Resolution 12: Addressing the ITAP and University Policy 1.3

Abstract: This resolution aims to address and remedy the issues identified in Objective 2 of the International Students section of the Graduate and Professional Community Initiative (“GPCI”). As confirmed by a graduate and professional student-wide survey and in meetings of the Graduate and Professional Student Assembly (“GPSA”), certain demographics of students are targeted by a University-wide program called International TA Program (“ITAP”), which has consistently overstepped its authorities, interfered with funding and grants, and at times caused undue stress and pressure on students. The GPSA resolves to acknowledge these issues, and, in addition, demands that the University Provost and President form a working group involving stakeholders to reform the ITAP per the suggestions presented in this resolution.

Sponsored by:
Nikola Danev, Executive Vice President;
Kavya Krishnan, Vice President for Communications;
Liz Davis-Frost, Student-Elected Trustee and ex-officio member;
Christine Ohenewah, Voting Member

Reviewed by: Executive Committee, 02/08/2021

Whereas, international students\(^1\) must participate in Language Assessment (“ILA”) meetings in order to determine language proficiency level and allow for time to fulfill any requirements prior to a Teaching Assistant (“TA”) assignment,

Whereas, participation in the ILA is a requirement of the Office of the Provost for all first-time teaching assistants from a country where English is not the first language to demonstrate a minimum level of oral proficiency via a language assessment,

Whereas, the only exception are students who have earned a TOEFL iBT speaking score of 28 or higher or an IELTS speaking score of 8.5 or higher, and students with a previous degree are not exempt from a language assessment,

Whereas, University Policy 1.3 sets vague requirements for the implementation of the aforementioned assessment,

\(^1\) This term remains undefined by the ITAP office and the University
Whereas, per University Policy 1.3 failure to meet ILA requirements results in a mandatory English language course (“ALS5780”) administered by the International Teaching Assistant Program (“ITAP”) and a TA ban being placed on the student,

Whereas, the ITAP has no formal advisory committee or oversight,

Whereas, Cornell University already has an English Language Support Office (“ELSO”),

Whereas, ITAP receives an undisclosed amount of University funding,

Whereas, the Graduate and Professional Community Initiative (“GPCI”) recognizes the need for reform of the ITAP,

Whereas, 90.5% of surveyed Cornell University graduate and professional students (“Cornell students”) express dissatisfaction with the ITAP,

Whereas, over 84% of students targeted by the ITAP are from one geographic region,

Whereas, student funding is contingent on being a TA in many graduate and professional programs and the ITAP has the ability to bar students from being TAs, therefore directly interfering with their funding,

Whereas, Directors of Graduate Studies (“DGSs”) are not allowed to grant exemptions to ITAP bans,

Whereas, ALS5780 requires over 200 hours of active work and most students must take it more than once,

Whereas, there is no way to appeal an ITAP decision,

Whereas, the International Teaching Assistant (“ITA”) designation assigned by the ITAP is derogatory and inherently introduces bias and xenophobia,

Whereas, the current political climate in the United States presents many problems for international students,

Whereas, there is no clear guideline for persons affected by University Policy 1.3,

Whereas, no other peer institution\(^3\) has a similar program,

Whereas, ITAP has failed to provide empirical data for the necessity, or success, of the program,

Whereas, the ITAP is undergoing a review process that does not involve students,

Whereas, instances of racism and xenophobia have been reported by students undergoing the ITAP:

\(^2\) See Appendix 1.
\(^3\) Informal survey of Ivy+ schools.
Be it therefore resolved, that the Cornell Graduate and Professional Student Assembly (“GPSA”), on behalf of all graduate and professional students at Cornell, and in recognition of the undue burden on international students, strongly and unequivocally condemns University Policy 1.3 and the ITAP;

Be it further resolved, that the GPSA acknowledges the unfair additional burden placed on international students by the ITAP and University Policy 1.3;

Be it further resolved, that the GPSA strongly and unambiguously condemns racist and xenophobic behavior of Cornell affiliates;

Be it further resolved, that the GPSA demands that students be involved in the ITAP review and reform process;

Be it further resolved, that the GPSA demands that the ITAP be disbanded immediately and entirely for the academic year 2021/22 and until it is thoroughly reviewed and changed per the requests of the students and the GPSA;

Be it finally resolved, that the GPSA requests that the ITAP review board have equal, both in number and voting powers, representation from graduate students (particularly international students), Directors of Graduate Studies or their appointees, and University Administrators.

Respectfully Submitted,

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