



**Graduate Assistants United**  
YOUR UNION, YOUR VOICE

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## **PRESS RELEASE**

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE  
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### **GAU Calls on UF to Protect Health and Financial Security of Students and Employees During COVID-19 Outbreak**

**GAINESVILLE, FL** – GAU recognizes the outbreak of Coronavirus (COVID-19) is likely to have significant long-term effects on the University of Florida, our members, and the university community. While we believe forceable changes to working conditions, generally, should be bargained between the Union and University, we believe it is wise of UF to temporarily transition to online instruction and for local officials to discourage large group gatherings. To combat the outbreak of COVID-19, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recommends persons practice social distancing and avoid congregating in large numbers in public settings.

During this public health emergency, we call on UF to take additional steps to safeguard the health and financial security of students and university employees. The University should provide further guidance and resources to graduate assistants to aid in the transition to online teaching. Paid sick leave should be provided to all employees, and UF should ensure all graduate assistants receive full pay regardless of the level of campus operations, so they can protect their own health and care for family and loved ones. We also ask the University to state unequivocally that graduate assistants who are not able to fulfill their duties due to illness or medical advice will not be subject to disciplinary action.

Following advice from public health officials, including guidance from the CDC and the Florida Department of Health, GAU is cancelling our scheduled events through at least March 30th. Our Spring General Body Meeting scheduled for Monday, March 16th, Bargaining Meeting planned for Tuesday, March 17th, and our office hours will be conducted virtually.

GAU encourages the community to treat the COVID-19 outbreak seriously and follow the advice of the CDC and other public health professionals.

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*GAU is the official labor union representing the approximately 4,000 teaching, research, and graduate assistants at the University of Florida. UFF, FEA, NEA, AFT, AFL-CIO. For additional information, contact GAU Communication Chair Stephen C. Phillips at [communications@ufgau.org](mailto:communications@ufgau.org) or 352-575-0366.*