

**Notes on Town Hall Meeting with Associate Provost for Graduate Affairs Dr. Daniel Kleinman  
November 14, 2017**

- **Taxes: Upcoming tax bill may include provision to tax tuition reimbursements as income. What happens to BU grad students if it passes?**
  - According to Kleinman:
    - Senate version does not include provision to tax tuition waiver as income
    - BU has registered its opposition to the provision through its legislative lobbying arm
    - It may be that tuition payments will escape taxation as Qualified Scholarships even if the provision goes through
      - This is possibly reflected in the 1098-T form that BU files for each student
    - A pending letter on the tax bill and BU's response will go out via email
  - There is a general lack of guidance on how to file taxes under the many different situations that pertain to graduate students.
    - Kleinman has offered to potentially set up a forum in which tax questions could be addressed
- **Dental and Vision: Graduate students currently do not have dental or vision insurance coverage through BU as part of their health coverage. Can anything be done to provide better care options for graduate students?**
  - There are currently no plans to offer graduate students dental or vision insurance through BU. Students may purchase private insurance if they so choose.
    - Given a limited budget for student health insurance, expanding care might imply admitting fewer students or making cuts elsewhere.
  - The BU website information on dental coverage is fairly opaque.
    - Website updates on dental care options for BU grad students are pending.
  - An idea has been floated to develop an arrangement with the BU Dental Health Center, a dental office on Commonwealth Ave. near the Charles River Campus used by many of the faculty and staff, to offer discounted dental care to BU graduate students.
    - More information on this arrangement may appear in January 2018
    - If this option is pursued, not likely to take effect before Fall 2018
    - The rate of discount and cost structure for care is not established, could be ~25 % discount off the retail prices
- **Stipend support: Many graduate students struggle to afford the cost of living in an expensive city like Boston on their current stipend; many student stipends do not cover summer term, and though many programs often require longer periods to complete, stipend funding stops after 6 years. What can the provost's office do to expand stipend support for graduate students?**
  - Kleinman: My goal is to expand stipend support, and I believe 8 months of stipend per year is too low.
    - However, the budget is limited – expanding stipend support could mean that fewer students can be supported in future admissions.
    - The Provost's office could make a case for expanding stipend funding to the administrative offices controlling the budget, but this process will likely take a long period of time.
    - Kleinman's office to have developed a proposal by the end of summer 2018.
  - 5 new summer internships for students of the humanities have been created this year to help support students without summer funding.

- Kleinman: We should focus in particular on helping PhD students in the humanities get internships and do other professional development activities to prepare them for alt-academic careers
  - There are remaining inequalities in stipend support between departments, and in some departments among student cohorts depending on year of admission.
  - The cost-of-living sample budgets provided on the BU website for prospective graduate students do not often accurately reflect the expense of living and working in the area.
    - The provost's office is planning on improving the website at some point.
- **What is role of the Provost's office? What are the Provost's immediate priorities for the near term?**
  - Dr. Kleinman is the senior officer for graduate affairs
    - Does not control the budget for graduate students
  - Diversity and inclusion initiative
  - Professional development initiative
  - Interested in evidence of solid job market prospects for Masters students who are paying in to help support academic programs.
- **Graduate students with dependents: What additional support can be offered to graduate students with dependents? What can be done to improve the student leave policy?**
  - Though students can get up to 60 days of paid leave for childbirth or adoption:
    - Students on external grants do not receive maternity leave pay
    - If both partners are BU grad students, leave may not overlap
  - There is little scope to revise the leave policy on the shorter-term
  - Support GWISE in creating for a panel discussion for BU graduate students with dependents, explore options for additional support
  - Limited reimbursements will be offered on an application basis to help cover conference travel for a few graduate students with dependents per year.
  - A general subsidy for graduate students with dependents is not forthcoming.
- **Transit, parking, food on campus: Many students commute to campus over considerable distance; parking, transit, and food on campus area a significant fraction of cost-of-living. Can BU provide any additional support?**
  - Grad students do not get a discount on parking like the faculty/staff do.
  - Grad students get an 11% discount on transit through a program with the MBTA; faculty/staff get a more generous discount.
  - Faculty/staff get a discount on food at the GSU. Graduate students do not.
    - Provost's office to look into options for enhancing discounts in these areas.
- **Working outside the university: The grad student offer letter prohibits outside employment. This creates a struggle for graduate students who need to supplement their stipend. Can this provision be relaxed?**
  - The provost's office will look into means of providing limited exception on a case by case arrangement.
  - Many students teach at the Met College and are paid for their work without issue.
  - There is little potential for oversight of outside student work by the BU administration.
- **Diversity and Inclusion Initiative: BU student body is less diverse than some other large universities. What is the initiative and what are its goals?**
  - Goals are to raise diversity of BU grad student body
  - Recruitment targeted at universities that serve diverse communities

- Reexamine admissions process to ensure people of color and other underrepresented groups are not weeded out early from the process
- Build community among and within groups on campus to aid in retention.