



A Resolution Advocating for Graduate Student Housing Support at the University of Tennessee, Knoxville

Sponsors: Lufuno Phophi, Joseph Moulden, Manu Rathore

WHEREAS, the Graduate Student Senate (GSS) is the official legislative body and voice of all graduate and professional students at the University of Tennessee, Knoxville; and

WHEREAS, according to the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, housing insecurity can be identified based on housing costs relative to income (greater than 50%), low housing quality (insufficient plumbing, heat, electricity, leaks, or holes), neighborhood instability (high rate of poverty, crime, unemployment, poor city services such as litter, noise, and pollution), and overcrowding;¹ and

WHEREAS, the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services further defines homelessness as the most severe form of housing insecurity where an individual does not have a safe, regular, and adequate nighttime residence;² and

WHEREAS, housing insecurity would also include the risk of not being able to pay rent and utilities which can result in frequently moving³ and / or experiencing food insecurity;⁴ and

WHEREAS, the most common challenge facing college students' housing insecurity has been identified as not being able to pay the full amount of their rent, mortgage, or utility bills;⁵ and

WHEREAS, studies have shown that graduate students, along with students with non-traditional backgrounds, face unique challenges in meeting their basic needs as students in college;⁶ and

¹ Kushel, M. B., Gupta, R., Gee, L., & Haas, J. S. (2006). Housing instability and food insecurity as barriers to health care among low-income Americans. *Journal of General Internal Medicine*, 21(1), 71–77. <https://doi.org/10.1111/J.1525-1497.2005.00278.X>

² Ibid

³ *Basic Needs Insecurity During Table of Contents*. (2021).

⁴ Robbins, M. K., Spence, M., & Steeves, E. A. (2022). A cross sectional assessment of basic needs insecurity prevalence and associated factors among college students enrolled at a large, public university in the Southeastern U.S. *BMC Public Health*, 22(1), 1–11. <https://doi.org/10.1186/S12889-022-12817-6/TABLES/4>

⁵ Ibid

⁶ Ibid

WHEREAS, students experiencing housing insecurity are more likely to experience high rates of depression and anxiety as well as sacrifice important academic resources that could impact their academic success;⁷ and

WHEREAS, a study published in 2022 reported that 66.1% of college students face housing insecurity, while doctoral students were 6.5 times more likely to face housing insecurity compared to sophomores at a Southeastern U.S public university;⁸ and

WHEREAS, according to a National Postsecondary Student Aid Study, [over 60% of all college students live in off-campus housing](#). As of December 2021, UT Knoxville can house [8,071 students](#). This means that almost [75% of all UT students live in off-campus housing](#); and

WHEREAS, in 2021, the [Mortgage report](#) showed that the median home sales prices rose nearly 17% from the year prior in the U.S.; and

WHEREAS, in Tennessee, as of writing this document, [RentCafe](#) estimates that the average rent for a Knoxville apartment to be \$1,400 a month and that a continuous increase is expected in the average price for rent in Knoxville over the next few years; and

WHEREAS, for Knoxville, [MIT's living wage calculator](#) estimates that a single adult would need to earn an annual income of \$30,626 before taxes; and

WHEREAS, [graduate assistantships are the primary source of funding for graduate students at UT](#) and [the minimum annual stipend of graduate assistantships](#) is well below the estimated cost of living in Knoxville; and

WHEREAS, given that the average apartment rent in Knoxville is currently estimated to be \$1,400 per month, Graduate Students at the University of Tennessee will experience housing insecurity because housing costs, relative to income, are greater than 50%; and

WHEREAS, the University of Tennessee, Knoxville does not offer a substantial amount of on-campus housing for graduate students; therefore off-campus housing is the primary option available for graduate students; and

WHEREAS, the University of Tennessee, Knoxville announced that [housing will not be guaranteed for upperclassmen during the 2022-2023 academic year](#), which further reduces the supply of off-campus housing available for graduate students since they will be competing for housing with more undergraduate students; and

⁷ Robbins, M. K., Spence, M., & Steeves, E. A. (2022). A cross sectional assessment of basic needs insecurity prevalence and associated factors among college students enrolled at a large, public university in the Southeastern U.S. *BMC Public Health*, 22(1), 1–11. <https://doi.org/10.1186/S12889-022-12817-6/TABLES/4>

⁸ Ibid

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the UT Graduate Student Senate recommends that the University of Tennessee should consider establishing a graduate student housing working group with representatives from the administration, the graduate student body, and the faculty, that focuses on addressing on-campus and off-campus housing needs for graduate students and professional students; and

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the UT Graduate Student Senate recommends that the graduate student housing working group will be charged with collecting data on housing insecurity among graduate students at the University of Tennessee, as well as identify initiatives that have been successful at other institutions like [MIT](#), [Harvard](#), [Stanford](#), [University of California](#), [Caltech](#) and the [University of Georgia](#) which provide on-campus graduate student housing. This data should help determine the specific needs that are unique to graduate students at the University of Tennessee; and

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the UT Graduate Student Senate recommends that the graduate student housing working group establish a relationship with community-based housing organizations and the off-campus housing market in Knoxville. These relationships can help the group understand how the changing dynamics of the Knoxville housing market affects graduate students at the University of Tennessee; and

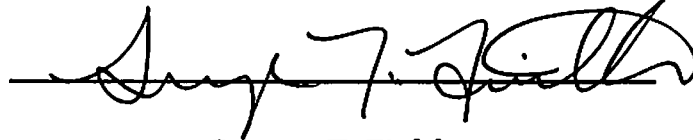
THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that once the graduate student housing working group has gathered data, they can contribute specific strategic recommendations for the development of designated on-campus housing for graduate students and off-campus housing initiatives for graduate students; and

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the UT Graduate Student Senate strongly recommends the establishment of an emergency graduate student housing single point of contact. This contact will assist incoming graduate students that might be struggling with navigating the off-campus housing market upon arrival at the University of Tennessee by consolidating resources and time-sensitive information. Additionally, this contact could raise awareness for subsidized off-campus housing and temporary housing solutions for graduate students that suddenly become housing insecure. These resources would complement the information provided on offcampushousing.utk.edu.

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the UT Graduate Student Senate encourages all active parties at the University to participate in establishing a supportive housing environment for graduate students. Improving the basic housing security of graduate students on campus will allow current students to fully embody the Volunteer Spirit, fulfill the mission of the University, and attract the most competitive and skilled talent to the University of Tennessee; and

BE IT FINALLY RESOLVED that this Resolution be distributed to the Office of the Chancellor, the Office of the Provost, the Office of the Vice Chancellor for Student Life, the Office of the Dean of the Graduate School, the Office of University Housing, the President of the Student Government Association, and the President of the Faculty Senate.

Adopted by the Graduate Student Senate of the University of Tennessee,
Knoxville, on the tenth of May in the year two thousand and twenty-two.



George T. Fields

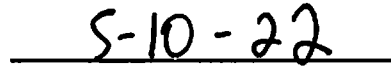
Senate Chair

The Graduate Student Senate of the University of Tennessee, Knoxville,
President, does hereby [] approve / [] refuse to approve this resolution.



Hunter A. Hammock

President



Date