

1 Title: **RESOLUTION SUPPORTING FAIR LABOR PRACTICES FOR SCHOOL OF**
2 **SOCIAL WORK PRACTICUMS**

3
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16 Resolution Number: 04. 14-15

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18 WHEREAS the University of Washington (UW) School of Social Work's (SSW) practicum
19 program provides administrative support, oversight, direction and negotiation with practicum
20 agencies for approximately 500 graduate and undergraduate students assigned to approximately
21 300 agencies; and

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23 WHEREAS the UW SSW exercises significant and primary control over the
24 practicum tasks, practicum environment, practicum placement and practicum evaluation of
25 practicum students; and

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27 WHEREAS the UW SSW practicum students' activities include actual
28 operations of the practicum sites and are dissimilar to classroom-based learning; and

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30 WHEREAS social workers provide essential services to vulnerable and at-risk populations, that
31 are often undervalued, with the average Master of Social Work salary upon graduation in
32 Washington state expected to be approximately \$42,200. While many students incur
33 educational debt, the debt burden to social worker students is higher than many programs,
34 which could be reduced by compensated and protected practicums; and

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36 WHEREAS the tasks performed by UW SSW practicum students benefit the
37 practicum site; as reported by the SSWs 2014 Student Survey evaluating the Practicum
38 experience, approximately 50% of social work students felt they did displace regular
39 employees and 75% of students felt that their practicum agencies derived immediate advantages
40 as a result of their uncompensated work done in the agency; and

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42 WHEREAS the UW SSW has been unwilling to report back their findings on
43 their evaluation of student practicums, making students obtain this information by filing a
44 Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) request; and

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46 WHEREAS paid internships yield employment offers upon graduation at over twice the rate of
47 unpaid internships with significantly higher salaries/earnings; and

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49 WHEREAS UW Master of Social Work students engage in 140 additional hours of practicum
50 work above the Council on Social Work Education's (CWSE) required 900 hours; and

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52 WHEREAS some UW SSW practicum sites are already paying practicum
53 students minimum wage, because they consider practicum students to be employees and are
54 concerned that they would otherwise be liable for violating minimum wage laws; and

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56 WHEREAS the UW SSW practicum sites maintain the right to bill and receive
57 payment for services performed by the practicum student, as maintained in the practicum
58 agencies/UW SSW contracts and practicum manual for students, which may violate item number
59 4 in the Department of Labor's (DOL) Fair Labor Standards Act; and

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61 WHEREAS the tuition cost to Washington resident students to complete the UW School of
62 Social Work practicum requirements is approximately \$15,361 or \$14.77/ practicum hour for
63 Washington residents and \$25,706 or \$24.72/practicum hour for non-Washington residents.
64 Additionally, due to the burden of practicum hours, students also incur a loss of wages that might
65 otherwise be obtained in paid positions outside of school curriculum, as well as additional
66 financial resources associated with transportation, professional clothing, and required agency
67 materials; and

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69 WHEREAS the UW SSW does not provide health and accident insurance for
70 practicum participants and requires students to sign a liability waiver prior to beginning work in
71 their practicum sites, deeming them financially responsible for any medical bills incurred as a
72 result of emergency or other medical treatments needed as a result of practicum students' tasks at
73 the practicum site; and

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75 WHEREAS the UW SSW practicum students are required to sign a risk liability waiver holding
76 the UW SSW and practicum sites harmless for bodily injury and death incurred at the practicum
77 site including the following: driving to and from the practicum site, or while in the course of
78 practicum activities; unpredictable or violent behavior of certain client populations served by the
79 practicum site; exposure to infectious diseases, including tuberculosis or other airborne
80 pathogens, and hepatitis, HIV or other blood borne pathogens; and

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82 WHEREAS, the UW SSW deliberately misclassifies its practicum students as exempt from wage
83 requirements, workers' compensations and employee benefits;

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85 **THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED BY THE GRADUATE AND PROFESSIONAL STUDENT**
86 **SENATE OF THE UNIVERSITY OF WASHINGTON:**

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88 **THAT** the GPSS calls upon the UW SSW to recognize that the work
89 performed by students at the practicum sites equates to uncompensated, unprotected and
90 unrecognized labor and is not compliant with the DOLs standards; and

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92 THAT the GPSS calls upon the University of Washington to commission an annual audit of the
93 practicum program's adherence to the Department of Labor's standards and a program evaluation
94 assessing student safety in their practicum sites, the burden of financial responsibility placed
95 upon students as a result of practicum participation, and student satisfaction with their learning
96 experience by the start of the next practicum placements; and
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98 THAT the GPSS calls upon the UW to ensure this audit is carried out by a body independent of
99 the School of Social Work with at least one student representative and that the results of this
100 audit are made public in a timely manner; and
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102 THAT the GPSS calls upon the UW to recognize that the UW SSW operates as the primary
103 entity responsible for exercising extensive control over the tasks, environment, contracts and
104 responsibilities of the practicum students' relationship with the practicum program; and
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106 THAT the GPSS calls upon the UW SSW to procure sustainable practicum positions that are
107 compensated and protected under Federal Labor Laws, that both ensure student safety and hourly
108 wages associated with the work students provide in these agencies. Additionally we urge the
109 SSW to clearly designate a paid staff member to address and be charged with procuring these
110 paid practicum positions, as well as inform and support students and agencies in applying for
111 work study benefits for work done in practicum agencies; and
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113 THAT the GPSS calls upon the UW SSW to report the results of student surveys to the student
114 body, and deliver a plan of action to address issues of DOL compliance and student safety; and
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116 THAT the GPSS directs the President of the GPSS to monitor the university's progress towards
117 making the above changes, advocate on behalf of the affected students in the SSW to the
118 university administration, and work with the Social Workers Student Union to achieve this
119 directive; and
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121 THAT a copy of this resolution be forwarded to interim UW President Ana Mari Cauce, the
122 Associate Dean for Academic Affairs Emiko Tajima, the Dean of the SSW Edwina Uehara, the
123 UW Board of Regents, UW Faculty Senate Chair Kate O'Neill, Editor-in- Chief of The Daily Joe
124 Veyera, GPSS President Alice Popejoy, ASUW President Christina Xiao,
2015-2016 GPSS Leadership, and the 2015-2016 ASUW Leadership.

Presented to GPSS for approval on Wednesday, March 11, 2015

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