



Office of the Dean of Graduate Studies

Mail Code 230-87, 1200 East California Blvd, Pasadena, CA 91125

Tel: 626 395 6346 Fax: 626 577 9246 Email: gradofc@caltech.edu

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Dear Caltech Graduate Students,

Over the last month, there has been extensive dialogue and discussion with me personally and within the community more broadly about next year's health insurance plan for graduate students. I appreciate the perspective that each of you have brought to this topic and the concerns that many of you have expressed. In the best of times, modifications to health plans, especially with higher costs, are not popular. In the midst of a healthcare crisis, I understand that these conversations can raise even greater questions and concerns.

I am writing today to share that the student health insurance plan for the 2020-21 academic year has been finalized. When the new plan goes into effect on September 1, 2020, the following changes will be implemented:

- The annual premium cost for graduate students will be \$630. This represents an increase of \$84 from the premium cost of \$546 for graduate students in the 2019-20 academic year.
- The annual deductible will increase from \$250 to \$500; and
- The out of pocket maximum will increase from \$1,500 to \$2,000.

Under the new plan, the full premium will be \$3,138 (a total increase of \$412). The Institute is continuing its commitment to pay 80% of the premium for graduate students. A more detailed pricing for the 2020-21 medical, dental and vision plan premiums is at the end of this letter.

Aspects of the 2020-21 plan that will remain unchanged include:

- A \$15 copay per office visit; and
- The inclusion of 25 mental health visits without a copay.

The cost increases in the plan reflect both the rising costs for health care services generally, as well as the continuing trend that the Caltech student community increases its use of the health plan. Renewal rates are based on Caltech's previous claims.

I appreciate that beyond the increased premium, the plan changes will lead to increased out-of-pocket costs for some of you. The Institute is proactively taking steps to help mitigate the financial impact of this change, through such measures as

- Subsidizing 80% of the premium. Caltech's support in this manner provides a significant buffering of the true cost of health insurance.
- Fully covering the health fees for the campus health resources.
- Providing access to a dedicated staff member who works on health insurance claims for students in the Human Resources benefits office.
- Providing students with significant unanticipated expenses with the option to petition for financial assistance through the Graduate Studies Office's emergency fund. (<https://www.gradoffice.caltech.edu/financialsupport/emergency-funding>)
- Increasing the dependent health care supplement, in alignment with increased premium costs, to \$140/month starting September 1. (<https://www.gradoffice.caltech.edu/financialsupport/funding>)

In addition to the measures mentioned above, the Institute is increasing the minimum graduate stipend by \$1,500 from \$35,000 to \$36,500 for the 2020-21 academic year. Across the Caltech community, only

graduate students are receiving an annual salary increase, as the campus is subject to a salary freeze because of the financial impact of the coronavirus pandemic on the Institute's finances.

These changes in the health plan for the 2020-21 academic year may not be the outcome you were hoping for, but having no alterations was not an option given the rapidly escalating costs of health care in a time of financial constraints for the Institute.

It is also important to emphasize that throughout the process to review the student health plan, members of the graduate student community have been actively engaged in the discussion. The faculty health committee that is charged with reviewing available options and making recommendations to the Institute on such plans and services includes graduate student members. For more than a decade, graduate student participation on this committee has been important for shaping changes to the health insurance plan. In the present situation, the graduate student members clearly and forcefully advocated their positions—as they are expected to do in their role—and the perspective they brought to the discussion was invaluable in informing what plan features, such as preserving the copay amount and 25 copay-free mental health visits, were the most critical to maintain. We throughout the administration thank them and all the members of the community with whom they consulted for their feedback.

Caltech is committed to ensuring you have access to a quality plan that supports your health and wellbeing. If you are having challenges with health insurance issues, please let us in the Graduate Studies Office know, so that we may work with you and other campus resources to address these challenges.

Sincerely,



Douglas C. Rees

Dean of Graduate Studies
Roscoe Gilkey Dickinson Professor of Chemistry

2020-21 premiums	Annual	1st term	2nd term	3rd term
Medical (graduate student)				
student only	\$630.00	\$210.00	\$210.00	\$210.00
Medical (dependent(s))				
spouse or child	\$3,138.00	\$1,046.00	\$1,046.00	\$1,046.00
2 or more children	\$6,276.00	\$2,092.00	\$2,092.00	\$2,092.00
Spouse and 2 or more children	\$9,414.00	\$3,138.00	\$3,138.00	\$3,138.00
Dental (graduate student)				
student only	\$128.68			
Dental (dependent(s))				
spouse or child	\$119.84			
2 or more dependents	\$318.28			
Vision				
student and all covered dependents	\$31.80			