Resolution to Abolish Restrictions on Leaves of Absence

Whereas, in 2009 UCOP began instituting a statewide change to the UC Leave of Absence policy, requiring students taking research leaves of one quarter or more to pay an In Absentia fee amounting to 15% of tuition, along with health insurance fees, campus fees, and professional fees, and has limited the time for research leaves to 1-2 years maximum;

Whereas, student and faculty efforts to pay In Absentia fees since 2009 using department funds or Graduate Studies’ matching commitments have mitigated harm to individual students, but drain financial resources meant for graduate students and departments, and these matching commitments only cover the full cost of In Absentia fees for students who receive nationally-competitive grants such as NSF;

Whereas, UC Davis has additionally removed "research purposes" from the criteria of eligibility for PELP (Planned Educational Leave Program), such that students are required to declare In Absentia status in order to enjoy the benefits of campus research resources such as IRB approval, which is necessary for their data to be publishable;

Whereas, In Absentia fees, unlike indirect costs provided for in most research grants, fund resources that by and large provide no benefit to UC Davis scholars doing off-campus research, such as: on-campus facilities that are not accessible to them; health plans which students are often unable to use in their research site; and statewide unrestricted funds (that is, funds from tuition) which UC is not required to spend on education and research;

Whereas, In Absentia fees cause disproportionate harm to: departments with limited funds due to austerity measures; international scholars who pay double the tuition of resident students; scholars who are required to conduct fieldwork to complete a degree; and scholars who receive UC-internal funding for their research;

Whereas, the GSA of UCLA has passed a resolution condemning similar restrictions on Leave of Absence at UCLA and are currently working to get administration to restore two-year tuition-free leaves of absence;

Whereas, UAW Local 2865 (UC Student-Workers Union) has called for an end to Leave of Absence restrictions and fees across UC as part of the 2013 academic workers’ contract;

Let it be resolved, that the UC Davis Graduate Student Association is of the opinion that:

Any mandatory fees attached to research leaves imperil UC Davis’ tradition as a leading research university and discourage innovation.
Let it be finally resolved, that the UC Davis GSA calls on UC Davis to immediately stop assessing In Absentia fees and to begin work with the graduate student body to implement a new leave of absence policy--one that improves the quality of graduate student life at UC Davis and promotes the pursuit of pioneering research.