

## Optional Tuition Waivers?

Bievenue, Lisa Anne

**Sent:** Wednesday, February 14, 2018 11:44 AM

**To:** Office of the Chancellor; Illinois Provost; Cangellaris, Andreas C; Jones, Robert J

**Cc:** Mierek, Jason Bradley Ploof; Vigil, Katie M

Dear Provost Cangellaris and Chancellor Jones,

We are writing on behalf of the Association of Academic Professionals to express our support for the Teaching Assistants and Graduate Assistants at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign in their effort to bargain a contract. We find the news of the administration's attempts to remove protections on tuition waivers during the bargaining process worrisome and antithetical to the mission of the University.

In his e-mail of December 20th, President Killeen said tuition waivers for graduate students is one of "several key provisions of current law that help make higher education more affordable and accessible." In a December 6th meeting with the Campus Labor Coalition, Chancellor Jones was quite clear about his position that not only are graduate students, and the University's ability to recruit top graduate students, critical to the success of higher education and our university, but that it would be increasingly difficult to recruit top students if tuition waivers are compromised, even by the threat of taxing waivers. Imagine how much less affordable higher education will be and how difficult it will be to recruit graduate students if tuition waivers are optional.

We do note your position in the mass email of Friday, February 9<sup>th</sup>, that tuition waivers are not being eliminated, but rather you are "allowing departments the needed flexibility to adapt and modify their graduate programs in light of changing needs and administrative models." We are concerned because it is not clear what that "flexibility" would entail, nor how that "flexibility" will impact the competition for, and distribution of, assistantships. It seems to us that this is an obfuscation and that attempts to remove tuition waivers from the bargaining table are undermining not only the bargaining process but also the well-being of graduate students.

We urge you to withdraw your attempts to derail negotiations with proposals that will not only hurt graduate students but the University as well. It is becoming increasingly clear that Administration has ignored the demands of graduate workers at the bargaining table. The teaching labor of graduate workers is a major reason why we continue to be a preeminent institution of higher learning and research in the United States. We all know that UIUC would not function without graduate workers.

We urge you to sign GEO's proposals for better living and working conditions for graduate employees at the University of Illinois at Urbana Champaign.

Association of Academic Professionals

Lisa Bievenue, Chair

Jason Mierek, Treasurer

Katie Vigil, Vice-Chair