

STUDENT SENATE BILL 2024-1437

**TITLE: Graduate, Union, and Institutional Development Enhancement (GUIDE):
Section 1, Volume II: RECs and Off Campus Graduates**

AUTHOR(S): Senator Austin Britton, Senator Cassandra Urbenz

**SPONSOR(S): Minority Party Leader Anamika Naidu, Senator Hunter Monson,
Senator Adriana Sela**

WHEREAS Research and Education Centers (RECs) are off-campus facilities dedicated to research and education outside of Gainesville, Florida [1]; and,

WHEREAS the University of Florida currently has 33 unique RECs and off-campus satellite facilities that host graduate students and workers [1,2] ; and,

WHEREAS these facilities host hundreds of faculty, graduate assistants, and undergraduate students [1]; and,

WHEREAS these facilities span throughout the state of Florida [1]; and,

WHEREAS graduate assistants (GAs) at these facilities face existing issues such as rising housing costs, lack of full medical coverage, and low pay [3]; and,

WHEREAS these GAs additionally face issues in accessing healthcare, as many report difficulties in understanding and utilizing their healthcare, citing a lack of effective communication [3]; and,

WHEREAS these GAs cannot utilize dental coverage at all unless they travel to Gainesville, Tampa, or Miami [4]; and,

WHEREAS these GAs have more limited housing availability than in Gainesville [3]; and,

WHEREAS while RECs can have on-site housing, GAs commonly are required to vacate after just a few months [3]; and,

WHEREAS while RECs are spread throughout the state, no cost-of-living adjustments are made to wages; and,

WHEREAS even without cost-of-living adjustments for these GAs, the UF minimum for GAs remains significantly below the cost of living for the state of Florida [5]; and,

WHEREAS RECs have more limited student amenities than the UF main campus; and,

WHEREAS GAs at RECs, while technically having access to, have no reasonable way of utilizing access to locations such as UF RecSports and Lake Wauburg, nor any other Gainesville-specific location; and,

WHEREAS these GAs similarly have limited access to mental health services, cultural connection services, UF Sports, and UF student organizations; and,

WHEREAS despite these distinct issues, no REC students currently serve in the UF student senate; and,

WHEREAS these students have no reasonable way of voicing their concerns in front of the UF student senate without driving for hours; then,

THEREFORE LET IT BE RESOLVED, that the University of Florida Student Senate calls for the establishment of a dedicated communication channel between the Research and Education Centers (RECs) and the main campus to ensure effective dissemination of healthcare information and resources to graduate assistants (GAs); and,

THEREFORE LET IT FURTHER BE RESOLVED, that the University of Florida Student Senate advocates for the expansion of dental coverage access points for GAs, ensuring they do not need to travel to Gainesville, Tampa, or Miami for necessary dental care; and,

THEREFORE LET IT FURTHER BE RESOLVED, that the University of Florida Student Senate recommends the development of on-site housing policies that provide GAs with stable and long-term housing options at RECs; and,

THEREFORE LET IT FURTHER BE RESOLVED, that the University of Florida Student Senate supports the implementation of cost of living adjustments for GAs working at RECs to address regional economic disparities across the state of Florida; and,

THEREFORE LET IT FURTHER BE RESOLVED, that the University of Florida Student Senate urges the university administration to increase the minimum wage for GAs to a level that meets or exceeds the cost of living for the state of Florida; and,

THEREFORE LET IT FURTHER BE RESOLVED, that the University of Florida Student Senate calls for the enhancement of student amenities at RECs to ensure that GAs have access to comparable resources as those available on the main campus; and,

THEREFORE LET IT FURTHER BE RESOLVED, that the University of Florida Student Senate supports the establishment of specific representation for REC students within the UF student senate to ensure their unique concerns are addressed; and,

THEREFORE LET IT FURTHER BE RESOLVED, that the University of Florida Student Senate proposes the implementation of remote participation options for REC students to voice their concerns and vote for their representatives without the need to travel long distances; and,

THEREFORE LET IT FURTHER BE RESOLVED, that the University of Florida Student Senate recommends the creation of an REC Advisory Board, consisting of REC students and staff, to provide regular feedback and recommendations to the student senate and university administration.

Proviso: A copy of this resolution shall be sent to UF-GAU Co-Presidents Eva Garcia-Ferres and Cassandra "Cassie" Urbenz, UFF-UF President Meera Sitharam, Chief Bargainer Patrick Keegan, and Student Body President John Brinkman.


[1] <https://research.ifas.ufl.edu/research-areas/facilities/>

[2] <https://tnt.aa.ufl.edu/distance-programs/off-campus-programs/>

[3] <https://ufgau.org/>

[4] <https://gatorcare.org/wordpress/files/2024/05/GatorGrad-Care-Dental-Benefits.pdf>

[5] <https://www.sofi.com/cost-of-living-in-florida/>



7/16/24

Monish Vijayaraghavan
Senate President

Date