



Graduate Student Senate  
November 7, 2018

Provost Patrick Farrell  
27 Memorial Drive West  
Bethlehem, PA 18105

Dear Provost Farrell,

In 2016, President John Simon first outlined a new multidimensional plan to build a stronger and more dynamic Lehigh titled: Path to Prominence. This plan outlines an increase in the university population (1,000 undergraduates, 500 graduates, 100 faculty), establishes a College of Health, and builds new residential and research buildings. The core focus of this plan is threefold: expansion, evolution, and exploration. Lehigh wants to be at the cutting edge, seeking to establish greater diversity among the student population, accommodate growth, support innovative research, and broaden Lehigh's impact on the world.

As part of this plan, new parking changes and regulations have been proposed beginning July 1, 2019. These changes include a substantial increase in fees and/or travel time to office/class/work for graduate students (see Appendix A for a summary of these changes).

---

The graduate student community has several concerns about the upcoming changes to parking services, fees, and regulations. We believe that these changes will significantly impact our financial stability, our ability to carry out innovative research, and our ability to carry out our duties as teaching and graduate assistants. The specifics of these impacts are outlined in the letter below. In order to respond to how these changes affect us, we also outline four recommendations for further changes to the parking services fees and regulation:

- Provide the same first year \$250 subsidy to all funded Graduate Students as provided to Faculty/Staff.
- Eliminate the cost of the Academic Break/Night and Weekend pass and make all passes valid for the entire calendar year (including overnight parking) for all Graduate Students.
- Reduce the cost or introduce a tiered fee system.
- Reduce the cost of the Saucon Village Parking Pass.

Given the goals of Path to Prominence and the active role graduate students play in achieving these goals, please consider the following letter.

## **Financial Constraints**

The proposed increase in parking fees will disproportionately affect graduate student financial stability. In order to park close to their office/classes/research labs, those on the Asa Packer campus would be required to pay roughly 2.5% of their entire income for the academic year. As part of the RA/GA/TA contract, these graduate students are strongly discouraged from finding another job to help pay for this increased cost. The \$250 permit to park on Mountaintop Campus and the Third Street Garage also represents a substantial portion of graduate student income. As most graduate students live paycheck to paycheck and would likely be unable to afford these parking fees, they will be forced to park in the free commuter lots, which are likely not equipped to handle ~2,500 students *plus* faculty and staff who opt to park in these lots. This is especially true of the northside lot, which offers less than 200 spaces, while the majority of graduate students, faculty, and staff live closer to that lot. This would force many graduate students to drive past Asa Packer Campus and Mountaintop from their northside homes to park on Goodman Campus. This not only takes a substantial amount of time, but would substantially increase the amount of money graduate students are spending on gas, increasing the economic and social disparity between graduate students and faculty. Although we have been offered the option to park in free commuter lots, we will also be required by our research and teaching responsibilities to also purchase the academic break pass for a total of \$190. This is a 150% increase from our current full calendar year fee.

## **Ability to Perform Research, Teaching, and Graduate Student Duties**

Parking Services has acknowledged that graduate student life resembles that of faculty members far more than undergraduate students. In order to fulfill our research and teaching responsibilities we are expected to be available during regular business hours, nights, weekends, and especially academic breaks. As a result of this expectation, it is imperative that parking passes be provided for the full calendar year. The current structure will require graduate students to also purchase the academic break pass in addition to other parking permits.

The proposed fee system also negatively affects graduate students with schedules that require them to come to campus after working offsite as part of their program (e.g., College of Education internships/placements). In order to be able to get to their classes or placements on time, these students will be effectively required to pay the increased parking fee.

The new transportation system causes additional concerns for our ability to fulfill the duties required of us. Transportation to the northside commuter lot is specifically restricted to typical business hours. Again, this requires graduate students to find a way to pay for the night and weekend/academic break pass, as it is unsafe for us to walk alone in the evenings to our cars. Two Lyft credits is not a sustainable solution to this problem. It will likely cost more than \$5 to take a ride to the northside lot, especially on nights and weekends when these services are

offered at a premium. Many graduate students will need to use this service more than once (e.g., night classes), and therefore will again be forced to buy a night and weekend pass. It is also important to note that using ridesharing services, rather than university transportation increases the safety risk to graduate students. As we work atypical hours, graduate students would likely be returning to their cars at atypical times, including alone in the middle of the night. Giving ridesharing service drivers access to this information could potentially lead to a threat to the safety of property and/or self. Additionally, not all graduate students are comfortable using ridesharing services, especially when asked to use them alone in the evening when being dropped off in a parking lot.

Furthermore, we would like to address the fact that parking permits do not allow graduate students to park on campus between the hours of 11pm and 6am. As indicated above, graduate students are often required to be in the lab to work on research or oversee experiments well beyond 11:00pm. Restricting our ability to park on campus overnight will restrict our ability to perform and complete our research projects. Additionally, many graduate students work in the evening at Fairchild-Martindale Library until it closes at 2:00am.

### **Recommended Changes to Parking Services Fees and Regulations**

*Provide the same first year \$250 subsidy to all funded Graduate Students as provided to Faculty/Staff.* As a goodwill gesture to faculty/staff Lehigh is providing a one year \$250 pay increase to offset the increased cost of parking. Despite the fact that graduate students make significantly less and do not have the same disposable income as faculty, this subsidy is not being offered to graduate students. This perpetuates disparity for an already disadvantaged group. This sends a message that the graduate student contribution to the university is far less important than the contribution of faculty and staff. If one of the goals of Path to Prominence is increasing our research prominence, it is important that graduate students, who do a large portion of the research, be treated equitably and valuable members of the Lehigh community.

*Eliminate the cost of the Academic Break/Night and Weekend pass and make all passes valid for the entire calendar year (including overnight passes) for all Graduate Students.* Parking permits for graduate students should encompass a full calendar year as well as evenings and weekends, as our research, teaching, and graduate student schedules require us to be on campus all year and some programs predominantly offer graduate level courses during the evening (e.g., College of Education). Additionally, many graduate students do research or work with the community outside of Lehigh, which requires them to be available on nights, overnights (between 11:00pm-6:00am), weekends, and academic breaks to accommodate working adults and families. It is also important to note that during these “off peak” hours, there should be a lower demand for parking, which in turn would drive costs for the university down. .

*Reduce the cost or introduce a tiered fee system.* A far more equitable solution to covering the increased cost of parking lot maintenance, would be to offer an income-based tiered permit fee system.

*Reduce the cost of the Saucon Village Parking Pass.* Currently, graduate students parking in the Saucon Village Lot pay a maximum of \$430 with the ability to park at Saucon Village, a parking lot close to their office at night, on weekends, and during academic breaks. The new parking regulations require Saucon Village residents to pay roughly the same base price (or more if they are RA/GA/TA) for less services. In order to park in other areas, these graduate students would be required to pay an additional fee for the academic break or the night and weekend pass. They are also not being provided with free access to the commuter lots. It is unfair to ask Saucon Village residents to pay more for more restrictive services.

---

We, the graduate students, strongly encourage you to consider the above recommended changes to the parking services, fees, and regulations. Innovative and productive research is an essential piece to the Path to Prominence plan. With the parking regulations and fees as is, research productively will significantly decrease. These regulations actively obstruct the flexibility and financial stability required to perform our duties. Additionally, they communicate a failure of understanding of the importance of the graduate student contribution on campus. Again, we urge you to consider our requests.

Respectfully yours,

The Graduate Student Senate

Enclosures : Fee Table (App. A), Sample Comments from Graduate Students (App. B)

CC: John Simon, President  
Patricia Johnson, Vice President for Finance and Administration  
Jennifer Jenson, Deputy Provost for Academic Affairs  
Alan Snyder, Vice President and Associate Provost for Research and Graduate Studies  
Kathleen Hutnik, Associate Dean for Graduate Student Life  
Sharon Field, Manager, Parking Services  
Sara Irick, Senior Project Manager Grant Integrative Facility Management  
Brent Stringfellow, Associate Vice President of Facilities  
Cameron Wesson, Dean of the College of Arts and Sciences

Georgette Phillips, Dean of the College of Business and Economics  
Stephen DeWeerth, Dean of the P.C. Rossin College of Engineering and Applied Science  
William Gaudelli, Dean of the College of Education  
Dominic Packer, CAS Associate Dean for Research and Graduate Programs  
Oliver Yao, CBE Associate Dean for Graduate Programs  
John Coulter, CEAS Associate Dean, Research and Operations  
Thomas Hammond, COE Associate Dean  
Doug Mahony, Chair of the Faculty Senate  
M. Kathy Iovine, Vice Chair of the Faculty Senate  
Ageliki Nicolopoulou, Faculty Senate Executive Committee  
Ray Pearson, Faculty Senate Executive Committee  
Frank Gunter, Faculty Senate Executive Committee  
Susan Woodhouse, Faculty Senate Executive Committee  
K. Sivakumar, Secretary of the Faculty, Faculty Senate  
Jill Forrest, Secretary to the Senate, Faculty Senate  
Ellen Liebenow, Chair of the Employee Relations Advisory Committee  
Christina Finley, Vice Chair and Treasurer of the Employee Relations Advisory Committee  
Marlene Vant Hoogt, Secretary of the Employee Relations Advisory Committee  
Zach Vinik, President of the Student Senate  
Jessica Hicks, Editor in Chief, The Brown and White  
The Brown and White

## Appendix A

**Table 1.** Current and Proposed Parking Services Fees.

	Current Fees (yearly) <sup>1</sup>	Changes as of July 1, 2019 (school year) <sup>2</sup>
RA/GA/TA Permit	All Designated Lots: \$76 Evening and Weekend: Incl. Academic Break: Incl.	Asa Packer: \$500 Mountain Top/Goodman: \$250 Goodman or Northside Commuter Lots: \$0 Evening and Weekend until 11:00pm: \$86 (school year) Academic Break until 11:00pm: \$190 (incl. Evening and Weekend)
Saucon Village non-RGT	Saucon, Mountaintop Commuter, and Zoellner (until 11pm) :\$430 Evening and Weekend: Incl. Academic Break: Incl.	Saucon/Evening and Weekend: \$420 Goodman Commuter Lot/Evening and Weekend: \$86 Summer Sessions: \$127
Saucon Village RGT	Saucon, Mountaintop Commuter, and Zoellner (until 11pm) :\$377 Evening and Weekend: Incl. Academic Break: Incl.	Saucon/Evening and Weekend: \$420 Goodman Commuter Lot/Evening and Weekend: \$86 Summer Sessions: \$127
Graduate Commuter	All Faculty/Staff Lots: \$96 Evening and Weekend: Incl. Academic Break: Incl.	Asa Packer Upper Residential: \$525 Commuter Lots/Evening and Weekend: \$86 Goodman Commuter Lot: \$0 Summer Sessions: \$127

<sup>1</sup> Data gathered from <https://financeadmin.lehigh.edu/content/parking-rates>. Fees presented are doubled to reflect yearly cost.

<sup>2</sup> Data gathered from <https://tinyurl.com/parking2019PDF>

## Appendix B

“...the plan purports to improve the sustainability of transportation at Lehigh, but in actuality is a plan that reduces the sustainability of graduate transportation and increases pollution in the environment. Because I am passionate about this, I calculated the effect of the new parking system on my personal contributions to pollution. I found that the extra distance I would be required to commute due to needing to park at Goodman campus would result in the release of over 300 additional pounds of carbon dioxide into the environment per semester (and this is just for me). That is not sustainable, and I do not feel Parking Services should make unfounded claims that the new system will increase sustainability.”

“The University is asking fac/staff/grads to assume all the cost and inconvenience of the changes in campus parking without sharing in those itself. Instead of addressing structural concerns re: transportation, sustainability, and accessibility, the University is instead shifting its responsibility to third parties (the Lyft credit) and the lifeblood of the University (students/fac/staff). They are, in effect, abdicating their responsibilities - an acknowledgment that they cannot meet the needs of constituents and so will not even try. To those in administration who claim that Lehigh "is not in the business of building parking lots," I would remind them that Lehigh is not in the business of ANYTHING. We are an educational institution...”

“The fees of saucon village parking permit is remaining the same with eliminating a lot of services. First year I was here, I paid the same value to park in Saucon, Packer and mountain top. Then second year. it was saucon and mountain top only. Now, I will park only in saucon and yet pay the same amount of money...”

“...Graduate students have been told that Parking Services acknowledges that our lives resemble those of faculty more than undergraduate students (i.e. in order to fulfill our teaching and research responsibilities, we are expected to be available during regular business hours and often during weekends and academic breaks; additionally, many of us have relocated to this area and have families so we commute to work). However, we are not given the same supports that faculty are given in making this transition to paying exponentially more for parking than we have in the past. This [incongruence] makes us question the sincerity and genuineness of those in leadership. Furthermore, paying \$500 for a parking permit comes at a much higher cost to graduate students who are paid far less than other university employees: this amount is roughly 2.5% of a TA's entire income for an academic year. A far more equitable way to cover costs associated with the P2P expansion would be to have a tiered permit fee system, or even better yet let those costs be supplemented by the income that will be generated from the additional undergraduate students. The additional cost to park after regular business hours, on weekends, and during academic breaks is exploiting graduate students who already earn very little in order to increase the funds brought in to the parking office. Graduate students are often expected to be available for research activities during these “off hours” (e.g. in my lab we collect data from families from the community, which means scheduling appointments during late evenings, weekends, and academic breaks). There will be ample parking spaces available on campus during these times so we should not be expected to pay a hefty price or waste an hour of our time to access our place of employment in these instances. I also have concerns about being forced to park up the mountain during the winter. I can think of instances last year in which the university remained open until inclement weather hit in the afternoon, then at about the same time that classes were canceled (and thus I was able to leave campus), the buses were no longer able to go up the mountain safely. This would leave many of us stranded on campus with no way to access our vehicles. And then once we were able to access our vehicles, we would have to navigate steep mountainous roads in inclement weather in order to return to our homes. If a primary source of parking is up the mountain, weather cancellations should be made more liberally to accommodate the more treacherous terrain many of us will be required to travel.”