

Resolution to Eliminate the Special Institutional Fee
for Graduate Students at the University of Georgia

1. WHEREAS, graduate students are essential to UGA’s teaching and research mission, ensuring UGA’s high-quality course offerings, excellence of instructional standards, performance of groundbreaking research, mentorship of undergraduates, and overall student learning experience; and,
2. WHEREAS, the University of Georgia imposes a mandatory \$450 Special Institution Fee (hereafter known as “SIF”) on all enrolled students per semester, including graduate students¹; and,
3. WHEREAS, the SIF was created as an austerity measure in 2009 due to state funding reductions², but the 2020 University System of Georgia budget has exceeded the 2009 budget³; and,
4. WHEREAS, the USG Board of Regents discussed a SIF sunset provision to take effect on June 30, 2012 at the November 17, 2009 BoR meeting⁴; and,
5. WHEREAS, the SIF accounts for approximately 39-72% of the student fees that graduate students pay each semester⁵; and,

¹ Bursar and Treasury Services, “University of Georgia Fiscal Year 2019-2020 Mandatory Fees Per Semester.” Finance Division, University of Georgia, accessed February 5, 2020, https://busfin.uga.edu/bursar/bursar_fees_1920/.

² Finance Division, “Special Institution Fee Fact Sheet.” Finance Division, University of Georgia, accessed February 13, 2020, https://busfin.uga.edu/bursar/tuition_special_inst_fee_fact_sheet_201920.pdf.

³ USG Board of Regents, “All Budgets for Fiscal Year 2020,” Fiscal Affairs, University System of Georgia, accessed February 13, 2020, https://www.usg.edu/assets/fiscal_affairs/documents/usg_budget_2020.pdf and USG Board of Regents, “All Budgets for Fiscal Year 2009,” Fiscal Affairs, University System of Georgia, accessed February 13, 2020, https://www.usg.edu/assets/fiscal_affairs/documents/usg_budget_fy09.pdf.

⁴ Board of Regents of the University System of Georgia, “Board of Regents Meeting Agenda: Tuesday, November 17, 2009,” Board of Regents Meetings, University System of Georgia, accessed February 6, 2020, https://www.usg.edu/assets/regents/documents/board_meetings/agenda1109.pdf.

⁵ The variability in proportion is based on the fact that not all graduate students take six or more face-to-face credit hours each semester. Bursar and Treasury Services, “University of Georgia Fiscal Year 2019-2020 Mandatory Fees Per Semester.” Finance Division, University of Georgia, accessed February 5, 2020, https://busfin.uga.edu/bursar/bursar_fees_1920/ and Bursar and Treasury Services, “Mandatory Fee Policy.” Finance Division, University of Georgia, accessed February 13, 2020, https://busfin.uga.edu/bursar/tuition_mandatory_fee_policy.pdf.

6. WHEREAS, unlike the Green⁶ or Transportation⁷ fees, for example, graduate students do not receive a service in-kind for this fee; and,

7. WHEREAS, SIF-funded programs largely benefit the undergraduate population, e.g. “First-Year Odyssey,” enhancing academic advising via the “Exploratory Center,” experiential learning, and “Double Dawgs”⁸; and,

8. WHEREAS, the only initiative that might directly benefit graduate students would be smaller class sizes; however, data from the Common Data Set (to which UGA reports) indicate that UGA’s class sizes are merely average or even slightly above average⁹, and counting classes with an enrollment of no more than 50 students, UGA is ranked 80th out of 93, with 91% of classes having 27.5 students enrolled, and,

9. WHEREAS, the SIF funds graduate teaching assistantships¹⁰, effectively making graduate students pay to work for the university; and,

10. WHEREAS, most UGA graduate students who have teaching or research assistantships on campus receive a tuition waiver, yet are only permitted to waive mandatory fees, including the SIF, under very narrow circumstances, such as prior military service or being aged 62 or older¹¹; and,

11. WHEREAS, annual UGA graduate student fees are the fourth highest among a set of 70 comparable schools in the nation¹², undermining UGA’s ability to recruit highly qualified graduate students; and,

12. WHEREAS, the SIF negatively affects graduate students’ studies by increasing financial stress, causing graduate students to minimize their course load (in-class credit hours) to reduce

⁶ Finance Division, “Green Fee Fact Sheet.” Finance Division, University of Georgia, accessed February 5, 2020, https://busfin.uga.edu/bursar/tuition_green_fee_fact_sheet.pdf.

⁷ Finance Division, “Transportation Fee Fact Sheet.” Finance Division, University of Georgia, accessed February 5, 2020, https://busfin.uga.edu/bursar/tuition_transportation_fee_fact_sheet.pdf.

⁸ Finance Division, “Special Institution Fee Fact Sheet.” Finance Division, University of Georgia, accessed February 5, 2020, https://busfin.uga.edu/bursar/tuition_special_inst_fee_fact_sheet_201920.pdf.

⁹ “Estimated Class Sizes.” Public University Honors, accessed February 5, 2020, <https://publicuniversityhonors.com/2015/10/20/estimated-class-sizes-more-than-90-national-universities>.

¹⁰ Finance Division, “Special Institution Fee Fact Sheet.” Finance Division, University of Georgia, accessed February 5, 2020, https://busfin.uga.edu/bursar/tuition_special_inst_fee_fact_sheet_201920.pdf.

¹¹ Bursar and Treasury Services, “Mandatory Fee Policy,” Finance Division, University of Georgia, accessed February 5, 2020, https://busfin.uga.edu/bursar/bursar_fees_policy/.

¹² Based on data from the 2018-2019 school year, which includes summer fees. Summer attendance is mandatory for several UGA graduate programs. Weitz, Joshua, “Grad Fee Analysis Current,” accessed February 13, 2020, <https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/1hxpkBHvsCe9D7evzIQ0bDOIk5UORhOzRm4QWhWukFaU/edit#gid=660233854>.

certain fees, diminishing students' intellectual experience, and disincentivizing departments to offer diverse elective courses due to low enrollment; and,

13. WHEREAS, the special institution fee revenues are pooled with tuition, making the fee effectively tuition by another name¹³; and,

14. WHEREAS, a petition from the United Campus Workers of Georgia requesting that the Special Institutional Fee be removed that received 1010 signatures, of which at least 781 were graduate students, was submitted to Tracey Cook, Executive Vice Chancellor, on October 15, 2019, and President Morehead and UGA deans on November 13, 2019¹⁴; and,

15. WHEREAS, other R1 universities in the southern United States, including Georgia Institute of Technology¹⁵, UNC-Chapel Hill¹⁶ and Louisiana State University¹⁷, have recently resolved to reduce or eliminate similar fees for graduate students;

NOW, THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED, the Faculty Senate of Franklin College, acknowledges the need to eliminate the SIF for graduate students at the University of Georgia; and,

THEREFORE, BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, the Faculty Senate encourages the Board of Regents to eliminate the Special Institutional Fee for all graduate students at the University of Georgia; and,

THEREFORE, BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, the Faculty Senate urges the University of Georgia to work with the University System of Georgia Chancellor and the Chair of the Board of Regents to eliminate the Special Institutional Fee for all graduate students.

¹³ Tracey Cook, Executive Vice Chancellor for Strategy and Fiscal Affairs, University System of Georgia, stated this to representatives of the United Campus Workers of Georgia in a meeting on October 29, 2019.

¹⁴ Graduate Committee of the United Campus Workers of Georgia. "Petition to Remove the Special Institution Fee," accessed February 13, 2020.

¹⁵ Bursar and Treasury Services."Georgia Institute of Technology 2019-2020 Tuition and Fee Rates Per Semester." Bursar and Treasury Services, Georgia Institute of Technology, accessed February 13, 2020, http://www.bursar.gatech.edu/student/tuition/Spring2020/sp20_allfees.pdf.

¹⁶ UNC-The Graduate School. "Update on Mandatory Graduate Student Fees in Fall 2019." UNC-The Graduate School, University of North Carolina, accessed February 5, 2020. <https://gradschool.unc.edu/news/2019/feesmemo.html>.

¹⁷ Marsh, Maria. "Full-time LSU graduate students' Student Excellence Fee expected to phase out by 2021." *The Reveille*, Lsureveille.com, October 4, 2019, accessed February 5, 2020, https://www.lsureveille.com/news/full-time-lsu-graduate-students-student-excellence-fee-expected-to/article_efcd1748-e666-11e9-b9a9-a3c282d1ba10.html.