



April 8, 2020

Dear Board of Trustees of Portland State University:

The Graduate Employees Union would like to recognize the hard work and dedication our colleagues at PSU have exhibited during this public health crisis.

We are encouraged to hear PSU is applying for the [Education Stabilization fund under the CARES act](#) and ask the University to note the following provision in the fund: “(the institution) shall to the greatest extent practicable, continue to pay its employees and contractors during the period of any disruptions or closures related to coronavirus.”

We know PSU is interested in preventing layoffs: President Percy has stated there will be no layoffs to Graduate Assistants or grant-funded researchers. However, because most GAs are on quarterly appointments, layoff is irrelevant: **rather, non-renewal of appointments in subsequent quarters is a major concern.** Thus, we ask for a commitment that there be no cuts to GA positions and that Assistantship renewals continue as was planned prior to the COVID crisis.

Graduate Assistants bring great value to PSU through dedicated instruction of undergraduates, carrying out research activities, and administrative work. We are also some of the most vulnerable members of the campus community, precariously employed on a quarter-to-quarter basis, earning an average of \$1000 per month (of which an additional \$261 per month is eaten up by the PSU Student Health Insurance premium and \$67 per month by fees).

Many of us do not have dedicated home offices, desktop equipment, or access to fast internet, so transitioning to fully remote work has been challenging. Graduate Teaching Assistants spent countless hours of extra unpaid labor converting in-person courses to remote and preparing for a new teaching modality in Spring term.

We stepped up to bring Winter quarter to a smooth close and transition into Spring quarter with functioning remote classes, ensuring our undergraduate students continue to have a high-quality learning experience. We, the Graduate Assistants of PSU, are committed to our University and ask that PSU make the same commitment to us.

Sincerely,

Emily Leickly, Graduate Employees Union President  
Graduate Employees Union Executive Board