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GOVERNMENTAL AFFAIRS

PROPOSAL BY

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MENTAL HEALTH



The issues facing student mental health are numerous and well-documented. Perhaps chief among them is the wait times that students face when seeking mental health assistance. The UMD Counseling Center routinely has month-long waiting lists, forcing students to find more expensive off-campus help or simply not deal with their problems. The student government has made such issues a focus of lobbying efforts in the past, but major issues persist. While we cannot single handedly solve student mental health on Maryland's campus, we can increase the number of staff in the counseling center which will result in a decrease in wait times. With school psychologists having a starting salary in the range of roughly \$70,000-\$80,000, it is within our reach to enable the counseling center to hire an additional staff person. This will be achieved through lobbying the governor and state legislature to increase expenditures that will be allocated specifically to pay for the salary of a university psychiatrist. To supplement what we receive from the state, we will be working with the Office of University Development to raise further funds to ensure the perpetuity of this position. The success of this program will be seen as a model towards continued improvement and further increases in staff.

STUDENT AID AND STUDENT DEBT RELIEF

This is an evergreen issue for all members of the higher education community. In the past we have worked in conjunction with the university administration to lobby state and federal legislators on a number of small but vital changes to how student financial aid is handled. As a result of the coronavirus pandemic, the motivation for these legislative efforts have fallen by the wayside, but we still want to make sure that they are part of the conversation. They include simplifying the FASFA so that it is easier to fill out, especially for students with a more complicated financial situation and requiring that Pell grants are inflation-adjusted to account for changes in the national economy. There is a fast growing conversation in the United States regarding the cancellation of student debt. While the political climate is not yet right for legitimate legislation that would alleviate student debt, we want to continue pushing the issue and bringing more elected officials on board.



FIGHTING FOR STUDENT WORKERS

Students working part-time jobs on campus are paid the statewide minimum wage, instead of the higher minimum wage for Prince George's County, where the University is situated and where most students live. Nor are student workers afforded any kind of benefits, most importantly paid leave. While we are not paid the county's minimum wage, we still have to pay the county's cost of living. To believe that these jobs are not essential is a major and unfair oversight by the university. And when students get sick, which is almost inevitable living in a college environment, they still have to go to work if they want to be paid. This is detrimental to the health of students and those around them. These jobs aren't just small side gigs but pay for students' groceries, their rent, or their textbooks. They are an essential source of income. To amend these issues, we will continue existing lobbying efforts to require that student workers are paid the minimum wage of Prince George's County. These efforts will be coordinated with other schools in the University of Maryland System so that we may institute a system-wide policy requiring that student workers are paid the minimum wage of the county in which the school that employs them resides. Furthermore, we will work to attain paid sick leave for student workers equivalent to the amount they would receive for 30% of their maximum number of weekly hours.

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SGA Elections April 22-24