

## Student Academic Affairs

### Help is on the Way for Students Facing High Rents

On March 15, Vice Chancellor of Student Academic Affairs Elizabeth Watkins announced a new need-based Cost of Living Supplement (COLS) pilot program for UCSF students. "We've heard our students loud and clear ? it's hard for them to afford to live in San Francisco, where the rents are skyrocketing," said Watkins.

The University has made public its concrete plans to develop a substantial amount of [new campus housing](#) <sup>[1]</sup>; unfortunately, most current students will have graduated before the doors open in 2019. To bridge the gap until sufficient campus housing is available, UCSF is initiating the need-based COLS program to offer a \$2,400 annual supplement to students enrolled in degree programs who are not living in campus housing.

"We fully recognize that this Cost of Living Supplement is not a comprehensive resolution of the housing problem for the UCSF community. We also understand that \$2,400 won't be enough to address all financial problems, but we hope that it will be enough to make a tangible difference," Watkins said.

Funding for the COLS program will come from a philanthropic gift for student support together with contributions from UCSF Health and the UCSF schools. The supplement will be provided to as many students as can be accommodated by the designated resources. It is estimated that there is funding to support 1,500 students in 2016-17. Although funding is expected to continue beyond this period, extension of the program will be contingent on its effectiveness and the availability of funds.

To be eligible for the supplement, students must be enrolled in a UCSF campus-based degree program and must live in the Bay Area. Because the aim of the COLS program is primarily to aid students facing the higher cost of living off-campus, all students who will live in campus housing in 2016-17 will not be eligible for the COLS. Students who are enrolled in online programs and those who have been registered in any program for more than five years will also be ineligible for the supplement. Students must demonstrate proof of rent payment. The COLS may be used, at the student's discretion, to help pay for housing or associated costs, such as commuting.

The offices of Financial Aid and Housing Services are working collaboratively on an online

COLS application, scheduled to open on May 1. New and continuing students will have until July 1 to apply. (This is an extension of the original deadline posted here.)

Mirroring federal regulations for financial aid, students applying for the COLS will also be required to provide a statement of their personal income, spousal income (if married), and, if they are under 30, parental income information. Most professional students will have already completed the FAFSA (Free Application for Federal Student Aid) in order to apply for financial aid grants or loans. Graduate students will also need to complete the FAFSA. The University acknowledges that students are adults who are independent of their parents. However, in the spirit of "One UCSF," there will be one system for processing all applications, and since two-thirds of the student body have already produced personal and parental income, the remaining one-third will follow the same model in this need-based approach to allocation of the funds.

Students who are awarded the COLS will receive a one-time payment in the fall. The supplement, like all stipends and scholarships, will be considered taxable income by the IRS.

Town halls, where students will be able to ask questions about the COLS program, will be held on May 9 at Mission Bay (Byers Auditorium, 12 p.m.) and at Parnassus on May 10 (HSW 301, 12 p.m.)

The application and updates about the COLS program will be posted on the [Financial Aid website](#) [2] and will be disseminated through the student listserv and other channels.

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[UCSF Main Site](#)

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**Links:**

[1] <https://www.ucsf.edu/news/affordable-housing-ucsf>

[2] <http://finaid.ucsf.edu/cols>