



President's Report to the Senate  
February 14, 2018 Regular Business Meeting  
Jack Wilson, GSO President

### **Stipend**

Schools and Colleges are expected to target an average stipend increase of 2.5% for graduate students (including new admits) who are awarded a TA/GA/RA position--graduate employees, colloquially. No other details are available as-of-yet.

This comes immediately following a multi-year program of specifically targeting the lowest paid employees for raises: raising the floor on pay for assistantships. This has brought to this pay floor to be roughly consistent with comparable universities.

### **Employee Health Insurance**

Student Association and the Student Bar Association have been looped into the talks about migrating Grad employees from the employee plan to the student plan. Part of the migration may involve changing health insurance providers, which is why they are now involved. In that light, I encourage everyone to give feedback on what we want and don't want out of a health insurance plan in terms of coverage and customer service.

### **Ombuds Office**

I have been invited to serve on the search committee for a full-time Ombuds. This person will follow a temporary appointee. Implementation appears to remain on-schedule for finishing by the end of the academic year.

### **Student Legal Services (SLS)**

The Student Association in conjunction with the University has begun to explore the option of replacing SLS with in-house lawyers. This was, I have learned, the outcome of a meeting between the Chancellor, SVP of Enrollment and the Student Experience, and the Student Association President. By my current understanding they plan for implementation to be complete by the beginning of Fall 2018.

The decision to explore was made without the input of the GSO. I was only informed that this was a point of consideration after the decision was made. When the SVP of Enrollment and the Student Experience was informed of the GSO's general and in-principle opposition to the switch, the SVP stated

plainly that they are going to explore this anyway; in other words the decision to explore will happen regardless of GSO input.

The decision to explore should not have been made without consulting the GSO, especially given that the GSO is a major financial stakeholder. Furthermore, such a change would necessarily impact how much and/or to whom we pay for legal services. Thus, making such a change for the 2018-2019 fiscal year creates unnecessary uncertainty and chaos in planning our 2018-2019 budget.

As it stands, the position of this President is that SLS offers certain critical protections that lawyers within the University system cannot provide. Any lawyer within the University system would necessarily have conflicts of interest if a student entered an adversarial process with the University or an employee of and therefore would not be able to represent the student in that case. Give the increased awareness of sexual violence in the workplace, most recently at Michigan State University, it is clearer now than ever that these protections are important and necessary.