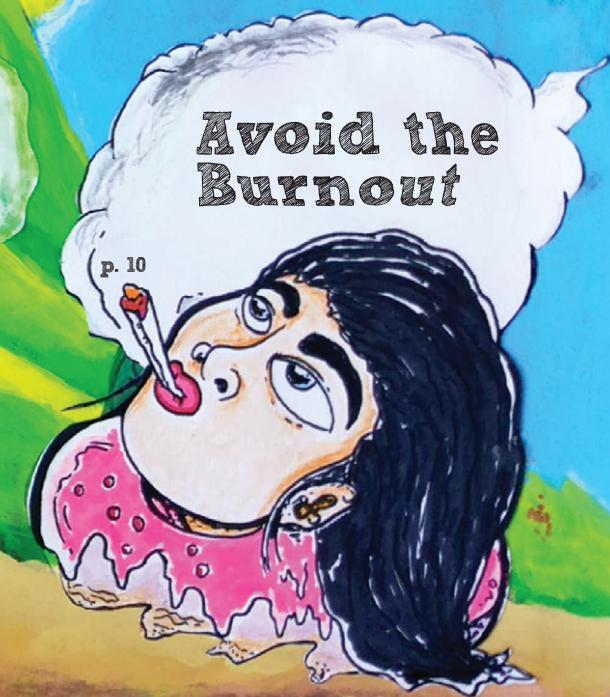
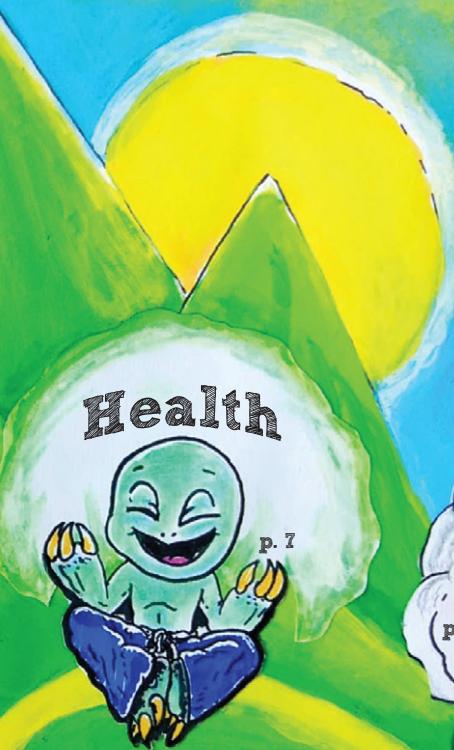
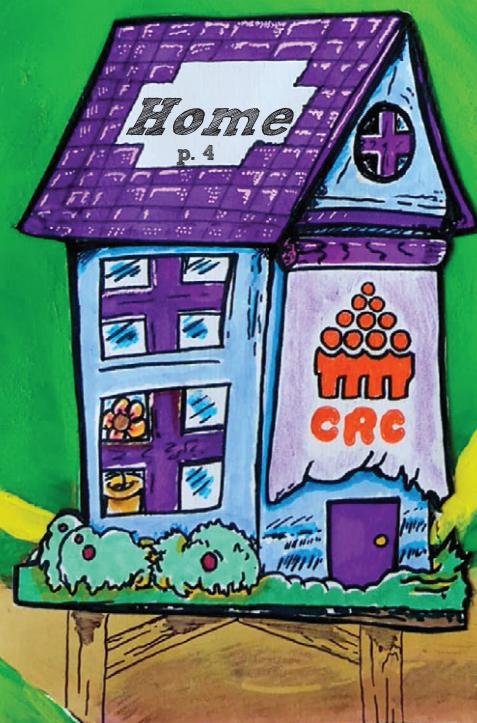


Graduate School Survival Manual



Committee on Rights
and Compensation

BÓULDER



WORK + SCHOOL

Know Your Facts

The cost of living in Boulder County for one adult with no children is between \$28,209 (Colorado Center for Law and Policy, 2015) and \$45,517 (Economic Policy Institute, 2018). A living or self-sufficiency wage is the amount a working adult requires to cover their basic needs. A person must be able to pay for their housing, food, transportation, healthcare, utilities, other necessary expenses, and save for emergencies.

CU graduate workers make an average of \$21,434 on a typical fully-funded 9-month TA or RA appointment. After expenses for books, materials, and mandatory fees, workers' average take-home pay is \$17,872--about 39% to 63% of Boulder's living wage.

CU graduate workers take home less pay than their peers at other PAC-12 institutions (see bouldercrc.org for details).

Other inequities also exist within CU's Graduate School. For example, the University's 2014 Student Social Climate Survey shows that LGBTQ graduate students are twice as likely as their straight peers to withdraw without completing their degrees.

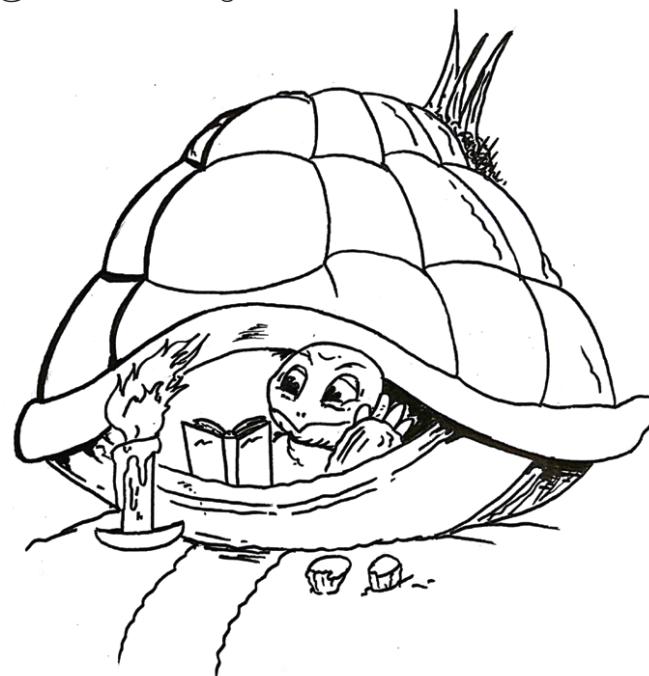
Know Your Rights

Graduate students who are on appointment or otherwise employed by the University are considered both students and employees (see CU Graduate Student Bill of Rights and Responsibilities, Section V).

Graduate student workers have the right to organize under the United States Constitution! This means that under the First Amendment, we can freely assemble and exercise the freedom of speech.

To confidentially discuss an academics- or university-related conflict, contact the University Ombuds Office: 303-492-5077. This office is unique because it is not required to report what you disclose to the University (unless there is risk of imminent harm).

To confidentially discuss a workplace conflict, contact us: info@bouldercrc.org



What CRC is Doing

We have released a petition to secure a living wage for graduate workers. Join the fight and add your name at: [bouldercrc.org/wages-petition!](http://bouldercrc.org/wages-petition)

We are putting pressure on CU to increase graduate student stipends. Since 2016, we have secured sizable raises every year--around 6% annually. This is an additional 4% over the 2% proposed by University administration.

We won transparency to and secured the release of more comprehensive data from the CU's 2014 Student Social Climate Survey.

CRC has used this survey, along with talking to graduate students across departments, to understand the major trends that are negatively impacting graduate students.

We have made changing these trends top priorities. Our current campaigns target the following issues:

- * Securing more affordable housing;
- * Increasing pay and obtaining more comprehensive benefits;
- * Ensuring the University and departments are places that welcome and support diversity (of all forms);
- * Fostering a stronger sense of worker consciousness and workers' rights.



Know Your Facts

Boulder housing costs are high. Rent for a one-bedroom apartment averages \$1,565/month and is growing 8% annually.

The 2018 Graduate Student Housing Survey shows that housing is a serious problem for many graduate students:

- * Almost 40% respondents live 5+ miles from campus;
- * Half of respondents are looking for new housing options;
- * The average rent cost for those living off-campus is \$970/month, which totals \$11,640/year.

A typical fully-funded 9-month TA or RA only takes home \$17,872 after expenses, meaning rent is 65% of income.

The City of Boulder prohibits 3+ unrelated people from living together in most dwelling units. Many live in 4+ bedroom houses illegally and some landlords willingly rent to tenants knowing that they are breaking the law. Renters may save money this way, but landlords will have greater leverage over them--akin to employers' leverage over undocumented workers.

Colorado is a tenant-unfriendly state:

- * There are few laws in place protecting tenants from landlord abuses;
- * The Warranty of Habitability--which prohibits landlords from renting units that are unfit for human habitation--was only promulgated into law in 2008;
- * Landlord retaliation is prohibited, but is often difficult to prove in court.

Affordable and safe housing do exist in Boulder:

- * Most affordable units are owned by Boulder Housing Partners, a quasi-governmental organization that provides housing for low-income residents. Most units will not rent to graduate students, although individual buildings may make exceptions.
- * There are also housing cooperatives that foster intentional community and collaboration, including several owned by the non-profit Boulder Housing Coalition (BHC). For BHC co-ops, students have to be at least 24 years of age to be eligible.
- * The Safehouse Progressive Alliance for Non-Violence (SPAN) offers emergency shelter services for individuals and families experiencing interpersonal violence and/or elder abuse.

Know Your Rights

Some basic Colorado tenants' rights:

- * Landlords must give 24-hour notice before entering your unit.
- * Landlords must give 30-day written notice before raising your rent (if on a 12-month lease) or 10-day written notice (if on a month-to-month lease). Rent may only be raised on a new lease, not an existing one.
- * According to the Warranty of Habitation, tenants may withhold rent if a landlord fails to take care of important repairs, such as a broken heater or plumbing. Documentation is essential.
- * Security deposits must be returned to tenants within 60 days of the end of the lease. Security deposit theft is common, as are expensive and dubious fees.

CU's Off-Campus Housing & Neighborhood Relations offers free legal advice to any enrolled student. Contact them at: 303-492-7053 or och@colorado.edu.

Security deposit or other minor disputes can be settled through Boulder County's Small Claims Court for a filing fee. These are usually settled in mediation and in favor of landlords, but legal advice and assistance can be useful.



What CRC is Doing

We are collecting housing stories about graduate students' current and past experiences with finding a home in Boulder County or the surrounding area. Email us to share your story: housing@bouldercrc.org! We welcome stories of all types and sizes!

We are also conducting a comprehensive housing survey during the fall of 2018 to better understand how the housing crisis in Colorado affects graduate students. Look out for our survey on our website or email us to find out more!



Know Your Facts

- * You're sick or injured during business hours:
Wardenburg Health Center, open Mon-Fri, and Sat morning, 303-492-5101. Hours shorten during the summer
- * You're having mental health issues:
Counseling and Psychiatric Services (CAPS) at C4C or Wardenburg, open Mon-Fri, 303-492-2277
- * You're sick or injured outside of business hours:
Emergency Room or Urgent Care (use Urgent Care services first if possible). You will have to pay the copay and fees out of pocket
- * You need specialty care:
Go to Wardenburg and get a referral first, otherwise services will not be covered (and you will still have to pay a copay)
- * You need prescriptions refilled:
The Apothecary at Wardenburg, 303-492-2093, or have your provider route the prescription to your nearest pharmacy

Breakdown of CU's health-related student fees:

- * Student Gold Health Insurance Plan, per semester: \$1995
- * Student Health Fee: \$94
- * Mental Health Resource Fee: \$45
- * Campus Care Supplement (only if you have your own insurance): \$175

If you have your own insurance, you do *not* have to buy the Gold Health Insurance Plan! See the Bursar for details.

Know Your Options

What's included in the Student Gold Health Insurance Plan:

- * General medical and preventative coverage (including general and travel vaccinations)
- * Sexual health services
- * One annual vision exam
- * One annual teeth exam and cleaning
- * \$75-200 copay for Urgent Care, Emergency Room, and Hospitalization (and variable fees during visit)
- * In-network providers require \$40 copay, a \$500 deductible/year, and 20% coinsurance/year

Other things covered by the Gold Plan that can be very useful:

- * 20 annual psychiatric visits with CAPS
- * 26 annual physical therapy and 10 chiropractic visits
- * Nutritionist services

What's not included in the Gold Plan (and should be):

- * Insurance for spouses or dependents
- * Dental services besides a routine exam and cleaning
- * Vision services besides an annual exam (which does not include a contact lens fitting)
- * Parental or medical leave



Where to get free or discounted medical services:

- * Planned Parenthood: 303-447-1040
- * Free and low-income clinics in Boulder: <https://www.freeclinics.com/cit/co-boulder>
- * Some CU departments have an emergency fund if you are having a medical bill emergency

What CRC is Doing

We are actively researching how to improve and increase the health services we receive for the \$1,995 premium we pay every semester to the Gold Health Insurance Plan.

We have brought attention to graduate students' limited access to mental health services through the Gold Plan to University administration, the Board of Regents, and the media.

We publicized the fact that we are the only PAC-12 university with no paid parental leave--a situation that marginalizes students that want to start a family.

If you are struggling with medical bills, have been turned down for health services, or have been unfairly treated, contact us: info@bouldercrc.org.

AVOIDING THE BURNOUT:

Some insights from your zine team!

Take care of your physical health as well as your mental health. Exercise, try to stay healthy, and get outside when you can. Boulder has some of the world's best roads for cycling. Take advantage of that and ride your bike up a bunch of hills (if that's your thing), or maybe just soak up some sun every now and then.

Jon, CRC, MATH Grad, and Boulder DSA



When the going gets weird,
the weird turn pro.

Phat, Illustrator



Most of the people who make it a point to sound smarter than you are in fact, not. The greatest and most difficult thing you'll learn in grad school is how to believe in yourself.

Marianne, CRC and PSYC Grad



The Boulder Public Library is an amaaazing place to work away from campus.

I've survived grad school (so far!) by maintaining and building a strong network of friends and supporters in and outside of my department and outside of the university. It's important not to exist in isolation!

Arielle, CRC and ANTH Grad



Arrf! [Snuggle your furry allies!]

Sumo, CRC Ally



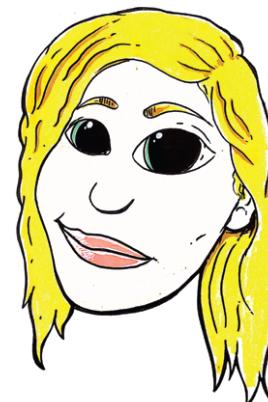
Get a hobby! Something that you do simply for the pleasure of doing it. Knit! Roller skate! Write poetry! Or ... my personal favorite, find some folks to engage in fantastical escapism playing Dungeons and Dragons!

Meagan, Boulder DSA



Other people's successes are not your failures. Don't let setbacks define you, they are the most valuable lessons you will learn from in grad school.

Katherine, CRC and EBIO Grad



When you take a couple hours (or a couple weeks) off, really take that time off. Enjoy it as much as you can and don't think about work during that time. It takes practice to learn that skill ...

Carly, CRC and EBIO Grad



The grad school hustle gives the aura that productivity and self-discipline reign supreme. The concept of kindness seems trite, but I think it forges connectedness and is crucial to our individual and collective well-being.

Be very kind to others. Be very kind to yourself. Make room for the stuff that makes you feel whole: long bike rides, community organizing, art with friends, practicing patience, reading a book, or doing nothing. And know to rest when you're tired.

Xi, CRC and GEOG Grad

The Graduate School Survival Manual (2018) is made by the Committee on Rights and Compensation (CRC), the graduate labor union at the University of Colorado-Boulder. We hope it is useful to incoming and current graduate students. It is also our first zine!

The manual is made with support from the House Justice Working Group of Boulder Democratic Socialists of America (DSA). Visit them online: <https://www.boulderdsa.org>.

It is illustrated by Phat. Visit his Instagram: @phatz_dali_666.