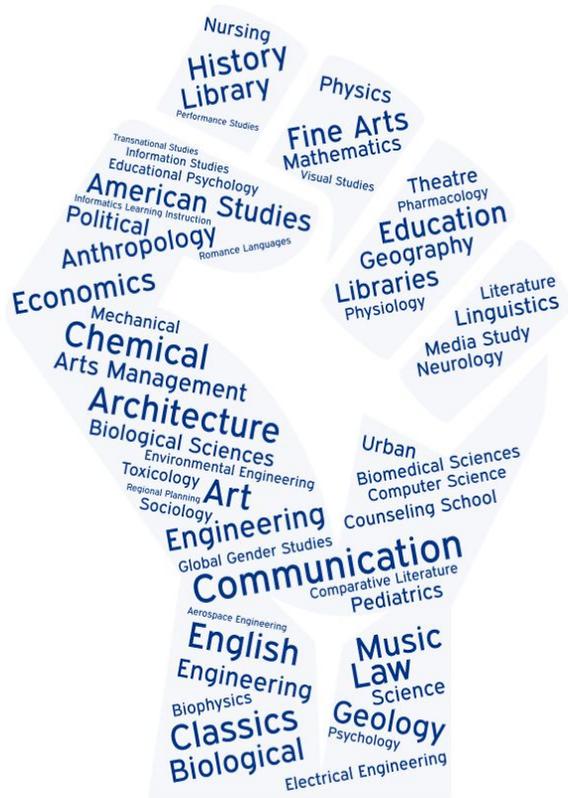


DEAD BROKE?

**JOIN THE MOVEMENT
FOR A LIVING STIPEND**

FALL 2017

WHO WE ARE



THE TEAM

26 active members in 3 departments & growing

THE PETITION

370 graduate students & faculty in 47 departments signed our petition

WHAT WE WANT

LONG TERM

- a LIVING STIPEND for all graduate teaching & research assistants
- COMPETITIVE FUNDING for all graduate teaching & research assistants

SHORT TERM

- NO MORE HIDDEN COSTS Eliminate fees for graduate students
- RAISE THE FLOOR Pay increases for the most impoverished departments
- ORGANIZE Build solidarity & community across departments

a SHORT, PARTISAN HISTORY

A TIMELINE OF THE MOVEMENT

SPRING 2017

MID MARCH The movement begins with students raising issues of working conditions on the English Graduate Student Listserv in response to Department recruitment efforts.

LATE MARCH English Graduate students draft a petition raising issues about working conditions and demanding a Department meeting to address them. After discussion, the petition is revised and circulated, gaining the signatures of 50% of enrolled students.

EARLY APRIL The petition is submitted, and the Department schedules a meeting for April 19.

Formal grad-only meetings are held to discuss petition and strategy for Department meeting. Survey of graduate student hardship is circulated via the listserv. Debate continues over the goals and tactics of the movement. The petition is revised to center the demand for a living stipend.

APRIL 19 A Department meeting is held to address the petition. Clemens 306 is over capacity. Grads and alumni speak to financial hardships and inadequate support for international students, MA students, and caregivers.

LATE APRIL A group of students and faculty develop letter to CAS Dean Robin Schulze demanding a living stipend. Another group drafts a petition demanding a living stipend from the UB College Administration for campus-wide circulation. A third group begins to collect data on stipend levels across the university.

At the April 26 Department meeting, English faculty address several issues raised in the petition:

won: Department endowed chairs will contribute \$5000 supplements to 5th-year graduate students for 2017-2018.

won: Travel funding will be increased from \$250 to \$500 per student.

won: An English Department Ombuds-Committee will be formed. The composition will be one tenured faculty and one graduate student.

won: All future full-time PhD students (beginning Fall 2018) to be admitted on TA lines or with comparable funding. Admissions committee will consider exceptions but only in a minimum of entirely self-funded cases.

May

English graduate students attend Faculty Senate meetings, presenting the Petition for a Living Stipend and questioning Provost Zukoski and President Tripathi on their commitment and on measures toward a living stipend. Administration admits to not having taken action. The Faculty Senate resolves to address the issue in the fall.

Letter drafted and sent to *The Spectrum*.

summer 2017

JUNE-AUG

Meetings held in June, July, and August to address growing the movement. Students from Physics attend. Actions include establishing “UB Ripping Us Off” Facebook page; trolling the college’s social media to raise awareness in regard to poor working conditions, low wages, and financial malfeasance; preparing public events and informational materials for the fall.

Letter drafted and sent to *The Public*.

FALL 2017

SEPTEMBER Saturday the 9th at 1 PM: Our monthly meeting. Contact us for details.

Wednesday the 13th & Thursday the 14th from 11 AM - 3 PM: Find us outside the Student Union. We want to hear about conditions in your departments and let you know more about the movement.

Thursday the 14th from 3:30 - 5 PM: First Annual UB Uppity Lecture by Prof. Jim Holstun: “The Moral Economy of the UB Precariat in the Twenty-First Century.” 538 Clemens Hall. Pizza will be served.

GET TO KNOW admin

A.K.A., WHO TO COMPLAIN TO AND ASK FOR \$

CaPen HALL

PRESIDENT SATISH K. TRIPATHI

SALARY: \$696,970

President Tripathi resisted calls for a Living Stipend in a May 2017 Faculty Senate meeting. He has also expressed little concern over UB's lack of black faculty when the issue was raised at this meeting.

Tripathi is a member of the Jacobs Foundation's board and a Trustee of the UB Foundation, which pays him \$150,000 a year. Tripathi and the billionaire Jeremy Jacobs also sit at the same table as part of the Western New York Regional Development Council.

Call Him Up: 716-645-2901 Let Him Know Your Thoughts: president@buffalo.edu

PROVOST CHARLES F. ZUKOSKI

SALARY IN 2014: \$432,000

His office plays a role in determining the wages of students and workers. Provost Zukoski has responded to adjunct protests and graduate student stipend concerns with derision.

Call Him Up: 716-645-2992 Let Him Know Your Thoughts: ubprovost@buffalo.edu

SEAN P. SULLIVAN VICE PROVOST, ACADEMIC PLANNING & BUDGET

SALARY: \$255,3000

Sullivan helps Zukoski in determining the wages of students and workers. Sullivan promised graduate students he would produce information on stipend levels across the university. To date, his office has not supplied these numbers.

Call Him Up: 716-645-2287 Let Him Know Your Thoughts: sps@buffalo.edu

SHARON NOLAN-WEISS DIRECTOR, DIVERSITY, EQUITY & INCLUSION

SALARY: \$139,279

Nolan Weiss's office is responsible for ensuring UB's compliance with policies covering discrimination, harassment, accommodations, equal opportunity and child protection. It's important to notify this office of harmful behavior *and* to hold them accountable for action.

Call Her Up: 716-645-2266 Let Her Know Your Thoughts: senolan@buffalo.edu

CLEMENS HALL

Dean ROBIN SCHULZE

Salary: \$127,680

To date, Schulze has not responded to an April 2017 letter from English faculty and graduate students asking for a living stipend.

Call Her Up: 716-645-2711

Let Her Know Your Thoughts: robinsch@buffalo.edu

BILLIONAIRES IN THE BACKGROUND

Jeremy JACOBS, CHAIRMAN OF THE UB COUNCIL

NET WORTH: \$4,400,000,000

The UB Council is the primary oversight and advisory board to UB. They help plan the future of the University and make sure that it is meeting its mission. Jacobs runs a hospitality and concession empire via his company Delaware North. He was a significant donor to the Trump campaign. Delaware North rents space to Immigrations and Custom Enforcement (ICE). Jacobs profiting off ICE appears to represent a conflict of interest given the fact that UB students have been screened and detained by ICE. As owner of the Boston Bruins, he defrauded the city of Boston of millions in dollars of potential charity revenue. Jacobs is also known as an enemy of labor and is thought to have headed the 2012 NHL Lockout, stopping the season so wealthy owners could get richer. Jeremy Jacob's worth is 488,888% greater than the yearly stipend of UB's lowest paid graduate worker.

Jeremy JACOBS JR.

MEMBER OF THE UB FOUNDATION INVESTMENT COMMITTEE

Jacobs Jr. is Co-Chief Executive of Delaware North and a member of the UB Foundation Investment Committee. The UB Foundation manages over a billion dollars for the University. It raises funds and helps decide how to spend it. While the foundation likes to say it mostly works with the money of wealthy donors, they actually take a lot of money directly from our pockets in the form of fees. You should have a say in how they spend these fees. Perhaps they could put it directly into student-workers' pockets, so they can teach and do research without worrying about how they're going to pay their rent.

Check it out!

<https://ubaaup.com/the-other-buffalo-billion-time-for-transparency-at-the-ub-foundation/>

UB PETITION FOR a LIVING STIPEND

DRAFTED MAY 2017

STILL AWAITING SUBMISSION TO THE ADMINISTRATION

We, the undersigned Faculty and Graduate Students of the State University of New York at Buffalo, hereby submit the following:

We affirm that the current minimum stipends for Teaching Assistant appointments throughout this University are unlivable. We come to this conclusion after a review of the Graduate Cost of Attendance listed on the UB Financial Aid Office website as well as lived experience.

The PhD programs at the State University of New York at Buffalo are fundamental to UB's mission as a Tier I research institution. Teaching Assistants, who are the bulk of students in PhD programs, sustain faculty research and scholarship and instruct large numbers of undergraduates. As they move out into academic and other intellectual work at different institutions, they constitute a network of collaborators for UB researchers and promote the reputation of UB nationally and even internationally.

Over the years, however, the financial position of TAs at UB has eroded, causing difficulties for them in the timely completion of their degrees, compromising their ability to compete on the academic job market, tarnishing the reputation of UB, and threatening its ability to recruit the best and brightest.

For the 2016-17 academic year, the nine-month cost of attendance, excluding tuition and fees, is listed as \$20,584 for off-campus living and \$17,891 for on-campus living. For the entire 12-month year, these costs are certainly higher, as students still need to pay for housing, food, and transportation during these other three months.

Because most departments do not currently pay their TAs a living stipend, international students are put in an especially difficult position. International students must adhere to a non-negotiable rule stipulating that they must show at least a \$22,000 balance in their bank accounts before their I-20 documents are renewed, so they can maintain legal status. This rule is simply unreasonable and unethical, there are several constraints regarding off-campus employment for international students and their on-campus employment is limited to 20 hours per week—which coincides with their TA responsibilities, which do not afford them a living stipend.

The University has implemented a 4.6% increase in overall tuition and fees during the 2017-2018 academic year, but does not acknowledge these increases for living expenses. The Graduate Cost of Attendance listed on the UB Financial Aid Office website currently suggests that living expenses will decrease by \$3259, which certainly is not the case. Using the increases suggested by the 2017-18 tuition and fees, the cost of living off-campus will be \$21,531, and living expenses on-campus will be \$18,714, excluding tuition and fees.

These figures affirm that TA stipends, many of which are below \$14,000, are unlivable, based on the data provided by the University itself. Based on these figures, we affirm that \$21,310 meets the minimum standard of a “living stipend.” This stipend would allow graduate students to afford the costs of living on campus and pay the \$2596 of mandatory fees imposed by the University. Understanding that on-campus housing is extremely limited, the living stipend must be above the minimum required to live on campus.

Further, we affirm that it is not reasonable or ethical to expect graduate students to take out supplementary loans to meet the minimum cost of living. Although this is a last resort for American students, their international peers do not have this option and consistently have to turn to family members or other sponsors to continue their education. Such circumstances delimit access to graduate study for students already assuming significant debt-burdens from undergraduate study and those who cannot gain access to reasonable loans or other financial support.

It is the position of the undersigned Faculty and Graduate Students that the University at Buffalo must pay a living stipend to its Teaching Assistants.

We hereby call upon the Provost and President to raise all TA stipends to a minimum living stipend of \$21,310, which meets the minimum cost of living at the present date.

SIGN THE PETITION HERE

<http://bit.ly/2pDiZfV>

Survey Results

FINANCIAL HARDSHIP GRADUATE STUDENTS SURVEY,
ENGLISH DEPARTMENT, APRIL 2017

1). Do you receive a TA/GA stipend? Please check all that apply.

a). Yes	43 — 74.14%
b). No	9 — 15.52%
c). Adjunct	6 — 10.34%
d). Unfunded International Student	4 — 6.90%

2). Did you receive a Dean's/Presidential Fellowship?

a). Yes	33 — 56.90%
b). No	21 — 36.21%
c). I received another fellowship	4 — 6.90%

3). Have you worked another job, either off-campus or extra-service, during your time at UB?

a). Yes	47 — 81.03%
b). No	11 — 18.97%

4). If yes to question #3, outline how many hours per week your extra employment requires.

a). Fewer than 5	3 — 6.25%
b). 5-15	15 — 31.25%
c). 15-25	13 — 27.08%
d). 25+/Full time	3 — 6.25%
e). Not during the semester, but during summer/winter breaks	14 — 29.17%

5). Have you received another substantial fellowship/scholarship (i.e., completion, multi-year, etc.) during your time at UB?

a). Yes	13 — 22.41%
b). No	30 — 51.72%
c). No, but I have received some conference assistance (etc.)	15 — 25.86%

6). Have you taken out student loans, or other sources of financing, during your time at UB?

a). Yes	30 — 51.72%
b). No	28 — 48.28%

7). Do you rely on financial or other material support from family, your partner, or friends?*

*this question was added to survey after some responses had already been received

a). Yes	29 — 72.50%
b). No	11 — 27.50%

8). Do you have dependents?

- | | |
|---------|-------------|
| a). Yes | 4 — 6.90% |
| b). No | 54 — 93.10% |

9). Have you had to miss out on professional development, such as conferences or travelling, etc, because of financial hardship?

- | | |
|---------|-------------|
| a). Yes | 41 — 70.69% |
| b). No | 17 — 29.31% |

10) Please offer any comments/clarifications to accompany your responses, or any other financial hardships/setbacks you have experienced, during your time at UB. (To preserve anonymity, these responses are not reproduced here. What follows are some general observations.)

a). *Students are relying on various sources of support to (struggle to) make ends meet. In addition to stories of depending on family for financial support, travel funds, and housing, many students here are debt-financing or subsisting off credit cards, which incur significant interest charges. Some students also reported living off savings or tax credits. One student noted that a group of students pools money to help each other in times of shortfall.*

b). *Many students are working beyond their TA/adjunct positions. Many reported employment throughout the year (both terms + breaks), and seizing additional opportunities (freelance/additional part-time work) whenever possible. Many reported that this distracted from satisfactory progress toward their degree. It was not just unfunded students who reported additional employment or student loans. Of the 10 students who reported only a TA/GA stipend, all reported outside employment, 6 of whom also reported private loans. Of those 33 students who reported a stipend and a CAS fellowship (Dean's/Presidential), 21 reported outside employment, 14 of whom also reported private loans.*

c). *Some students noted the unfairness of differential levels of support (i.e. fellowships) based on GRE scores.*

d). *International students are particularly vulnerable. Many are not offered TAships until late in their degree programs, if at all. Immigration law prevents them from working off campus, and on-campus jobs during semester breaks are limited. International students are also faced with higher tax burdens and health care premiums. Another critical issue reported is the annual re-issue of the I-20 form, wherein students need to show funds in their bank accounts sufficient for self-subsistence. This amount is \$22,000. A letter confirming TAship and tuition waiver still leads to a shortfall of \$4,500; students rely on family sponsorship or borrowing to maintain immigration status.*

e). *Some students reported having to resort to using fellowship amounts for health care costs or to pay off bills. Many students reported precarious financial situations and an anxiety about making ends meet.*

f). *Many students reported dissatisfaction with conference funding, which often does not even cover the cost of airfare. The stress of not being able to afford conferences is coupled with increasing pressure to professionalize. Some students noted a perceived disadvantage UB PhDs face on the job market, having not been able to attend valuable conferences or professional opportunities.*

UB RIPPING US OFF

\$ UB TAKES, \$ YOU CAN TAKE BACK

Here's how the University takes \$ directly out of our pockets:

College Fee	\$62.50
Technology Fee	\$398.25
Campus Life Fee	\$119.50
Health Service Fee	\$187.50
Academic Excellence Fee	\$187.50
Transcript Fee	\$5
Graduate Student Fee	\$64

That's a total of \$1024.25 per semester*, **\$2048.50 Per Year**

*based on itemization in an English graduate student's bill (August 30, 2017)

These are mandatory fees in addition to tuition. They don't necessarily come back to students in the form of goods that directly benefit students such as bloated administrator salaries and branding campaigns that cost millions of dollars. Many of us need this money to live our lives and do our jobs as students, research assistants, and teaching assistants.

Here are some funding sources so you can get your \$ back:

- GSA Conference Funding—\$300 for MAs, \$550 for PhDs.
<http://gsa.buffalo.edu/student-resources/conference-funding/>
- Departmental GSA—Get involved with your departmental GSA. Each has a budget, which can be used for additional conference funding or other ways to improve graduate student experience.
<http://gsa.buffalo.edu/clubs/departmental/>
- Mark Diamond Research Fund—PhD students can apply for up to \$3,000, MFA students for up to \$2,000, and Master's students for up to \$1,500 to fund dissertations or thesis expenses.
<http://gsa.buffalo.edu/student-resources/mdrf/>
- New York State & Graduate Student Employees Union Professional Development Awards—Funding for things like conferences, research, creative projects, curriculum development, etc. 2016 info:
https://www.goer.ny.gov/Training_Development/gseu/index.cfm

WHAT CAN I DO NOW?

GET IN TOUCH WITH US.

Let us know your concerns as a graduate student worker: UBRippingUsOff@gmail.com

Find out about our next meeting here: UBRippingUsOff.wordpress.com

Invite us to your next GSA meeting.