

THE INDEPENDENT DAILY NEWSPAPER FOR THE UNIVERSITY OF IOWA COMMUNITY SINCE 1868

# The Daily Iowan

NEWSPAPER • ONLINE • TELEVISION



THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 12, 2015 |

[HOME](#)
[METRO](#)
[SPORTS](#)
[OPINIONS](#)
[80 HOURS](#)
[PHOTO](#)
[VIDEO](#)
 Search

## Local organization protests tuition raises

BY [MICHAEL KADRIE](#) | OCTOBER 23, 2014 5:00 AM✉ [SHARE/EMAIL THIS ARTICLE](#)

Dozens of University of Iowa students, faculty, and state legislators deployed across the front of the Pentacrest Wednesday waving signs, chanting and delivering speeches condemning UI a comment by President Sally Mason and a potential increase in tuition.

"If public education is a right, then why are we seeing increases?" said Jeannette Gabriel, the president of Campaign to Organize Graduate Students.

COGS, a union for UI graduate students, organized the protest.



Though membership is voluntary, all UI graduate students are affected by the union's negotiations. Protesters — including a student in a wig portraying Mason presiding over seven students typing on antique typewriters — responded to comments Mason made in a speech to the UI College of Education on Sept. 24, 2014.

In that September statement, Mason said half of the average \$27,000 in debt accrued by graduating UI students is a consequence of what she terms "lifestyle debt." She described "lifestyle debt" as involving student ownership of technology such as laptops and iPhones.

But during an Oct. 8 media availability, Mason responded to criticisms of her statement by explaining how the UI is able to determine that only \$12,000 of that \$27,000 debt is need-based.

"We're able to ... know from the federal forms people have filled out exactly how much of that debt they needed to borrow to complete their college education by the federal standards for need-based debt," Mason said.

The state Board of Regents will discuss a potential tuition increase of 1.75 percent, which was another point of emphasis for protesters.

At the UI, tuition accounts for 60.7 percent of the operations budget; in 2001, it made up 30.6 percent.

Carl Rosen, the president of the United Electrical, Radio and Machine Workers of America's western chapter and part of the COGS parent union, said the fight for lower tuition in public education is a critical fight for the entire country.

"Our country is the wealthiest it has ever been; the money just isn't in the right places," he said.

On Nov. 1, the group will begin negotiations with the regents over its next two-year contract of employment for graduate teaching assistants and graduate research assistants.

Gabriel said the elimination of administrative fees from the financial concerns of students was another key goal of the protest and her organization.

"Fees are just a back-door way of increasing tuition," Rosen said.

The fees have risen 548 percent since the 2000-01 academic year.

Gabriel said the fight against “crippling” student debt is one uniting both graduate and undergraduate students. She said any victory they experience in the waiving of fees and tuition will put pressure on administrators to make changes at all levels.

Members of the UI faculty also came to show their support for students facing financial woes.

UI Associate Professor of intermedia Sarah Kanouse said public education needs to stop shifting financial responsibilities from the state to individuals.

She said some of the students she teaches work several jobs and arrive in class ready to participate despite their evident exhaustion.

“When students struggle, I know it’s not an individual failing but a failure of the system,” she said.

Spenser Santos, a UI graduate student and teaching assistant, said he often cannot believe the amount of money tuition brings to the university. He said the vast majority of it goes to “lining the pockets of ... administrators.”

“On average, each of my classes [of 20 or so students] represents over half a million dollars of tuition,” Santos said.

Gabriel said she was excited by the great turnout of both graduate and undergraduate students.

“The most important thing we can take away is that we are not alone,” she said.

In today's issue:



Local cyclists see crash course



Jack Boyle: The Workhorse



Bank slides into Brown Bottle space



Today's Display Advertising



Add a comment...

Also post on Facebook

Posting as **Melissa Zimdars** ▾

Comment



**Osvaldo Francisco Díaz-Duque** · Top Commenter

There has been a deployment, a condemnation, and a faux Sally Mason.

Reply · Like · Follow Post · October 23, 2014 at 5:58am

Facebook social plugin

[DI Awards and PR](#) | [Contact Us](#) | [Scholarships](#) | [Job Opps](#) | [Subscriptions](#) | [Back Issues](#)

[Privacy Policy \(8/15/07\)](#) | [Terms of Use \(4/28/08\)](#) | [Content Submission Agreement \(8/23/07\)](#) | [Copyright Compliance Policy \(8/25/07\)](#) | [RSS Terms of Use](#)

Copyright © 2015 The Daily Iowan, All Rights Reserved.