

1 **RESOLUTION 2021-009**

2 **A RESOLUTION ADVOCATING FOR ADEQUATE INSTRUCTIONAL BREAKS TO SUPPORT**
3 **GRADUATE STUDENT MENTAL HEALTH AND SCHOLARLY PRODUCTIVITY**

4 Authors: Abby Grieff.2, Chair, Health, Wellness, and Safety; Kathryn Holt.351, Chair, Arts and Culture; Aviva Neff.336,
5 Chair, Academic Affairs

6 Sponsor: Executive Committee
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9 WHEREAS the Council of Graduate Students (CGS) is the representative body of all graduate students enrolled at The
10 Ohio State University as established by Article 2, Section 1 of the CGS Constitution; and

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12 WHEREAS the Council of Graduate Students or its appointed representative(s) have the power to act as an advisory agent
13 on behalf of graduate students on all matters brought before personnel, committees, or agencies of The Ohio State
14 University involving the interest of graduate students as established in Article 3 Section 3 of the CGS constitution; and
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16 WHEREAS, on September 11th, 2020, The Ohio State University students received an email from Provost Dr. Bruce
17 McPherson, stating that “There will be no spring break. Instead, there will be two instructional breaks — on Tuesday,
18 Feb. 9, and Wednesday, March 31 — where there will be no classes. This approach will keep our community together
19 throughout the semester and reduce travel-related exposures”; and
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21 WHEREAS graduate student representatives were not involved in the decision-making process that led to the decision to
22 eliminate spring break; and
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24 WHEREAS the Council of Graduate Students has previously and unanimously opposed the continuation of unnecessary
25 in-person instruction and advocated to move all instruction online where possible until adequate testing, contact tracing,
26 and isolation/quarantine resources are available, and Franklin County is downgraded to a Level 1 Public Health
27 Emergency¹; and
28

29 WHEREAS graduate students experience rates of depression and anxiety that are 6 times greater than that of the general
30 population, some of the reasons being difficulty maintaining work-life balance, Imposter Syndrome, discrimination, and
31 harassment²; and
32

33 WHEREAS studies show that high rates of depression, anxiety, and other clinical mental health diagnoses amongst
34 graduate students, along with a lack of access to adequate support resources, leads to detrimental consequences such as
35 higher instances of suicidal thoughts²; and
36

37 WHEREAS mental health in graduate students has declined since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic due to a shrinking
38 job market, and upheaval within the academic environment where student work, take classes, and conduct research¹; and
39

40 WHEREAS, according to The Ohio State University COVID-19 Safe Return to Campus Survey Report for Ohio State
41 Students, Faculty and Staff, students had the highest anxiety level, followed by staff and faculty (% with GAD score ≥ 3 ,
42 39%, vs. 29%, vs. 25%), and the highest depression level followed by staff and then faculty (% with PHQ-2 Score ≥ 3 ,
43 24% vs. 10%, vs. 7%)²; and
44

45 WHEREAS, according to The Ohio State University COVID-19 Safe Return to Campus Survey Report for Ohio State
46 Students, Faculty and Staff, graduate students reported highest prevalence of anxiety, while prevalence of depression was
47 second highest among Columbus campus graduate students²; and
48

¹ <https://cgs.osu.edu/blog/a-resolution-against-the-plan-to-return-to-campus/>

² <https://medicalxpress.com/news/2020-08-mental-health-grad-students-covid-.html>

49 WHEREAS, as stated in The Ohio State University “Emotional Fitness Tips and Skills for Mental Health,” many students
50 look forward to spring break to relax, rest, and recharge³; and
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52 WHEREAS OSU “Emotional Fitness” states that spring break is beneficial for catching up on sleep, resting the brain,
53 minimizing screen time, eating well, spending time outside, catching up with loved ones (even virtually), self-care
54 activities, and the opportunity to improve mental health³; and
55
56 WHEREAS the American Psychological Association states that taking short breaks from graduate school can be “a relief
57 from the usual routine of graduate student life, and [they] can ensure that sustained focus and improved productivity
58 prevail during intervals of the day that are strictly devoted to graduate school-related activities”⁴; and
59
60 WHEREAS, given the multiple roles graduate students fill on campus as students, instructors, researchers, mentors,
61 administrative assistants, and more, single-day instructional breaks do not provide an adequate break from obligations and
62 responsibilities⁵; and
63
64 WHEREAS graduate teaching associates will be deprived of necessary time dedicated to instructional administrative
65 responsibilities, such as grading and writing lesson plans in addition to advancing their personal scholarly agendas.
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67 THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED the Council of Graduate Students stands in opposition to the current plan to replace
68 spring break with two single-day instructional breaks; and
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70 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED the Council of Graduate Students strongly urges the university to implement an
71 alternative solution to contain the spread of COVID-19 that allows graduate students adequate breaks to rest, recharge,
72 and attend to their mental health needs; and
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74 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED the Council of Graduate Students advocates for opportunities for respite including but not
75 limited to reinstatement of a week-long spring break followed by a return to virtual instruction for the remainder of the
76 semester or inclusion of at least two additional, consecutive instructional breaks in the current academic calendar; and
77
78 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED the Council of Graduate Students advocates that any alternative to the traditional spring
79 break should provide graduate students with an equivalent number of days off to the week-long spring break; and
80
81 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED the Council of Graduate Students is dissatisfied and concerned with the lack of graduate
82 student representation on the relevant task force and overall lack of attention to graduate student mental health and
83 wellbeing in the decision-making process; and
84
85 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED the Council of Graduate Students demands graduate student representation on all future
86 task forces and implementation committees tasked with making decisions regarding the academic calendar during the
87 continuing COVID-19 pandemic; and
88
89 BE IT FINALLY RESOLVED that the Council of Graduate Students directs its President and Vice President to distribute
90 this resolution to The Ohio State University President Kristina M. Johnson, Executive Vice President and Provost Bruce
91 McPherson, Vice Provost for Graduate Studies and Dean of the Graduate School Alicia Bertone, Vice President for
92 Student Life Melissa Shivers, Vice President for Government Affairs Stacy Rastaukas, and the Chair of the Council on
93 Student Affairs Jordan Vadja, and all other relevant leadership and authorities of The Ohio State University and its
94 partners.
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96

³ Return to campus survey report

⁴ <https://u.osu.edu/emotionalfitness/tag/spring-break-mental-health/>

⁵ <https://www.apa.org/science/about/psa/2012/01/academic-life#:~:text=Even%20taking%20these%20short%20breaks,to%20graduate%20school%2Drelated%20activities>

97 Approved: **Yes**/No

98

99 Date: __11/6/20__

100

101 Stephen J. Post

102 Stephen J. Post, President

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Council of Graduate Students
at The Ohio State University