**Higher Education Act Reauthorization**

**The Needs of Graduate Students**

*We urge you to support and co-sponsor legislation that:*

- Provides increased financial support for University-based research
- Improves the working conditions of graduate student researchers, including providing mental, physical, and financial support
- Expands access to diverse professional development opportunities

*Current legislation that we urge you to support includes:*

- Higher Education Mental Health Commission Act (S.3106)
- College Transparency Acts (S.1121)
- Civil Rights Transparency Act (H.R.6537)
- Empowering Students Through Enhanced Financial Counseling Act (H.R.1635)
- Aim Higher Act (H.R.6543)

**Graduate Student Life**

Graduate students suffer from extreme rates of mental health problems, six times that of the general population [1]:

- Globally, 41% showed moderate to severe anxiety and 39% moderate to severe depression. These numbers are higher in vulnerable populations. [1]
- 42-48% of science and engineering students at UC Berkeley are depressed. [2]

Graduate students with poor mental health report having negative relationships with their advisors, mentors, and PIs and report having a poor work-life balance. [1]

10-13% of graduate students are parents. [3, 4] Yet, in 2009, only 13% of AAU Universities provided maternity leave to doctoral students, and only 5% offered dependent health care. [3]

**Financial Climate**

In 2012-2013, the average cumulative debt for an undergraduate was $29,000, $57,000 (masters), and $75,000 (doctoral) - and $146,000 for a professional degree. [5]

Graduate students comprise 13% of the borrowing population, borrowing 40% of all loan dollars, and account for 77% of student loan profit [6]

Many graduate students live at near or below the living wage for single-person home [8] and must do so for around 8 years [7, 9]

Student loan debt has been compared to indentured servitude due to the increased time it takes to earn a degree, high loan payments, and modest academic salaries. [9]

**Research and Professional Needs**

Jobs in academia are decreasing significantly, and graduate students need training for diverse career fields. [10, 11]

Accessing published research is difficult because it is hidden behind a paywall, even though most is federally-funded. [12]

NIH hosts a free-to-public publication database - PubMed Central. More than 700,000 access it each weekday: ~25% are from universities, 40% are from the general public, and 17% are from industry [13].

At least 50 major publishers support open-access models [14]
References

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