

University Senate  
Student Welfare Committee  
March 8, 2014

**Meeting** called to order at 10:30 a.m.

**Attendance:** Karen Bresciano, Susanna Cowan, Morty Ortega, Rianna Pryor, Ari Solomon, Kevin Alvarez, Kate Fuller, Gregory Bouquot, Kent Holsinger, Larry Goodheart

**Special Meeting on Medical Insurance for Graduate Students**

Rianna Prior, the Graduate Student representative, explained the acute financial vulnerability that would result with projected reductions in the University's subsidy for medical insurance. She presented a 12 page document with abundant data. Major points were:

- In the proposed insurance plan, income ranged from a Full Time GA + Family of \$6,161 to Half Time GA + Family of – \$2,407. The impoverishment of GAs with dependents, especially those at half-time, is emphatic.
- Rianna explained that as doctoral students she and her husband struggle to support themselves, let alone the practicality of starting a family, in a state with a high cost of living. One student, who is currently pregnant, would face overwhelming costs.
- She characterized as representative the following statement from a survey: “Pitiful. I am beyond upset about the lack of coverage offered. In combination with increasing graduate student fees, the RAPIDLY increasing price to attend graduate school here is ridiculous.”
- The Graduate Student Senate has voted down two proposals: one that would force incoming students with dependents to pay as much \$8,768; and the other that would reduce the subsidy by 5% over three years and double deductibles to \$500 for all students.
- The UConn subsidy now qualifies as “scholarship/grant” for tax purposes and graduate school fees cannot be claimed for tax purposes, which create further distress.
- In sum, the University proposal has led to a card drive with the UAW to unionize, will further erode the financial viability of population already at risk, and will have a deleterious effect on the recruitment and retention of graduate students.

A lengthy and wide-ranging discussion with helpful input from Kent Holsinger, Dean of Graduate Studies, ensued. A central theme was the failure of prior communication and prompt consultation on the part of high level administrators with graduate students about the medical insurance situation. There was uncertainty about how the Affordable Care Act might apply. Kent added that no revisions in the status quo are anticipated for the next academic year.

The committee agreed that it should make a statement that would be communicated at the March 28 Senate Executive and Heads of Committee. Because time was pressing, Larry Goodheart asked Rianna to propose a brief statement that would be forwarded for review to the committee before it is formally presented at the Senate Executive and Heads of Committee meeting on March 28.

**Adjournment** at 11:45 a.m. **Submitted by** Larry Goodheart.

