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SB61-21/22-Resolution Advocating for Improved Resident Assistant Working Conditions

Elizabeth Bowles

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1 **The Associated Students of the University of Montana**
2 **Resolution Advocating for Improved Resident Assistant Working Conditions**
3 **January 14, 2022**

4 **SB61-21/22**

5 **Authored by: Elizabeth Bowles, ASUM Senator;**
6 **Sponsored by: Alex Crisp, UM Student; Anonymous Current and Former RAs;**

7
8 Whereas, The primary purpose of the Associated Students of the University of Montana
9 (“ASUM”) is to advocate for the general welfare of the University of Montana (“UM”) student
10 body;

11
12 Whereas, UM hires multiple Residential Assistants (“RAs”) each year to work for UM’s
13 Residence Living;

14
15 Whereas, The work done by RAs to keep dorms safe and meet student needs while living in a
16 dorm for the first year is substantial;

17
18 Whereas, First year RAs are paid \$6,025.00 per semester which is for the cost of housing,
19 dependent on the residence hall they are located in, the meal plan they choose, and any leftover
20 money is paid through bi-weekly paychecks;

21
22 Whereas, Not every RA receives adequate pay for their services due to the varied cost of living
23 for each residence hall;

24
25 Whereas, The responsibilities for an RA include: Office hours, weekly traditions, one-on-one
26 meetings with Area Coordinators (“AC”), staff meetings, quality circle, on call/duty hours, and
27 desk hours¹;

28
29 Whereas, UM Residence Living claims that the aforementioned responsibilities are intended to
30 average 20 hours of work per week²;

31
32 Whereas, RAs may be responsible for approximately 52 students at any given time;

33
34 Whereas, The position duties anecdotally provided by a UM RA include: facilitating three floor
35 meetings with predetermined and non-negotiable dates, participating with residents in a
36 University event or other RA organized events, intentional interactions every quarter with each
37 resident, filling out paperwork, attending committee assignments, being on duty for twelve (12)
38 hours (despite only being paid for three (3) to six (6) hours according to UM policy), nine (9)
39 days of training prior to the start of the semester primarily focused on leadership and community
40 building, (a minimal amount is related to responding to student crises that occur frequently), peer
41 support of other RAs, facilitating activities with floor residents, regularly creating bulletin boards

¹ *Resident assistant (RA) position description - UMT.* (n.d.). Retrieved January 26, 2022, from
<https://www.umt.edu/housing/employment/jobdescriptions/Resident%20Assistant.pdf>

² *Resident assistant position.* Resident Assistant Position. (n.d.). Retrieved January 26, 2022, from
<https://www.umt.edu/housing/employment/ra.php>

42 and hanging up posters, nine (9) days of training to learn how to respond to situations of suicide
43 and assault, and becoming mandatory reporters;

44
45 Whereas, Many RAs report having to respond to suicide or mental health crises of their peers or
46 students in the dorms;

47
48 Whereas, The duties of an RA require more than 20 hours of labor per week;

49
50 Whereas, RAs on campus have expressed that they feel as though they cannot speak truthfully
51 about their situation to their employers or to outside sources;

52
53 Whereas, The job of an RA should not interfere with a student's ability to maintain academic
54 success;

55
56 Whereas, The duties for an RA are not reflective of what the job actually entails;

57
58 Whereas, Many RAs seek mental health resources to aid them with the emotional stress of their
59 position³;

60
61 Whereas, The therapy often sought by RAs is not covered by UM nor accounted for in their
62 hours, despite the emotional stress of being an RA being the primary factor in their decision to
63 seek out therapy;

64
65 Therefore, Let It Be Resolved, That ASUM encourages UM to maintain a mentally conscious
66 workload for RAs on campus by diluting their responsibilities to other paid positions;

67
68 Therefore, Let It Be Further Resolved, That ASUM encourages desk clerks to be hired positions
69 in dorm buildings, either through compensation or work study programs;

70
71 Therefore, Let It Be Further Resolved, That ASUM encourages the addition of a community
72 director position, a designated position that will coordinate events for RAs and residents in dorm
73 buildings;

74
75 Therefore, Let It Be Further Resolved, That ASUM asks for free or discounted group or
76 individual therapy sessions for RAs to improve their mental health while navigating the
77 emotional stress of their position;

78
79 Therefore, Let It Be Further Resolved, That ASUM calls upon Residence Life to decrease the
80 hours RAs are required to work in order to justly reflect the hours requested of them in their job
81 description;

82

³ Bogus, B. (2020, September 17). *Working as a resident assistant can negatively affect mental stability*. The University Star. Retrieved January 26, 2022, from https://www.universitystar.com/opinions/working-as-a-resident-assistant-can-negatively-affect-mental-stability/article_2cc6d06a-3022-56fb-af52-c48942ef90b1.html

83 Therefore, Let It Be Further Resolved, That ASUM calls upon Residence Life to revise the
84 number of hours and responsibilities expected of an RA in their job descriptions in order to
85 accurately and transparently advertise the positions;

86
87 Therefore, Let It Be Further Resolved, That ASUM calls upon Residence Life to increase the
88 amount of compensation RAs are given;

89
90 Therefore, Let It Be Further Resolved, That this Resolution be sent to Jeff Adams, Director of
91 Curry Health Center; Sarah Swager, Vice Provost for Student Success; Paul Lasiter, Vice
92 President of Finance and Operations; Jace Whitaker, Interim Assistant Director of Residential
93 Education; Sandra Curtis, Executive Director of UM Housing and Community Standards.

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96 Passed by Committee: January 23, 2022

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98 Passed by ASUM Senate: January 26, 2022

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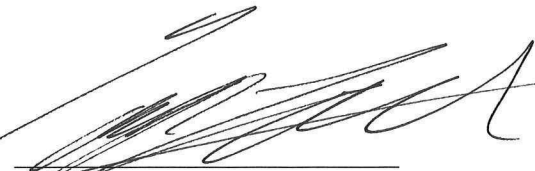
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Elizabeth Bowles,
Chair of Relations and Affairs


Canyon S. Lock,
Chair of the Senate

Passed Unanimously.