



December 4, 2017

Dear Georgetown Alliance of Graduate Employees:

We are writing in response to your letter asking Georgetown University to voluntarily recognize GAGE as the collective bargaining representative for a subset of graduate students at Georgetown: students enrolled in Ph.D. or Master's programs in the Main and Medical Campuses who are Research Assistants, Teaching Assistants, or Teaching Associates, excluding those in the Business School, the School of Medicine, and the Law Center. This group excludes the majority of graduate students and its exact composition would change from semester to semester.

We are in complete alignment with your goal of enhancing our graduate programs to ensure that we provide an excellent academic environment in which our students can flourish, and remain deeply committed to working with graduate students to accomplish this aim. We also remain committed to our Just Employment Policy, but we do not think the Policy applies to graduate students. For the reasons we explain below, Georgetown University has decided not to recognize GAGE as the collective bargaining representative for this limited and ever-changing group of graduate students.

We believe that a graduate student's relationship with the University is fundamentally an educational one. We do not believe that graduate students take on a different relationship with the University during those semesters when they are teaching or engaging in research. Georgetown University is eager to work with its graduate students – including those of you who are active in GAGE – to address issues that affect all graduate students.

Georgetown University is organized around a commitment to educating students, furthering knowledge, and contributing to the common good. We do so with a deep devotion to the formation of our students for their future success. To this end, graduate programs are designed to equip students with the skills, knowledge, and curiosity necessary to excel in their respective fields of study. This comprehensive professional training relies on a combination of coursework, independent research, and teaching-assistant and research-assistant learning opportunities.

Coursework and classroom learning is a base foundation of graduate education. However, independent research and opportunities to teach and conduct research with faculty are vital and often-required elements of the graduate-program curriculum. Teaching experiences help graduate students develop the skills that they will need in their professional careers, and are crucial in building academic vitae. These skills include syllabus organization, lecturing, and student assessment necessary for those pursuing a career in academia as well as the more general skills of inquiry, analysis and the effective presentation of ideas needed in all professional career paths. Research experience under the mentorship of a faculty member is a key component of all Ph.D. programs and is fundamental to fulfilling the academic dissertation requirement. Doctoral candidates' research and teaching endeavors are therefore fully integrated into their educational experience. Similarly, Master's programs may also

include opportunities to work alongside faculty in teaching or research as a complement to program coursework.

These research and teaching opportunities are integral to the educational experience of graduate students. Our relationship with the students conducting research and doing teaching assistantships is one of faculty and student, mentor and mentee. This relationship is not, fundamentally, one of employer and employee. Students have such experiences *because* they are students, not because they are employed to provide those services. Because all of these experiences are part of the comprehensive education provided to graduate students, we believe that we should address issues like financial assistance and health insurance in a holistic way for all graduate students.

We share the desire to provide the resources you need to thrive. To this end, in response to feedback from graduate students, the Graduate School has significantly increased doctoral stipends since the 2011-2012 academic year. We also increased the level of non-service support during coursework years. And we offer beginning to advanced language training over the summer. More recently, we capped teaching at one course per semester, added a Ph.D. student to the Executive Committee of Graduate Studies, and opened new graduate student spaces on campus. Finally, we increased recognition awards for graduate-student teaching and research efforts. These steps are consistent with our goal of attracting the strongest students who will contribute to the collective intellectual growth of the Georgetown community and help build an excellent research institution.

We want to continue working with graduate students, including all of you, to determine how best to enhance the resources offered to students. We will continue, for example, to increase stipends and to work with students on ideas for enhancing graduate-student health insurance, working with outside experts to develop specific options for consideration. We welcome your input in that process.

An underlying idea guiding the University is that immersion in academic life provides an unparalleled foundation for personal formation. Students learn disciplinary methods and study the current state of knowledge in an area of concentrated focus. Intensive coursework, learning to teach in one's field of study, and undertaking original research are essential components of this process of formation and discovery of one's authentic path. Our dedication to this process will never falter, and you are essential partners in this effort.

Sincerely,

Robert M. Groves
Provost

Edward B. Heaton
Executive Vice President for Health Science