February 15, 2011

The Executive Board of the Graduate Student Government Association of Georgia Tech wishes to express, in complement with the resolution adopted by the Graduate Senate, its most sincere concern over the continuing escalation and current monetary levels of mandatory students fees levied on the graduate student body. Fees, as a single topic, represent one of the most significant issues that affect the entire graduate population.

Please note this letter is not intended to attack the concept of fees, which we understand are a necessary component to campus entities, particularly higher education institutions. Rather, our major concern resides in the fact that Georgia Tech has higher fees than 15 of our 20 peer institutions. Yearly graduate student stipends average a pre-tax total of $20,000. In contrast, the total sum of fees, including the five mandatory fees, academic excellence fee, parking fees and enrollment in the mandatory health insurance, amounts to a yearly total of $4,100. This means that approximately 21.5% of an average graduate’s total income goes solely to pay fees. This high number serves as a burden to current students and as a likely deterrent of prospective students. Since it has always been the goal of Georgia Tech to recruit the best students, we believe it is highly likely that current fee levels may adversely affect graduate recruitment and retention.

To address this issue, we respectfully propose action items that we feel are important to consider:

- Transparency of, and accountability for, the spending of the Academic Excellence Fee.

- Increase fringe benefits for graduate students, which currently include $100 in the fall and spring semesters.

- Increase negotiations that encourage Georgia Tech to break away from the Board of Regents student insurance system, which, as preliminary research shows, would likely result in the lowering of health insurance premiums.

- Encourage the Office of Graduate Studies and Admissions to survey prospective students who decline acceptance into respective graduate programs to determine if fees are becoming or have become a deterrent for attending Georgia Tech.

- Slow the charge of Institute overhead to campus entities that rely on fees as a primary source of income, which represent a total of $6 per semester in fees for the 2011-2012 fiscal year.

- Address the possibility of the inclusion of the Academic Excellence Fee into tuition.
The primary purpose of this letter, and the Senate resolution, is to formally address the issue of fees and create an open dialogue between the students and the administration concerning only the most pressing fee-related issues. As the undersigned, it is our hope that in the spirit of Georgia Tech, we can all work together to resolve these issues, thus continuing to make Georgia Tech the world class institution that it is.

Sincerely,

Anthony Baldridge  
Graduate President

Kathy Schnure  
Graduate Vice President

Lauren Polander  
Grad VP - Academic Affairs

Brandon Polander  
Grad VP - Health Services

Sean Dunn  
Grad VP - Student Welfare

Arren Washington  
Grad VP - Conference Fund

James Black  
Secretary

Mihir Pathak  
Coordinating Officer

Michael Ellis  
Grad VP - Internal Affairs

Evan McClain  
Treasurer

Jason Okerman  
Grad VP - Communications