



April 2, 2015

Graduate Student Organization
216 Bowne Hall

Dear Chancellor Syverud:

On April 1st, 2015 the Senate of the Graduate Student Organization voted unanimously to censure the university leadership for its actions surrounding the recently announced changes to student health insurance. The Senate is appalled at the lack of transparency leading up to this decision, particularly the lack of announcements to those it would impact as the requirements and plans were being constructed. Additionally, the Senate is outraged that this decision process, one that materially affects students in a substantial manner, did not involve students prior to when a final decision was reached. The GSO insists the University include students in university policymaking, particularly when it impacts students to a large degree.

The Senate calls for all graduate teaching, research, and other assistants employed by the University to remain eligible for the employee health insurance plans, as they have been in this and past years. We censure the university leadership for moving to take this benefit away from all graduate assistants. The GSO is committed to maintaining employee insurance plan eligibility for all these students, regardless of degree type or other categorization. Graduate teaching, research, and other assistants are core to the instructional and research mission at Syracuse University, comprising up to one-third of the full-time equivalent instructional personnel. The university devalues and demeans the work these students perform by not recognizing them as eligible for employee health benefits. The current plan also presents severe cost increases and an unacceptably unclear benefits picture if it were to go forward, including questions about dental coverage and a total lack of vision coverage. The university needs to send a clear message that it will not diminish the insurance benefits to these students.

The Senate is alarmed at the substantial confusion and cost increases for international students that the new health insurance requirement has created and censures the university leadership for its role in creating this confusion and cost increase. Students across the university are still awaiting a complete plan description, full justifications for the move away from the HTH insurance plans, and a full explanation of the necessity to raise costs for most international students by approximately \$700 annually. International students require further information concerning how the new Aetna Student Health Plan will interface with their requirements as international students studying in the US. The GSO insists this information be made public and no further actions are to be taken to implement this plan without GSO Senate input.

Graduate Student Organization Senate