

A Resolution to Demand A Two-Year Extension to All Graduate Students' Time to Degree Completion
R. #3

3rd GAPSAs GENERAL ASSEMBLY
2nd Session
R. #3

A Resolution to Demand A Two-Year Extension to All Graduate Students' Time to Degree Completion

IN THE GAPSAs GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF GEORGE MASON UNIVERSITY

Approved: April 13, 2021

Sponsored by: President, Lilianna Deveneau
Co-Sponsored by: Sociology PhD Representative, Fanni Farago
Cultural Studies PhD Representative, Terilee Edwards-Hewitt
Neuroscience PhD Representative, Dylan V. Scarton,

Resolution #3

Be it resolved by the GAPSAs General Assembly of George Mason University –

Whereas, Mason demonstrated its commitment to tenure-track faculty's professional well-being and success by providing a one-year extension to tenure clocks, and

Whereas, graduate students have faced many of the same challenges as faculty, including lack of access to laboratories, libraries, archives, and community-based research sites; the time-intensive demands to adapt multiple courses to online formats; and the loss of conference presentations, networking and other professional opportunities, and

Whereas, graduate students have also had to contend with the disruptions of the pandemic—often filling simultaneous roles of students, caregivers, parent-teachers, researchers, instructors, and (other) employees—within and outside George Mason University¹, and

Whereas, graduate students were called away from their research projects and academic interests in order to pivot to help navigate and mitigate the pandemic, and

Whereas, attempts to return to pre-pandemic projects may not be possible or may be delayed due to the specificity and rigor of graduate student research, projects, and initiatives, thereby adding

¹ Levine, F. J., Nasir, N. S., Rios-Aguilar, C., Gildersleeve, R. E., Rosich, K. J., Bang, M., Bell, N. E., & Holsapple, M. A. (2021). Voices from the field: The impact of COVID-19 on early career scholars and doctoral students [Focus group study report]. American Educational Research Association; Spencer Foundation. <https://doi.org/10.3102/aera20211>

additional time and networking demands to obtain a new research advisor, mentor, committee members, and/or other role that is crucial for student success, and

Whereas, graduate students in teaching and mentoring roles have had additional labor in teaching and mentoring, especially given the increased challenges and requests around technological, well-being, racial in/justice, and professional development, and

Whereas, the mental health and overall well-being of graduate students was identified as an area of national concern before the pandemic, and the “mental-health crisis” is now “as great or greater than it’s ever been, and it’s not getting better. Unless there’s concerted attention, it will get substantially worse, because the pressures are not going away” according to Alan Leshner, chair of the US National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine’s committee behind the report², and

Whereas, the administration’s current policy of granting extensions on an ad-hoc basis is not equitable, efficient, or sufficient; with each request made at the academic unit level, varying requirements exist across the university; and place particular burden on first-generation, underserved, and other underprivileged students—which often include students of color—who may not be aware of such university processes due to lack of access and other cultural capital, AND

Whereas, the administration’s current policy only brings support and/or mental well-being/relief, to those who’s timeline is exhausted, and a universal time limit extension would remove stress/pressure and promote emotional well-being for graduate students proactively for the entire population;

Therefore, be it resolved, that George Mason University’s Graduate and Professional Student Association demands a two-year time-to-degree extension for all graduate students to complete their respective programs.

Passed the General Assembly: 21-0-4

Attest:

President: Lilianna Kay Deveneau

² <https://www.nature.com/articles/d41586-021-00229-2>