

A Resolution of the Bloomington Faculty Council in Support of the Rights and Protections for Graduate Student Academic Appointees during the COVID-19 Pandemic

Whereas, the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic has had, and continues to have, a negative impact on the academic, financial, and personal well-being of all faculty, students, and staff;

Whereas, graduate students currently face a particularly daunting set of personal and professional challenges, even as they continue to be called upon to shoulder significant professional responsibilities on Indiana University Bloomington's behalf;

Whereas, these challenges include everything from heightened exposure to potential job loss in the short term, to historically unprecedented uncertainty where their future career prospects are concerned, to increased debt, food insecurity, anxiety, and stress;

Whereas, President McRobbie and Provost Robel have announced that Indiana University Bloomington will offer both in-person and online instruction during the 2020-21 academic year;

Whereas, the faculty recognize that they have professional and ethical obligations to help students continue to progress toward the achievement of their academic goals, and to respect the terms of the students' appointment;

Whereas, during a pandemic clear and explicit communication of expectations is critical to the success of the student employee, the faculty, and the university;

Therefore, be it resolved that the Bloomington Faculty Council affirms the following principles and expectations for reopening and, if necessary, reclosing the Bloomington campus for the 2020-2021 year:

1. That Student Academic Appointees' (SAA) ability to continue to make timely progress toward the completion of their degrees be prioritized as a consideration in all relevant discussions and decision-making processes;
2. That any additional costs associated with the transition to and/or from an online educational format shall not be externalized onto graduate student instructors;
3. That units shall offer SAAs the same protections and personal health considerations offered to faculty where the determination of their instructional and other work responsibilities is concerned;
4. That reductions in the SAA-supported portion of the Indiana University Bloomington workforce shall be avoided at all costs;
5. That cuts to SAAs' pay and benefits shall be avoided at all costs;

6. That the SAA employment contracts include clear and explicit provisions regarding the terms of their employment, including, but not limited to, level of compensation, the scope of their responsibilities, and the average hourly commitment;
7. That the Council reaffirms its commitment to BL-ACA-D23, and encourages the campus to continue to examine ways in which we can support and expand the Graduate Student Ombuds-process;
8. That international students serving as SAAs be assisted with addressing challenges related to visas and travel restrictions, and accommodated to the greatest extent possible; and
9. That all of Indiana University Bloomington's instructional and research employees, including faculty and SAAs, recommit ourselves to doing our best to support one another, and the students we teach, under circumstances that are largely unprecedented and far from ideal.