

April 13, 2020

Dear President Wiewel and Administration,

My name is Nadeen Ezzeddine and I am a first year PMHC-A student in the Graduate School of Education and Counseling.

I was initially writing to you in regard to the recent increase of graduate student tuition and fees that is currently scheduled to go into effect this Summer 2020. While President Wiewel's frequent emails to students have been optimistic and calming during these strange times where the news is mostly anxiety-inducing, Lewis and Clark students feel as though the College could be doing more to support its students. Our President Wiewel's letter on April 9th, 2020 states that if we are struggling, to reach out. This is us reaching out.

Lewis and Clark recently made the decision to raise the tuition for graduate students, from \$947 per credit to \$975 per credit. This tuition increase is being made during the unprecedented circumstances of the COVID-19 pandemic. Under the best of circumstances, a tuition increase would be unpopular but given the current situation, it is defeating news, one more unexpected challenge to have to overcome while already scrambling to stay adjust and stay afloat. Adding to the pain, we were not notified of this increase. Instead, we have been constantly notified of how many COVID-19 cases there have and have not been, which is information that we are grateful is being communicated. We have also been notified that most students on all three Lewis and Clark campuses have shown "great resiliency" and are doing surprisingly "well" during this pandemic. Does increasing the tuition during these tough times also show our resiliency? Does expecting us to move to fully online delivery of classes without preparation show how "well" we are doing? After being in touch with many other Lewis and Clark students across all campuses – the Graduate School of Education and Counseling, the

Lewis and Clark Law School, and the College of Arts and Sciences— it has become clear that graduate students are not the only ones upset about the recent tuition increase, but students across all campuses are feeling uncomfortable and struggling.

On April 8th, 2020 we were informed that Lewis and Clark established a Coronavirus Emergency Response Fund for students in need but were also informed that this fund “is limited and likely won’t be able to assist all in need.” We are *all* in need. While Lewis and Clark say they cannot assist all students in need through this Fund, Lewis and Clark *can* help all students in need **by not only preventing this tuition increase but also through a partial tuition remission for Summer semester classes and beyond, should the fully remote learning still be in place.**

It is also important to note that for students in the Counseling programs, CACREP-accredited online MA programs at private intuitions generally charge less per credit than Lewis and Clark. Now that Lewis and Clark has transitioned to online delivery of classes, it would be a reasonable and generous response for Lewis and Clark to offer comparable pricing per credit to these other institutions, so long as the COVID-19 pandemic and online delivery of classes continues.

It is informative, during these bizarre times, to look around at how other higher learning institutions are reacting to the challenges we are all facing. On April 9th, 2020, Portland State University’s Board of Trustees voted *unanimously* to reduce or refund multiple types of student fees. The University of Oregon also recently alleviated the payment deadline for their quarter’s tuition and extended it until June, even though their quarter already started. Even local Oregon universities have begun working to provide assistance programs that benefit *all* students, as compared to Lewis and Clark that has thus far only informed us that *some* students *may* get

assistance. We ask that you look to these Oregon schools as an example of what Lewis and Clark can do for its students.

While the steps taken thus far by the Lewis and Clark administration have been in response to the health concerns raised by the pandemic, those albeit necessary steps have deprived us of much. We have lost out on countless campus resources, we have lost out on person to person contact with our peers; we have lost out on communication with our professors and faculty; we have lost out on building relationships with our community; and we probably will continue to lose out on significantly more in the upcoming semesters as well. While we understand and appreciate that the limitations arising from the pandemic are beyond the control of the Lewis and Clark administration, the College could certainly be doing more to alleviate the hardships being imposed. No one expected this pandemic to hurt us in the many ways that it has, and no one certainly expected to pay even *more* than before for tuition and online classes. We also lost out on the money spent on parking passes, the remainder of which Lewis and Clark has *refused* to reimburse countless times to students who have requested it and have even outright *ignored* students' simplest requests. Even the smallest amount of money for expenses such as these has been denied to us, amounts of money that could also alleviate many of our troubles.

We ask you to consider how the decisions of this historic institution, which we are all proud to attend, affect the majority of students who have lost their jobs, who will not be able to afford their rent, who are grappling with not being able to eat, and who are struggling to support both their families and continue successfully with classes. Lewis and Clark should also consider how first-generation students, many of whom are people of color, are affected by this pandemic as many first-generation students also play a dual role in supporting their families financially on top of being students. Not helping students through a partial tuition remission or tuition reduction

feels as if the College is choosing to completely ignore the hardships that these students are facing. It is also a direct contradiction to the social justice values that Lewis and Clark routinely espouses to have. Consider how a partial remission of tuition for Lewis and Clark students would alleviate the ongoing hardships of this pandemic for your students.

It also seems quite clear that Lewis and Clark has the resources to support its students during this time. The Office of Business and Finance at Lewis and Clark states that Lewis and Clark's endowment is valued at more than \$238 million which is aimed at "[playing] a vital role in supporting the college's educational mission." Clearly, supporting students during this time of crisis plays a direct role in the College's educational mission. And if it is not, it should be. The lowering of college tuition is especially important during this time as the nation's economy and market downturn has caused major industries to close, leaving so many unexpectedly without an income and without jobs. During this unfortunate time, paying for colleges and universities is a *luxury* that many cannot afford. It only makes sense that when the economy is in decline, that the cost of many things, such as college tuition, be lowered to match the ongoing events. Without this taken into consideration, fewer students will be able to afford Lewis and Clark, let alone attend the university, which also affects the university's endowment.

Our President Wiewel's April 9th letter stated that implementing a Health Science minor was being discussed in an effort to attract more students to enroll at Lewis and Clark, seeing as this pandemic will surely decrease the university's enrollment in upcoming terms. It seems more likely that a higher tuition rate during the COVID-19 pandemic may prove to be prohibitive for new applicants. It is important that the College thinks also about what it can do to support students *already attending* Lewis and Clark.

Although this untimely tuition increase may have been one scheduled and is a normally routine matter for this time of year, no one anticipated that COVID-19 would strike this hard. Because of this, this tuition increase should have *never* gone into effect. Instead, efforts to lower the tuition should be being rigorously pursued to help us all during this crisis. The timing of this tuition increase feels insensitive to the struggles that many students are already facing as the pandemic continues to attack people and our economy.

I write this letter, with my fellow peers and Lewis and Clark alumni, to all members of the administration across Lewis and Clark College collectively and demand we be taken seriously, and that a minimum that no tuition increase occurs and that even more appropriately that a partial tuition remission or tuition reduction be granted for all Lewis and Clark students across all campuses. This is a crisis and the burden of it should be shared by all of us sacrificing a little. We students have lost much in the format of accessing education. We should not have to pay more, while enduring an event that negatively affects us all. With all respect, we demand that our concerns are heard and addressed. We do not pretend to have all of the information or answers. We also believe that perhaps the College is somehow unaware of how deeply impacted we are, and how demoralizing the tuition increase truly is. We all chose to attend Lewis and Clark for a reason, are all proud Lewis and Clark students, and we expect nothing less than to be treated with respect and as an integral part of Lewis and Clark. This is a time for all of us, on all levels, to come together, working creatively to minimize the far-reaching devastation of this pandemic. Please feel free to contact me to discuss any questions or concerns. Thank you for your time. We look forward to you for your leadership, experience and dedication, to help us in building a better solution and future together.

Sincerely,

Students of the Graduate School of
Education & Counseling

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