

Class C Resolution: Support for the prohibition of students catering thesis/dissertation defenses and other related activities.

WHEREAS the Graduate School has crafted a statement asking faculty to prohibit students from catering thesis/dissertation defenses and other related activities; and

WHEREAS the statement notes that it is common practice in some programs for students to cater food and/or drinks for meetings with faculty (e.g. during general exam defenses or thesis/dissertation defenses); and

WHEREAS the statement notes that this practice is often an implicit expectation rather than an explicit requirement, but the power differential between the student and their faculty mentors means that it is generally far from voluntary; and

WHEREAS the statement explains that students are concerned that they will be punished or judged harshly if they do not cater the meeting; and

WHEREAS the statement demonstrates that buying food can be an undue burden, it can create anxiety for students, and many other universities across the country have or are adopting similar policies to support students; and

WHEREAS the faculty at the University of Washington is deeply committed to educating the next generation of scholars, innovators, and difference-makers; therefore

BE IT RESOLVED that the Faculty Senate of the University of Washington endorses the Graduate School statement.

Approved by:
Faculty Senate
December 5, 2019

The Graduate School statement on prohibiting students from catering thesis/dissertation defenses and other related activities.

It is common practice in some of our programs for students to bring food and/or drinks to meetings with faculty (e.g. during annual committee meetings, general exam defenses, thesis/dissertation defenses). It is often an implicit *expectation* rather than an explicit *requirement*. However, the differential in power between the student and their faculty mentors means that this “voluntary” practice is actually far from voluntary.

The Graduate School, in consultation with the Graduate and Professional Student Senate and the endorsement of the Faculty Senate, is writing to ask that you work with your faculty colleagues to end the practice. Allowing students to make the decision about catering these required meetings themselves is a false choice for them: many are concerned that they will be punished or judged harshly if they do not bring food/drink. We remind you that:

- We have students dealing with [food insecurity](#); buying food for a required meeting is an undue burden (it is an undue burden even if they are not dealing with food insecurity)
- The practice creates a lot of [anxiety](#) for students
- Programs at universities across the country have or are adopting such policies to support students

We are sure that the faculty at the University of Washington is deeply committed to educating the next generation of scholars, innovators, and difference-makers. Allowing students to focus on their studies facilitates that aim. We applaud the programs that have already prohibited student catering at required meetings and encourage the rest of our programs to do so ASAP. Our students will appreciate it.