



The Administration Hears Us, But Refuses to Listen.

Senator M. Cruz-Morales, Senator S. Cruz-Morales, Senator Flores, Senator Leonard,
Senator Perez, Senator Rassieur, Senator Adeyemi, Senator Gordon, Senator Khan,
Senator Santana, Senator Wey - November 25, 2020

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Introduction

The University administration's recent release of the [Spring 2021 plan](#) confirms that Georgetown's administration doesn't listen to students, a sentiment that the student body has come to understand all too well through other crises of mismanagement like the inequitable [Fall financial aid packages](#) and the [closure of Leo's](#) until the Spring semester's late start in January 2021. These problems, too, are marked by a stunning lack of transparency despite repeated student efforts to participate.

The issue is not simply that Georgetown is ignoring the needs of the student body, but is worse in that it solicits student input, then discards it. The effect of this is to maintain the appearance of transparency and responsiveness, deflecting rightful criticism that, in fact, students have little concrete say or oversight in decision-making at the very top. It is not for lack of trying that students were not consulted; the University did indeed circulate six different Spring calendar options weeks prior to the decision. However, despite having access to [survey data](#) collected by the GUSA COVID Committee from 492 students, the administration selected the least preferred Spring calendar option, Option 6.

Further, the student body has been all but inundated with reminders to offer their feedback on the Fall semester; yet, despite noting that a majority of students feel disengaged, anxious, and are experiencing Zoom fatigue, the most recent [statement on student feedback](#) lays no blame on the University's year-long campaign to eliminate three-day weekends, instead advising faculty to, among other things, send emails saying "I'm here for you." To be fair, the administration also suggested providing breaks during class, though curiously, it remains unable to extend the same suggestion to the academic calendar. These decisions are not due to ignorance of our problems. In spite of detailed knowledge of students' difficulties, the administration has chosen to disregard our well-being. This cycle of indifference must not continue in the upcoming semester.

Likewise, faculty seem not to have been substantively consulted on determining the Spring plan. [The Hoya reported](#) on a faculty survey that revealed as much, with Professor Jacques Berlinerblau stating that “A lot of our deliberative processes have gone wrong. [...] I’m the 1,000th person to say this, but by constantly making this a top-down deliberative process, a lot of good options weren’t being considered.” Overall, 46% of faculty did not feel included in the pandemic policy decision-making process, and 80% wanted greater transparency in financial planning. If faculty are not being heard to the point where some have formed their own advocacy group—Scholars for Scholars—and students are being listened to even less, one wonders who *is* given a seat at the table when the administration makes such decisions.

Academic Affairs

Georgetown’s Spring [academic calendar](#) reflects how little care the administration has shown for the academic success of students this semester. As noted, the lack of three-day weekends has precipitated stress and exhaustion for students. Even in asynchronous courses, students report that professors fail to upload recorded lectures in a timely manner, causing work to accumulate. Despite this, the Spring calendar suggests that the next semester will operate in a similar fashion.

Additionally, the Add/Drop period, a time for students to finalize their schedules for the semester, will only be four days long for Spring 2021. This is a drastic change from the previous semester in which Add/Drop lasted two weeks. The Add/Drop period is especially vital in this virtual setting. Its significant reduction shows a profound lack of understanding of students’ needs. For students who may only have a certain class once per week—such as the 150-minute-long seminars—this is simply not enough time to get familiarized with course content to the point of being able to decide to keep or drop a class.

International Students

This online semester has disproportionately affected international students, who have had to adapt to online instruction from different time zones. This took a toll on both their mental and physical health. Similarly, many of them are experiencing situations at home which influence their education. These students, unlike those in the U.S., are trapped at home, unable to secure visas. In order to receive or maintain their F1 visa status, international students are required to be enrolled in at least one hybrid-instruction course. This factor would enable them to apply for stability housing if needed or to move to the U.S. However, the University’s Spring plan does not utilize its full resources to help these students. International students additionally have not received more in-depth information from their academic counselors regarding plans which disproportionately affect them.

Transfer Students

The Spring plan’s failure to include transfer students has pushed transfer students to either transfer out of Georgetown or opt for a deferral. The University’s proposal to have seniors move

back to campus should also include transfer students who now only have about one year on campus left as a result of this plan. Georgetown excluding transfers in their policies is not a new phenomenon as transfers last year requested to be considered for on-campus housing in the Fall, but were ignored despite petition efforts. The administration's pattern of behavior in excluding transfers ostracizes a group of students who offer a unique perspective to the Georgetown community. While we understand welcoming more students back to campus may be a safety hazard, there are barely 150 new transfer students each year.

Stability Housing & On Campus Needs

The Spring plan briefly mentions a very minimal expansion of stability housing for the next semester. At first, students seeking stability housing for Spring 2021 were told to explain their circumstances to Student Affairs by email just to get an automated reply, a directive that had not been discussed during meetings with students. A few days later, presumably due to an influx of emails, the administration released a vaguely worded application which students were given Thanksgiving break to complete. While it is beneficial that students now have an application, the fact that students have to disclose their traumas in writing—now twice—is unacceptable. Moreover, the administration's strict, narrow parameters to access housing provides it an unjustly broad discretion to deny in-need students.

Last semester's stability application process was already extremely unethical and traumatizing for students as many were denied housing due to an incomprehensive process that allowed for comparatively privileged students to receive spots on campus while their peers in need suffered. Given that the administration is only allowing about 150 new stability applicants on campus for Spring, this will more than likely exacerbate the issue. The lack of transparency in the stability housing application process also raises concern as the University refuses to release information on the demographics of the team reading over applications—let alone who specifically sits on the committee—which introduce bias in the selection process. Even after the administration themselves stated that the application process for the Fall semester could have been more humane, the resultant Spring application process was even less humane. Georgetown evidently does not prioritize their students in need, nor does the administration want to be equitable in their supply of stability housing.

While those issues are specific to students seeking a spot on campus, students who were given on-campus housing for Fall 2020 also felt as if they were treated by the administration as an afterthought. Throughout the Fall semester, students on campus have raised a number of concerns to the administration that have gone unanswered, such as GUPD officers not following safety procedures like wearing masks. While the Georgetown Scholars Program has provided a great amount of support for students on campus, there needs to be a greater support system for the on-campus community. Just yesterday, students on campus received an email indicating that they would receive Flex and Debit Dollars to accommodate their food needs. This measure,

however, was only a result of student pushback, further highlighting the disappointing opacity in University decision-making and lack of consideration of in-need students. While having to face reduced hours in nonideal conditions, dining hall workers will not be given any opportunities to work for the remainder of the Fall semester. The University needs to be held accountable for this inhumane treatment of service workers in a time in which working families are especially vulnerable.

Finally, it is completely unacceptable that the University would charge senior students full tuition in order to gain access to on-campus services. If the point of prioritizing seniors was to let them experience as close to a normal final semester during a pandemic, it is extremely unethical to only allow this experience at an extra cost. This action is detrimental to both senior students and students seeking stable housing. Moreover, it shows the University's motives for bringing students back to campus are not due to the desire to provide for those in need, but rather for monetary gain.

Our Demands

As members of the student body, we demand the following:

- **One break per month at minimum for Spring 2021:** We demand the University to alter the academic Spring calendar. If Georgetown truly believed in its Jesuit value of Cura Personalis, they would care about the mental and physical health of their students. We believe that in order to uphold this value, Georgetown must grant students at [minimum one break per month](#) in its revised academic calendar.
- **Bring back transfer students along with seniors for Spring 2021:** Recent cohorts of transfer students have been unable to experience the on-campus college experience, unlike seniors who have been on campus for at least 2 years. Given that there are only approximately 150 new transfer students each year, and to disincentivize them from transferring out, transfers should also have the option to be on campus this Spring.
- **Transparency on the committee overseeing housing requests:** Students deserve to know the names, or at the very least demographics, of the committee approving stable housing requests since these individuals are deciding their fates for the following semester
- **Subsidized, expanded dining options for students on campus through the Spring semester including Spring break:** While the administration is now providing students remaining on campus for the Thanksgiving and winter breaks with a Debit and Flex Dollar stipend, this does not change the severe lack of options where students will be able to spend this stipend. It cannot be forgotten that the University's initial plan was to let students fend for themselves, and this cannot be a part of any future dining policy. One cannot care for the whole person on an empty stomach. Plainly, Leo's must remain open throughout the entire Spring semester to support both students and our community's workers.

- **Support Georgetown workers:** Georgetown must ensure that workers' health insurance policies are extended through Spring 2021, shifts are expanded, and as many employees are brought back as soon as possible—not only so that our community's workers can support their families, but also so that the 150 students remaining on campus prior to the Spring semester and the roughly one thousand who will be on campus for Spring 2021 have the dining options they need.
- **Increased resources for students who are not permitted to live on campus:** Due to the low number of spots being given for on campus housing in the Spring, the administration needs to open a housing fund for students in need that will allow them to obtain housing in the Washington, D.C., Maryland, and Virginia region. The University should also ensure an increase in mental health resources for students who are unable to live in the area. In relation to international students it is vital that the University offers them at least one hybrid class to activate their F-1 visas, enabling them to study within the US in the coming semesters.

Senator Ardoin (2021), Finance & Appropriations Committee Chair, Senior Class Committee Chair

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Senator Sheila Cruz-Morales (2022), Sexual Assault and Student Safety Policy Chair

Senator Flores (2022), Sustainability Policy Chair

Senator Perez (2023), Accessibility Chair, Ethics and Oversight Senate Rep

Senator Rassieur (2023), Policy and Advocacy Committee Chair

Senator Adeyemi (2024), Gender Equity Policy Chair

Senator Gordon (2024), Finance and Appropriations Liaison to CMSF

Senator Khan (2024), Student Conduct and Arts Chair

Senator Santana (2024), Free Speech Policy and Veterans Affairs Chair

Senator Vincent (2024), Technology and Transportation Chair

Senator Wey (2024), Student Health and Student Organizations Chair

Senator Leonard (At-Large), Academic Affairs Chair

Senator Sanchez (At-Large), Ethics and Oversight Committee Chair, Mental Health Policy Chair

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