

May 26, 2020

Dear Provost Zukoski,

As we collectively wrap up a challenging semester in a changed world, the Division of Cinema and Media Studies writes to thank you for the thoughtful, flexible, and careful leadership that you and President Folt have provided for our community. We recognize the extensive logistical and economic challenges that USC faces as we plan for the coming academic year, and we are eager to partner with you in charting a path forward.

We write to you today to express our solidarity with USC's least secure workers, including staff, adjuncts, non-tenure track faculty, and graduate students. As USC grapples with difficult financial decisions, we urge you to protect the most precarious members of our community, shielding their incomes, their jobs, their opportunities, and their benefits.

As faculty who teach, mentor, and work closely with graduate students, we recommend that the Provost's Office and Graduate School directly address USC's graduate cohort, a group facing particular financial, professional and psychological stressors, and articulate a clear plan to support their needs. These needs include emergency funds, health and housing services, increased international student advising, and research support. Additionally, the Graduate School should create a centralized, easy-to-find online resource *specific to graduate students* that aggregates pertinent policies and information related to COVID-19. Provost Zukoski's April 16th memo to the graduate students outlined important first steps and commitments, but we believe that USC can and should do more. We are asking for more transparency about how top-level policies are being formulated and for much broader representation of faculty and graduate students in those groups and processes.

The Graduate Student Organizing Committee (GSOC) and the Graduate Student Government (GSG) Executive Board have requested the extension of doctoral student funding in order to offset research and other delays caused by COVID-19. We strongly endorse their request and ask that you formulate a clear plan for funding such extensions. Other leading universities, including Yale and Brown, have taken similar steps. If USC cannot guarantee such funding to all doctoral students, the Graduate School should substantially expand opportunities for sixth-year finishing fellowships, pre- and post-doctoral teaching fellowships, and sixth-year teaching assistantships.

Graduate students comprise over half of our student body. They are a vital part of our campus community, actively creating new knowledge through their research while enriching the undergraduate experience through their teaching. Please attend to their specific needs and concerns

with seriousness and care as we navigate an uncertain future.

Respectfully,

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Vicki Callahan, Professor of Practice

J.D. Connor, Associate Professor

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