3 million rides, and the service is heavily used by students daily. Campus Bus operates shuttle services for student groups, alumni groups, academic groups, Auditorium events, and sporting events. Because the Campus Bus carries masses of people around campus, it reduces traffic congestion and the numbers of single occupancy vehicles.

#### 5. Student Activity Fee

The Student Activity Fee supports student life on campus through the following:

- **Campus Recreational Sports:**  
Campus recreational sports uses 100% of the student fee allocated to recreational sports for programs and services that directly benefit students. Student fees do not go to administrative costs or faculty/staff programs. Of the 38,597 students who are assessed mandatory fees, this commitment to diversity of options has resulted in 30,185 students (78%) participating in Campus Recreational Sports. This number results in 1.9 million uses per year. Clearly, the student fee provides the widest scope of opportunities and best value in town. As importantly, 50% of the funding returns to students through employment. Our hourly wage student employees represent 150 different academic majors on campus and constitute 96% of our staffing model.
- **Student Legal Services:**  
Student Legal Services provides high-quality, comprehensive legal services to the students at IU-Bloomington. Students who pay the fee receive individual legal advice and representation at no additional charge. The fee allocation allows Student Legal Services to devote time and resources to assist students in matters where the amount at issue may be substantial to the student client, but which would likely be cost-prohibitive for attorneys in private practice. Security deposit returns and other leasing disputes are good examples of cases that affect thousands of students every year, but which rarely rise to the high-dollar dispute levels to justify representation at market attorney fee rates. Student Legal Services can help students with the matters that affect

them most, without worrying about billable hours, because of the fee funding it receives each semester.

- **IU Auditorium**

The fee provides discounts for student tickets for programming (even online). Discount of up to 50% off tickets for students. IU Auditorium also provides several other ancillary programs for students including artist interactions, student organization event support, student volunteer and staff engagement, and leadership and career programs, most of which have continued over the last year.

- **Culture of Care:**

The Culture of Care provides campus-wide programs and initiatives that focus on sexual well-being, drug and alcohol awareness, mental health, and respect. Many students struggle with a wide variety of concerns during their time in college. Culture of Care encompasses the areas that can be particularly difficult for college students. Peer to peer education and support has been proven to be highly beneficial for teenagers and young adults. Having students run programs, hand out resources, and work to destigmatize the belief that asking for help is a sign of weakness, helps students feel more comfortable utilizing the resources that Indiana University offers.

- **Indiana Memorial Union**

The fee covers cleaning and basic maintenance of the Student Involvement Tower. The Tower provides office, cubicle, and storage space for more than 50 student organizations, including many of the major campus-wide organizations, like IU Student Government, Union Board, IU Dance Marathon, Funding Board, and the Board of Aeons.

- **Funding Board**

Provides funding that makes impactful student organization initiatives happen for all non-student fee funded student organizations (around 545) including support for student events, travel and professional development, and internal organizational needs. Student organizations assist in providing the co-curricular experience for students to participate in an organization, field, and/or charitable program that provides a social and learning experience as well as providing the campus community impactful programs and services. Student organizations often request funds for programs and events that are important campus experiences and traditions and need the support from Funding Board to continue.

- **Student Government (both IUSG and GPSG)**

- The Graduate and Professional Student Organization (GPSG) is recognized as the official student government for the post-baccalaureate population at Indiana University, Bloomington. Each of the 10,150 graduate and professional students at IUB is a member of the organization, encouraged to participate in our many academic, social, and community-oriented events and initiatives. The Graduate and Professional Student Organization serves the graduate and professional students on the IU Bloomington campus in four core ways: Advocacy, Academic Support, Community Building, and Graduate Resources. GPSG strives, through its various programs and services, to provide opportunities for graduate and professional students to manage their professional lives effectively and efficiently during their time at Indiana University. Some of these support services are: Travel Awards; Research Award; Faculty Mentor Award; Yolanda Treviño Service Award.



- IU Student Government uses its funding to support campus-wide initiatives that impact and support students. These initiatives evolve each year to meet the needs of the campus community and serve immediate issues and concerns. This year, IU Student Government responded to the COVID-19 pandemic and the racial injustice pandemic. Initiatives are funded that support all students. IU Student Government serves as the voice of the student body to university leadership and the Bloomington Faculty Council and is committed to protecting student rights, enriching student life, and improving the Indiana University experience. This year, IU Student Government responded to COVID related needs by supporting Crimson Cupboard, the on-campus food pantry, to provide supplemental food, providing funding for the Emergency Meal Project during the summer, and supporting the Safer Sex Express, a contactless contraception delivery method. Funding has been used to support civic engagement and voting during the election this fall. The organization increased funding to outreach efforts to ensure they bring in a diverse membership and gather student input and voice in decision making. Funds were also used to support student leaders within the organization. Student leaders were awarded stipends to ensure all students, not just students financially able to participate in a voluntary organization, could participate.
- **WIUX (Student radio)**  
WIUX has two stations, 99.1 FM WIUX-LP Bloomington and B-Side Internet Radio. 99.1FM is WIUX's low power FM station, which can be heard on the radio in Bloomington and worldwide on our website. B-Side is WIUX's online-only station and can be heard on our website as well. Both stations work to provide entertaining and timely programming to the student population and the Bloomington community. Our B-Side station continues to expand and has started to become more popular in terms of involvement interest. Radio shows on WIUX's stations range from rock music shows and all-vinyl programming to news, sports, and specialty talk shows, with everything in between.
- **Union Board**  
Union Board helps provide the valuable co-curricular experience for all students that supports community building, building connections and friendships, learning across difference and exposure to new cultures and ideas, on-campus, and alcohol-free experiences, and share experiences that connect students to Indiana University. Provides support for student educational, social, and cultural programs and events for all IUB students ranging from large scale lectures and concerts, films, cultural dance, and performance events, late night experiences, a student-featured art gallery and creative arts magazine, etc.

## 6. International Fee

International students, regardless of academic program, pay a special fee that supports international student services. Those services include the extensive advising and technical support that is required for our students and the university to comply with immigration laws and regulations, including the following:

- Interpreting and implementing U.S. laws, regulations, policies, and guidance.
- Complying with reporting requirements. The Department of Homeland Security maintains a web-based system called SEVIS (Student and Exchange Visitor Information

System) that keeps records for all international students enrolled at U.S. colleges and universities. There are both ongoing and event-based reporting requirements, including but not limited to arrival on campus and check-in, enrollment, current address, education level, program and major field of study, number of courses and credits enrolled, practical training recommendations and authorization, travel authorization, and the like. The Office of International Services maintains an internal system that interfaces both with SEVIS and with other IU systems.

- Assisting all international students in complying with their obligation to remain in visa status. The requirements here are very detailed: e.g., a student cannot drop below a certain number of credit hours; can't switch program of study without advance approval; must complete their program of study within a specific timeframe, must obtain authorization to change from one degree program level to another or to transfer schools, etc. This requires both technical support (to ensure that the system described above automatically flags situations where a student might need to update their record) and extensive individual advising.
- Assisting international students seeking to establish eligibility for academic internships, post-degree extensions of their visas for employment purposes; authorization to work; etc. Again, this is all heavily regulated and so requires a lot of individual advising.
- Individual case-work in the event that a student runs into an issue such as denial of an employment benefit or visa denial (e.g., working with contacts at U.S. consular posts overseas to determine why an application was denied, address the issue, etc.).
- Communications regarding all of the foregoing (including on website, through regular webinars, information sessions with academic units, etc.).
- Local, state, and national advocacy for our international students regarding all of the foregoing (for instance, ensuring that campus academic units take the particular situation of international students into account, and that representatives in the Department of Homeland Security, as well as the Indiana congressional delegation, understand the unique issues and concerns facing international students).

#### **IV. GWC Claims**

With these factual predicates in place, let me turn to the GWC's arguments.

- **Living Wage**

The GWC argues that their stipends do not provide for a living wage. There are three difficulties with this argument. First, stipends do not account for all the monetary support that SAAs receive. Second, living wage calculators suggest that the GWC is incorrect, even on its own terms. Third, the entire concept of a living wage is difficult to apply to people who are working, at most, 15-20 hours each week. However, translating the total compensation graduate students receive to an hourly wage with the help of a well-respected living wage calculator demonstrates that the GWC's claim is wrong.

- **What is a "living wage"?**

As the New York Times notes, “The term ‘living wage’ gets thrown around enough by politicians and advocacy groups that the definition can get muddy.”<sup>7</sup> It needs to be distinguished from the [federal poverty guidelines](#),<sup>8</sup> on the one hand, and from the concept of a Universal Basic Income<sup>9</sup>, on the other, neither of which are connected to work. The concept of a living wage, by contrast, focuses instead on the amount that a person working a standard 40-hour week would need to provide for basic needs. Living wage discussions often intersect with minimum wage discussions, as both are tied to the sensible idea that those working full-time should be able to meet their basic needs.

For PhD SAAs, total monetary awards----the dollars that student is using to live on---include both stipends and grants and fellowships. So let’s look at the living wage argument in both ways: as a function of the “wage” part of their compensation, and as a function of the total awards they receive.

Returning to the New York Times article: “In 2004, Amy Glasmeier, now a professor of economic geography and regional planning at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, developed [the Living Wage Calculator](#). This tool uses more specific data to gauge the basic needs of American families. It estimates the cost of food, child care, health care (both insurance premiums and typical health care costs), housing, transportation and other necessities.” Importantly, it also translates a living wage for a particular location to an hourly wage, which allows us to think about a living wage in the context of part-time employees.

- **Do PhD SAAs earn a living wage?**

Yes, they do. According to the MIT Living Wage Calculator, a [“living wage” in Monroe County, Indiana](#) for a single adult is \$14.44/hour. PhD SAAs on .5 appointment commit to work 15-20 hours each week for two sixteen-week semesters. Using 20 hours/week as the standard, PhD SAAs work 640 hours/year. Using the MIT calculator number of \$14.44, SAAs would be receiving a living wage if they received \$9241 annually for half-time work. No SAAs receive stipends that low. Students receiving a stipend of \$18,000/year would be earning \$30/hour. Using the 640 hours/year figure, it is easy to calculate that there are no SAA PhD students receiving below a “living wage” **for the work they do**. This is true even if we assume that all of the SAAs are required to pay the full amount of mandatory fees for six credits or more of \$703.19. We could make an even more generous assumption about the work required of SAAs by assuming that they are working at the 20 hour/week rate for 10 full months, for a total of 800 hours. That would yield a living wage calculation of \$11,552. Again, no school offers stipends that low for PhDs.

And of course, as the table above demonstrates, SAAs typically receive far **more** in non-tuition remission funding than would be necessary to qualify for a living wage in Monroe County. Even the lowest school combined funding average of \$17,120 is \$28.53/hour.

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<sup>7</sup> Eric Ravenscraft, [“What a ‘Living Wage’ Actually Means,”](#) New York Times, June 5, 2019.

<sup>8</sup> The most recent (2021) [poverty guideline](#) for a single person is \$12,880/year.

<sup>9</sup> The concept of a “universal basic income,” advocated by Andrew Yang in the last presidential campaign, would have the federal government provide a set base income for all individuals. See Maura Francese and Delphine Prady, “Universal Basic Income,” (International Monetary Fund Working Paper 2018) for heterogeneous definitions of the UBI.

While GWC consistently ties its claims to its members' status as graduate workers, it is likely to object at this point that this analysis is not what it meant. The same MIT living wage calculator I used shows [typical expenses in Monroe County](#) require \$25,611 annually in after-tax income (although it assumes over \$2000 in medical expenses, including the cost of health insurance, and SAAs receive health insurance as part of their packages). So what might GWC mean instead?

It could be advancing a claim that PhD students should receive total funding equal to the amount of the cost of living in Monroe County---in effect, that their PhD programs should be free. It would be strange to tie that claim simply to their status as part-time workers, thereby suggesting that half-time work should be compensated at full-time wages (although maybe that is what GWC is advancing). In any event, I am sympathetic. It would be wonderful to fund all PhD students so that they needed to rely on no other funding sources at all during their PhD program.

Let's see how far off we actually are, though. SAAs receive full tuition remission, worth anywhere from \$19,200-34,900 annually. IUB calculates estimated academic year [non-tuition and fee cost of attendance](#) for graduate students at \$21,772. Let's include those mandatory fees, which brings the total to \$22,475. By this measure, the lowest average SAA funding package would require a student to find around \$5,355 in additional funding annually; the highest more than covers the full cost of attendance.

Or we could come at this question from a different direction. The MIT Living Wage calculator estimates that a [single person in Monroe County](#) needs \$25,611 in after-tax income to meet typical expenses. By this measure, the lowest average PhD SAA would be required to fund \$8491 in living expenses annually; the highest average SAA would still be covered.<sup>10</sup>

In other words, a student with no other income could still get a PhD with a relatively modest amount of debt, particularly assuming the return on investment that was demonstrated in section one.

Finally, GWC might object that not all graduate students are single and some are parents, and I would agree. I would have fit that description myself as a graduate student. But IUB's obligation is to the student, not the student's family.

- **Should SAAs be exempt from mandatory fees? Should international students be exempt from the international fee?**

As noted above, mandatory fees, paid by all students, fund critical student-facing common goods, infrastructure, and services. They are like the taxes we pay as citizens to support our public schools and roads. GWC makes two arguments with respect to these fees. First, it argues that the fees are a "pay to work" requirement. This is inaccurate. The fees are a function of student status, and would be owed whether or not the students had academic appointments, as a condition of enrollment. Second, GWC argues that because SAAs are employed part-time by the university, they should be exempt from the mandatory fees, because paying fees means that their actual funding is reduced by the amount of the fees.

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<sup>10</sup> I am assuming here that if an SAAs only income came from stipends and fellowships, and the student takes a standard single-filer exemption, that student's tax burden would be minimal. See [IRS Tax Brackets](#).

But student academic appointees are also (and frankly, foremost) students. As students, they receive the same benefits from these fees as all of their colleagues. The GWC argument is, in effect, that SAAs should receive the benefits of these services but be able to shift the cost of the services to all other students. How exactly is that fair?

The same is true for the international student fee. We are delighted to host international students at IUB, and we value their participation in our classrooms and programs. International students require quite a bit of special support, listed in section III above, that is specific to the regulatory schemes under which their visas are issued. Particularly during the last presidential administration, when it appeared that there was a new threat to international students every month, the Office of International Students has been enormously taxed to provide the support that international students have a right to expect, and relies on the fee to provide that support. International students come to the United States under visa regulations that require that they have the [means to support themselves](#) for their course of study. The costs for providing these services will not go away if international SAAs do not pay the fee. Rather, those costs will shift to a smaller pool of non-SAA international students or to domestic students. Again, I do not see how this is fair. The international students who pay the fees all use the services.

As is true with any kind of tax in support of a common good or infrastructure, taxpayers---or in this case, fee-payers---can and do complain about either the overall amount, or about whether they should have to pay for individual services that they don't feel they use. Those complaints are certainly valid exercises in political participation, and they may even be correct, but they are not specific to SAAs. And there are processes to address these concerns. For instance, students serve on the Committee for Fee Review (CFR) that makes recommendations about the use of student fees.<sup>11</sup>

- **Finally, has IUB ignored graduate SAA funding in the period since the College Report was issued?**

No.

In May 2019, the College of Arts and Sciences Task Force on Graduate Student Funding issued a report concluding that the College's stipends were not competitive with other Big 10 institutions, and that they provided inadequate funding to attract and support graduate students. The GWC claims that since that report, IUB has done next to nothing to address the concerns it raised.

This is simply inaccurate. In 2019, as Provost, I committed \$1.8 million in base funding to the College for graduate student support. Part of this funding was used last year to eliminate an average of \$1200 in annual College-based fees for all graduate students. This provided an increase in effective compensation of 8% for graduate students currently receiving the minimum base stipend in the College. The College has also worked individually with most of its departments to ensure that appropriate IUU Foundation fellowship funds are allocated to graduate student compensation and to systematically move departments to a minimum stipend of \$18,000. There are only 16 of 42 College departments and

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<sup>11</sup> Let me note here that one of the GWC participants in the CFR resigned under protest because the student chairs of that committee decided to impose a non-disclosure agreement on committee members. The CFR has always been a transparent body. While I understand the instinct to want to have confidential discussions, I do not think the use of an NDA is appropriate in this setting.

programs whose average total compensation is below that amount now, and none of them by even \$500. This number will be reduced to 9 of 42 in the next academic year, with plans that \$18,000 be the minimum base stipend for all departments the following academic year. Indeed, the elimination of the annual College-based fee and increasing the minimum base stipends are two of the recommendations of the College of Arts and Sciences Task Force on Graduate Student Funding report.

And this systematic progress is true for the rest of the campus. During the past two years, all of the Bloomington schools have reviewed school-based fees for graduate students and have eliminated a number of fees. The Jacobs School is increasing stipends for FY 22 by \$3092, in order to offset a program fee and put additional dollars into stipends. The Luddy School increased stipends by 10% for FY21. Together, the College, Luddy, and Jacobs account for 78% of the PhD SAAs on the campus.

During the “For All” Capital Campaign that just concluded, the IU Bloomington campus secured an additional 225 graduate fellowships at a total amount of \$56, 127,111. While those endowment funds come in over a period of time, they are all designated to increase graduate support.

In other words, during the period since the report came out, the campus and its academic schools and departments have all been working to ensure we remain competitive for graduate students on every front we can.

## **Conclusion**

The issues that the GWC has raised are structural, and I have addressed them as such. But I recognize that the GWC has raised these issues in the difficult and challenging context of the pandemic, when students, faculty, and staff may be grappling with unexpected additional expenses. IU is doing everything possible to help with those pandemic-related expenses, distributing millions of dollars in emergency aid to students, including graduate students. If you are facing such unexpected expenses, please contact your department or the [Division of Student Affairs Emergency Fund](#).

GWC has helped the campus see areas where we can improve in support of our graduate students. We are working to standardize offer letters, for instance, to make the total financial package and total value clear. I have asked Vice Provosts Eliza Pavalko and David Daleke to revise the published stipend minima, which are out of date and do not reflect our current approach. Graduate fellowships were a priority for the capital campaign, and we exceeded our goal. And all parts of the campus will continue to look carefully at ways to expand graduate funding.

Thank you for expressing your views.