



INDIANA
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Graduate &
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Student
Government

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Advocating for an inclusive and empowered graduate student community

GPSG STATEMENT ON THE FALL 2020 CAMPUS REOPEN PLANS

Over these past few days, [President McRobbie](#) and [Provost Robel](#) have released their letters to students about plans to resume classes on IU's campuses and IU Bloomington in particular. Further details specific to the Bloomington campus will be released in the weeks ahead, and all of this information will be available [here](#). Please note, the School of Medicine, Maurer School of Law, the School of Optometry, and all quarter-based programs will not necessarily be bound by certain campus-wide or university policies. The Graduate and Professional Student Government ([GPSG](#)) is working with individual professional schools and degree programs to stay up to date on how all IU graduate and professional students will be affected.

We strongly encourage students to be in contact with their department heads and school leaders as some accreditation and certification may change how policies are implemented in different degree programs. We will work diligently to keep the GPSG population updated to all changes for individual schools/departments as we are made aware.

Throughout the summer, GPSG has continued to take bold steps to advocate for our students. GPSG President Dakota Coates is meeting weekly with Vice Provost for Graduate Education and Health Sciences and Associate Dean of the University Graduate School [David Daleke](#) to discuss how UGS can mitigate the financial impact on students and to guarantee the greatest degree of academic and personal flexibility in our newly announced hybrid system. Additionally, he is meeting with Assistant Vice Provost For Student Development [Katie Kearns](#) to ensure that the IU Bloomington Fall Orientation continues to offer students a welcoming and informative introduction to the University. Unlike in any year's past, the GPSG Officers have been vigorously involved in advocacy over the summer. We have been actively attending various town halls, student forums, campus committees, and much more to ensure that we are hearing and relaying the challenges being faced by graduate and professional students.

See below for specific advocacy and policy updates:

Health & Safety

The health and safety of the graduate and professional students remains our primary concern as IU looks to reopen in the Fall. Accordingly, GPSG has received a guarantee that **all** students will be able to receive at least two free cloth masks to use on campus. Additionally, students who are engaged in research or other laboratory work will be provided additional PPE by the university at **no additional cost** to the students. Furthermore, we have ensured that all campus reopening plans provide the greatest degree of flexibility and opportunity for individual student choice on all levels. Thus, **no student** will be required to return to perform research, and **no student** will be required to attend an in-person class. Instead, the University will offer all students an **online option** for their classes – **regardless** of if they are in a high-risk group or not.

GPSG has successfully worked to ensure that students will receive free access to coronavirus testing, and we are currently working to ensure that students will face little-to-no expenses in relation to vaccinations in the fall.

Research

GPSG President Dakota Coates has also served as the primary student representative on the Laboratory Research University-Level Restart [Committee](#). The committee will continue to meet twice-per-week throughout the summer and will continue to reexamine how campus research operates as we move into the fall. On this committee, they have advocated and confirmed that students will be provided adequate – and free – PPE, that research restart will be a **voluntary process**, and that graduate and professional students will be able to reengage with their research with stringently enforced safety procedures. We have ensured that graduate and professional students will be granted priority for returning to their research. Their full guidance is available [here](#).

Academics

We continue to be heavily involved in discussions addressing how the university will manage the academic calendar in the Fall. While we continue to advocate for the greatest degree of online, distance classes – we understand that a notable portion of our students would prefer to return to an in-person format when able. To ensure that we try to serve both populations of students, we continue to advocate for a flexible academic experience that supports students whether they are attending virtually or in-person. However, we will continue to push the university to enforce their health and safety guidelines – and will work closely with any student who feels as though they are not being provided adequate academic support. We have also encouraged the University to enact greater flexibility with the G901 course. Until then, we have worked closely with the UGS and the various academic departments to establish alternative sources of support to supplement the existing G901 course. For students who would prefer to delay their attendance at IUB, we have worked with the university to ensure that **all students** are given extreme deference on decisions to defer their admission – at no detriment to the student.

GPSG has repeatedly expressed our concerns with the cancellation of breaks – and we continue to encourage the university to develop alternative break options so as to ensure that students are able to receive a proper break both to prepare for the remainder of their semester and for mental health and recuperation purposes. Additionally, we are continuing to raise concerns surrounding the potential for confusion by utilizing multiple academic calendars at the same time. To that end, we are encouraging the university and departments to create **clear and manageable** academic calendars such that students are not burdened with an overly complex class schedule.

GPSG has received a guarantee that all students – regardless of if a class is in-person by default – will have the option to continue their coursework virtually should they feel uncomfortable attending in-person **for any reason**. This is critical for graduate and professional students – for peace of mind, personal health, and academic predictability. **Update: To further clarify, students will be able to continue progress towards their degree through online coursework. However, at this time, it cannot be guaranteed that every class will be offered with an**

online option, and some classes may be required to retain an in-person classroom experience (such as clinics, labs, performative arts, etc.). We continue to encourage students to work closely with their individual departments/programs to determine in which format individualized classes will be taught in the fall.

Financial

GPSG has continued to work with the University to ensure that graduate and professional students received a proportional share of the CARES ACT higher education emergency relief fund to assist with financial burdens that have resulted from the COVID-19 pandemic. Additionally, we have worked with the University to ensure that students who are ineligible for CARES funding, such as international students and DACA recipients, had alternative sources of funding for the University.

GPSG, through President Dakota Coates and Vice President Dan Myers, was a foundational force in establishing the [Emergency Meal Project](#) on campus to provide students who are facing food insecurity with free meals. As of this statement, the EMP is supporting over 70 students per day – via a fee-free, judgement-free, and student-focused system. GPSG collaborated on a fundraising push for the EMP and we have been able to raise enough funds to offer this meal program throughout the rest of the summer. We are continuing to collaborate with IU Dining, the Food Institute, the Campus Kitchen, and the Crimson Cupboard to ensure that the program can continue to operate into the Fall semester such that we can continue the fight against food insecurity.

Pursuant to several prior General Assembly Resolutions, GPSG is continuing to fight for a reduction of campus fees and tuition during the coronavirus. In particular, we are in on-going discussions with the University to waive any fees associated with schedule changes. Additionally, we will continue to call for a reduction in both the overall tuition rate and the mandatory fees to match the reduction in access and services. GPSG will also be working with the Office of International Services to ensure that international students are able to receive relief from the international student fee.

Student Workers

We are continuing to work with the UGS to ensure that student workers are able to retain their positions across campus – and we are encouraging auxiliaries to find alternative avenues for students (such as Housing GAs) who's programs may have a reduced workforce in an online system. We are also working with the University to ensure that graduate instructors will receive the proper support for transitioning their classes online – and again, we have received clear assurance that **no graduate instructor** will be required to teach an in-person class.

International Students

We are continuing to work with the [Office of International Services](#) and UGS to ensure that international students are being provided proper resources to continue their academic career. Our

goal is to ensure that these students will be able to continue their academic careers with as few disruptions as possible. Accordingly, we are working to ensure that recordings and class-participation-alternatives are being pursued across all degree programs – and, that affected students are able to maintain as much of their financial support as possible. Additionally, GPSG will continue to call on IU to provide immigration and legal support to students who are navigating the visa process.

GPSG has also been in regular contact with Vice President for Diversity Equity and Dean of the University Graduate School [James Wimbush](#) and Vice Provost Student Affairs and Dean of Students [Dave O’Guinn](#) to encourage the University to leverage its resources to support all graduate students affected by the recent [executive action](#) taken against Chinese graduate students. OIS has provided a brief [summary](#) of who is impacted by the current order and they are continuing to closely monitor the situation. For any students who believe they may be impacted or who need legal/visa assistance, please contact OIS and [IU Student Legal Services](#).

GPSG Officer Initiatives

Each officer will be establishing a full-year plan for both policy and programming initiatives and are continuously reviewing ways in which their position can best support graduate and professional students during coronavirus. To that end:

- The Awards Officer is currently reviewing all of the financial awards that GPSG offers and we are looking for ways in which we can reorient awards to meet the challenges associated with virtual conferencing, digital research, and coronavirus.
- The Benefits Officer is actively advocating for compensation adjustments due to teaching burden changes and contingency plans for pervasive sickness in graduate students. He is also gathering more information regarding research protocols for graduate students, transit system changes due to COVID19 regulations, and training surrounding online instruction.
- The Diversity Officer is actively reviewing the continuation of diversity programming and education in a virtual environment as well as ensuring the necessary campus changes, such as student housing changes, accommodate all students including international students and students of different abilities.
- The Health & Wellness Officer is continuing to work with the IU Health Center, the SRSC, and other campus entities to ensure that students are able to receive proper telemedicine, mental health support, and online resources for physical/personal health.
- The Treasurer is actively reviewing our budget to ensure that GPSG can reorient our funds to ensure that we are able to shift funds into additional awards or to support campus initiatives, such as the Emergency Meal Project.
- The Sustainability Officer is currently exploring ways in which turbulent times like these can be used to reevaluate current practices to allow for long-term changes that help reduce IU's ecological footprint to be made
- The Vice President is committed to maintaining a constructive GPSG Assembly that will have engaged Representatives, exciting parliamentary procedures, and an extraordinary ability to advocate for graduate and professional students.

Sincerely,

The 2020-2021 GPSG Executive Committee