

**Stanford Solidarity Network**  
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**Statement for the County's Official Records**

We, the Stanford Solidarity Network, are a coalition of hundreds of Stanford graduate student workers committed to improving our living and working conditions. As the County Supervisors finalize the Conditions of Approval (CoAs) for the Stanford General Use Permit (GUP), we urge the Supervisors amend the CoAs to address issues of **childcare accessibility** and **housing affordability** for graduate student workers. We remind the Supervisors that **both of these issues are matters of legal concern**, as per municipal service requirements for unincorporated areas and compliance with the County General Plan, respectively.

First, we wish to point out that there are **significant conditions pertaining to childcare and affordable graduate housing that the [Planning Commission recommended](#), but are missing from the current draft CoAs**. The Planning Commission, after hearing various statements from the Stanford Solidarity Network last Spring, came to the conclusion that our demands should be added to the original County Draft CoAs. **We ask that the Supervisors incorporate the Planning Commission's well-considered recommendations.**

### **Childcare**

**We ask that the CoAs ensure accessible and affordable childcare services for both graduate student workers and postdoctoral fellows.** The latest draft of the CoAs contain a Municipal Services Study to assess the “adequacy” of childcare facilities by requiring that the childcare services be “comparable with municipal services provided in cities in Santa Clara County.” However, **we recommend a much clearer definition of what “adequacy” means.** “Comparable” to Santa Clara County is not a sufficient benchmark, as most students receive income at “very low income” levels for Santa Clara County. **“Comparable childcare facilities” to that in Santa Clara County would inevitably equate to unaffordable childcare facilities for graduate student workers.** Furthermore, there is no specific mention of graduate students workers and post-doctoral fellows in the latest draft of the CoAs (“graduate students” had been explicitly mentioned in the childcare review, which has since been deleted). As graduate student workers and post-doctoral fellows’ childcare needs are systematically overlooked, we ask that the CoAs explicitly mention these two groups in the Municipal Services Study.

To clarify the goals of the municipal services study, **“adequacy” must be clearly defined to mean *accessibility of childcare facilities***, in terms of location on campus relative to the graduate students’ place of work, sufficient space per facility and number of facilities, **and very importantly, *affordability for both graduate student workers and postdoctoral fellows***. To ensure these goals, this study must collect data on how many graduate students and postdoctorates have children and whether they would put their children in affordable childcare if it were available. The review should include an accessibility assessment of existing on-campus childcare facilities that reviews the length of their current waitlists and their affordability to graduate students who do not have outside support from families or spouses. The data collected in this study should then inform the number of childcare spaces that Stanford constructs. Without childcare spaces that are accessible and affordable to graduate students receiving the minimum yearly stipend of \$32,868,<sup>1</sup> graduate student workers and postdoctoral fellows’ childcare needs will only further strain already limited childcare resources in our surrounding community.

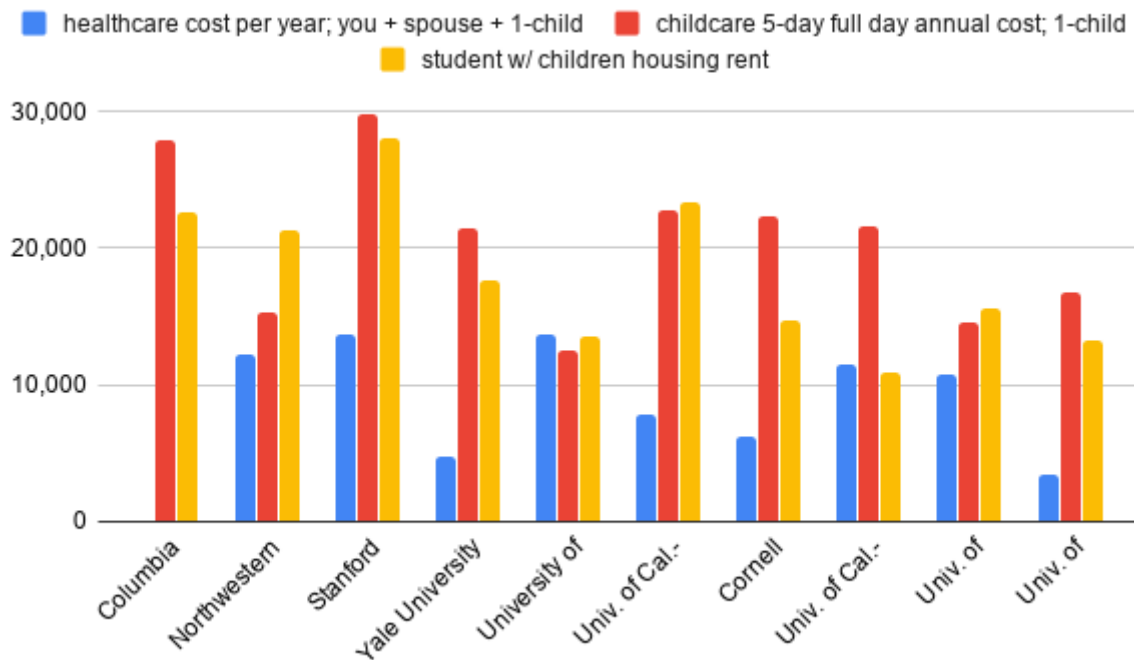
<sup>1</sup> This number is based on the most recent [Minimum Assistantship Salary Table](#), assuming the standard 50% assistantship for three academic quarters. The rates for research and teaching assistantships are different; the

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It has also come to our attention that the timeline for the completion of the study has been extended from 18 months to 36 months. **Childcare needs are an urgent matter and we therefore recommend that this timeline for the Municipal Services Study be brought back down to 18 months.**

It is important to note that **Stanford trails peer institutions in providing support for parenting students and postdoc families.** Many universities (both public and private) offer on-campus childcare, subsidies for low-income families and single parents, adoption subsidies, as well as family resource centers with full time staff to provide graduate student parents counseling and support. Stanford University offers limited assistance in a number of areas. As the chart below demonstrates, across the board, whether dependent healthcare, childcare expenses, or family housing rent, **Stanford graduate student parents face significantly more financial burdens than their equivalents in peer institutions.**

**Peer Comparison of Graduate Student Parents' Financial Burden**



research assistantships are \$10,956 per quarter while teaching assistantships are \$11,352 per quarter. The minimum yearly stipend of \$32,868 is based on three quarters of research assistantships.

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**Affordable Housing**

The CoAs overlook the crisis of housing affordability endemic on Stanford campus. **Currently only 15-20% of graduate housing qualifies as affordable (30% of income).** Stanford's plans for future graduate housing will only exacerbate the situation. Graduate housing construction in the Escondido Village Graduate Residences (EVGR) project is estimated to exceed even the most expensive graduate apartments currently on campus (See appendix "Graduate Income vs. Housing Expenses" for detailed analysis of how Stanford's newest graduate housing will increase average rents for single graduate students). The Stanford University administration has emphasized that "affordability" is a key concern, and has created an Affordability Task Force that is supposed to assess affordability concerns on campus. However, unless rents are lowered—which is unprecedented—the **new EVGR housing will in fact raise the average cost of housing for all single graduate students, reducing the amount of affordable housing to 7-8% on the whole.**

Regarding the GUP anticipated housing, while the current draft of the CoAs (and Stanford's own application) require 900 graduate beds, **there is no designation that these units be made affordable to graduate student workers.** In fact, in Stanford's GUP application, half of the 900 beds for graduate students will be at "moderate-income." Moderate-income for Santa Clara County is between \$66,150 and \$105,200. The median of graduate student income paid by Stanford is around \$35,000. **This new housing, as described in Stanford's application, would clearly be unaffordable for graduate student workers.**

**Within the Stanford Community Plan,** the policy approved by the County in 2000, **there is a very clear and explicit mention that Stanford's graduate student worker housing be made affordable for graduate student workers.** To quote the County policy sub-strategy 1C, entitled "Augment Affordability Programs and Funding," the policy states, "For housing to meet the needs of its target population, **its price must be consistent with the income of the intended residents...housing can be considered 'affordable' by accepted regulatory agencies but can still be too expensive for specific populations**" (52). The policy then makes clear that graduate student workers are one of these "specific populations." We remind the Supervisors that Zoning Ordinance Section 5.65.030 identifies required findings for approval of a Use Permit, including compliance with the County General Plan, which includes the Stanford Community Plan. **There is currently no implementation mechanism to ensure graduate housing affordability.** The CoAs provide an important opportunity for the County to ensure adherence to this important policy.

Additionally, as mentioned in our previous comments, we wish to make clear that graduate student worker affordability is **necessary for the County's goal of full mitigation.** As the County may be aware, most graduate student workers, as financially independent County residents living off of the low income we receive from Stanford, are eligible for Section 8 housing assistance. If Stanford housing is unaffordable for graduate student workers, we will increasingly rely on this housing assistance. In fact, it is Stanford's written policy for community associates (Stanford employees) in graduate student housing to direct graduate student workers with financial difficulties to request government assistance, such as CalFresh.<sup>2</sup> **In efforts to reduce Stanford's externalizing of issues of affordability onto the County, we urge the Supervisors to include in the CoAs requirements that graduate housing is offered at an affordable cost for graduate student workers' income.**

<sup>2</sup> Graduate Life Office, Community Associate Protocols 2019-2020, available at <https://tinyurl.com/caprotocol>.

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We note as well that Stanford externalizes not only issues of affordable housing, but also issues of general affordability, including food insecurity. Many students have relied on government food stamps and local food banks and will continue to do so without affordable housing. Over the past few months, hundreds of food insecure graduate students at Stanford have been supported by Second Harvest food banks, a stopgap, but much needed, measure.<sup>3</sup> **Full mitigation, so that Stanford's growth does not negatively impact surrounding communities and government resources, requires that the GUP address graduate housing affordability.**

A significant obstacle to ensuring affordable graduate housing is data. The data on the income we receive from Stanford is currently not public. Therefore, **it is crucial that the County require a study, as was done for non-student Stanford workers, to ensure an accurate assessment of the affordable housing needs of graduate student workers.** Based on this data, the County should require that Stanford provide affordable housing for graduate student workers at the appropriate rent-levels *for* graduate student worker income-levels (30% of income). We recommend that the County incorporate this assessment of housing affordability for graduate student workers and clear stipulations for action based on the study's findings in the CoAs under Section C, Part 4 entitled "Additional Student Housing Requirements" or as a separate part under this section.

<sup>3</sup> Holden Foreman, "More than 150 students and family members served at Second Harvest food bank delivery," *The Stanford Daily*, <https://www.stanforddaily.com/2019/09/01/more-than-150-students-and-family-members-served-at-second-harvest-food-bank-delivery/>

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**Appendix - “Graduate Income vs. Housing Expenses”**

Graduate students at Stanford are in a socioeconomically precarious position, working at a low income levels as research assistants, teaching assistants and fellows while their employer (the University) controls the cost of rent. Stanford has the ability to effectively determine their disposable income and living conditions, but has left many of its graduate students vulnerable to food insecurity, housing uncertainty, and without affordable healthcare and childcare options for their spouses and families. Here is an overview of an average student’s yearly financial situation.

**[Figure A: Annual Stanford University Full RA and TA Minimum Salary Rates, 2017-2020]**

Academic Year	RAship	TAship	Average of the Two
	Pay per Quarter		Academic Year Income
AY17-18	\$ 9,684.00	\$ 10,038.00	\$ 29,583.00
AY18-19	\$ 10,146.00	\$ 10,512.00	\$ 30,987.00
AY19-20	\$ 10,956.00	\$ 11,352.00	\$ 33,462.00

**\* The average of TA and RA funding rates will be used for subsequent calculations, with the caveat that funding varies by department and depends on a given student’s yearly funding scheme**

- These are official minimum salary rates posted by the university at <https://gfs.stanford.edu/salary/salary20/index.html>; departments can elect to offer more depending upon circumstance, such as the [Physics](#) department, which offers a slightly higher rate for a “head teaching assistant,” but the standard rate listed above for all 50% (20 hours/week) TAs.
- Graduate programs often do not guarantee summer funding; even when it is guaranteed or obtained separately, it is not likely that summer funding reaches the academic year rate. (e.g. the East Asian Languages and Cultures Department offers a \$8000 flat summer stipend for 2 summers; Comparative Literature by contrast offers 4 summers of fellowship at roughly the quarterly TA rate)
- According to HUD, a single student at the average pay rate, who receives a generous \$10,000 in summer funding for a total of \$43,462 per year, is still well between the “Extremely Low” and “Very Low” income limits in Santa Clara County.

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**[Figure B: Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) Income Limits, FY2019]**

FY 2019 Income Limit Area	Median Family Income <a href="#">Explanation</a>	FY 2019 Income Limit Category	Persons in Family							
			1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
San Jose-Sunnyvale-Santa Clara, CA HUD Metro FMR Area	\$131,400	Very Low (50%) Income Limits (\$) <a href="#">Explanation</a>	51,250	58,550	65,850	<b>73,150</b>	79,050	84,900	90,750	96,600
		Extremely Low Income Limits (\$)* <a href="#">Explanation</a>	30,750	35,150	39,550	<b>43,900</b>	47,450	50,950	54,450	57,950
		Low (80%) Income Limits (\$) <a href="#">Explanation</a>	72,750	83,150	93,550	<b>103,900</b>	112,250	120,550	128,850	137,150

**Tracking Changes over Time**

- Pay is not guaranteed by the university to increase on a yearly basis, but generally tracks with the yearly increase in university housing rent by RD&E.
- Pay increased approx. 4.75% going into the 2018-9 academic year, and approx. 8% going into the 2019-20 academic year. The larger bump was purportedly a one-off increase responding to students' affordability concerns.
- Over the same periods, university housing rents increased 4.7% and 4.5%, respectively.
- Summer funding (which often comes in the form of a stipend) is specified in a student's initial offer letter and in most cases does not increase to match inflation and increases in housing costs.

**For clarity, subsequent analyses of housing affordability will use single student data but will consider how high housing costs affect couples and families in our community (for whom conditions vary greatly depending on personal circumstances).**

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[Figure C: Academic Year 2019-20 University Housing Availability and Affordability]

University Housing Rent	Monthly	Fall	Winter	Spring	Summer	AY Total	# of Beds	%Avail
Munger + GSB (Average)	\$ 1,913	6,696	6,122	5,280	4,840	\$ 18,096.98	820	
<b>Average On-Campus Rates</b>	\$ 1,297	4540.6	4151.4	3580.6	3282.2	\$ 12,272.65	2,958	<b>73%</b>
Standard Studio (EV)	\$ 1,626	5,691	5,203	4,488	4,114	\$ 15,381.96	665	17%
Kennedy 2Bed/2Bath	\$ 1,593	5,576	5,098	4,397	4,030	\$ 15,069.78	108	3%
2Bed/1Bath	\$ 1,293	4,526	4,138	3,569	3,271	\$ 12,231.78	1,238	31%
Kennedy Junior Studio	\$ 1,202	4,207	3,846	3,318	3,041	\$ 11,370.92	220	5%
3Bed/1Bath	\$ 1,128	3,948	3,610	3,113	2,854	\$ 10,670.88	219	5%
Efficiency	\$ 929	3,252	2,973	2,564	2,350	\$ 8,788.34	508	13%
<b>Off Campus Units</b>	\$ 1,230	4306.7	3937.6	3396.2	3113.1	\$ 11,640.44	1,071	<b>27%</b>
2 bed/1 bath	\$ 1,293	4,526	4,138	3,569	3,271	\$ 12,231.78	672	17%
3 bed/2 bath	\$ 1,293	4,526	4,138	3,569	3,271	\$ 12,231.78	120	3%
O.C. 2 bed/1bath (3 students)	\$ 872	3,052	2,790	2,407	2,206	\$ 8,249.12	180	4%
O.C. 2 bed/2bath (3 students)	\$ 1,061	3,714	3,395	2,928	2,684	\$ 10,037.06	39	1%
O.C. 2 bed/2bath (2 students)	\$ 1,591	5,569	5,091	4,391	4,025	\$ 15,050.86	60	1%
<b>Average Across All Available</b>	\$ 1,280	4478.4	4094.6	3531.6	3237.3	\$ 12,105	4,029	<b>100%</b>

Rent as a Percentage of Quarterly Income	Fall	Winter	Spring	Summer	AY	# of Beds	%Avail
Munger + GSB (Average)	60%	55%	47%		54%	820	
<b>Average On-Campus Rate</b>	<b>41%</b>	<b>37%</b>	<b>32%</b>		<b>37%</b>	<b>2,958</b>	<b>73%</b>
Standard Studio (EV)	51%	47%	40%		46%	665	17%
Kennedy 2Bed/2Bath	50%	46%	39%		45%	108	3%
2Bed/1Bath	41%	37%	32%		37%	1,238	31%
Kennedy Junior Studio	38%	34%	30%		34%	220	5%
3Bed/1Bath	35%	32%	28%		32%	219	5%
Efficiency	29%	27%	23%		26%	508	13%
<b>Off Campus</b>	<b>39%</b>	<b>35%</b>	<b>30%</b>		<b>35%</b>	<b>1,071</b>	<b>27%</b>
2 bed/1 bath	41%	37%	32%		37%	672	17%
3 bed/2 bath	41%	37%	32%		37%	120	3%
O.C. 2 bed/1bath (3 students)	27%	25%	22%		25%	180	4%
O.C. 2 bed/2bath (3 students)	33%	30%	26%		30%	39	1%
O.C. 2 bed/2bath (2 students)	50%	46%	39%		45%	60	1%
<b>Average Total</b>	<b>40.2%</b>	<b>36.7%</b>	<b>31.7%</b>		<b>36.2%</b>	<b>4,029</b>	<b>100%</b>

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**Notes to Figure C**

- To calculate percentages, we use the average of quarterly RA and TA pay rates, as set by the university (see Figure A).
- Housing data is sourced from the R&DE website; only residences offering full academic year housing are used in the table above and some categories of housing with equivalent rent rates were condensed for legibility.
- An average residence rent rate was calculated across all single Munger and GSB residences for illustrative purposes; because the cost of these residences are over 50% of income, they are either generally inaccessible to most graduate students at the university or explicitly reserved for students in the School of Law or Graduate School of Business.

**Escondido Village Graduate Residences (EVGR) Development Update**

At the end of Academic Year 2019-20, according to the office of Residence Dining and whatever (RD&E), all students currently living off-campus will be evicted from their current apartments and moved to on-campus housing, timed with the completion of the new EVGR complex. The following data reflects housing costs for the current year, all other things equal, if all off-campus housing options were removed and replaced by the EVGR complex. Purportedly, the University intends to convert off-campus apartments to affordable housing for campus staff, but this has yet to be confirmed. RD&E will not release the housing rates for EVGR until March 2020, so we calculate monthly rate based on the planned new residences' floorplans and their nearest existing equivalents. According to correspondence with RD&E, however it is possible EVGR will be priced higher than existing equivalent campus apartments.

**[Figure D: Impact of EVGR on Graduate Housing Affordability]**

With New EVGR Complex	Monthly	Fall	Winter	Spring	Summer	AY	# of Beds	%Avail
* EVGR costs calculated at equivalent rates of current on-campus housing rates, based on proposed floor plans								
Existing On-Campus Rates	\$ 1,297	4540.6	4151.4	3580.6	3282.2	\$ 12,272.65	2,958	55%
New EVGR (Average)	\$ 1,508	5276.3	4824.1	4160.8	3814.0	\$ 14,261.21	2,423	45%
Studio	\$ 1,626	5,691	5,203	4,488	4,114	\$ 15,381.96	549	10%
Premium 2bed/2bath	\$ 1,593	5,576	5,098	4,397	4,030	\$ 15,069.78	1298	24%
Junior 2bed/2bath	\$ 1,202	4,207	3,846	3,318	3,041	\$ 11,370.92	576	11%
<b>New EVGR (As Percentage of Income)</b>		<b>47%</b>	<b>43%</b>	<b>37%</b>		<b>43%</b>	<b>2,423</b>	<b>45%</b>
Studio		51%	47%	40%		46%	549	10%
Premium 2bed/2bath		50%	46%	39%		45%	1298	24%
Junior 2bed/2bath		38%	34%	30%		34%	576	11%
<b>Existing On-Campus (% of Income)</b>		<b>41%</b>	<b>37%</b>	<b>32%</b>		<b>37%</b>	<b>2,958</b>	<b>55%</b>
<b>New Average Percentage of Income</b>		<b>43.7%</b>	<b>39.9%</b>	<b>34.4%</b>		<b>39.4%</b>		
<b>Old Average Percentage of Income</b>		<b>40.2%</b>	<b>36.7%</b>	<b>31.7%</b>		<b>36.2%</b>		
<b>New Average Rent</b>	\$ 1,392	4871.9	4454.3	3841.8	3521.7	\$ 13,168.07	5,381	55%
<b>Old Average Rent</b>	\$ 1,280	4478.4	4094.6	3531.6	3237.3	\$ 12,104.59	4,029	45%



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### **Key Takeaways**

- **Though the Stanford University administration has emphasized that “affordability” is one of their key concerns at present (Provost Persis Drell has stressed this on numerous occasions), unless rents are lowered—which is unprecedented—the new EVGR housing will in fact raise the average cost of housing, as a percentage of income, 3.2% across all available (non-Munger and GSB) single graduate residences, spiking average rent by \$112/month.**
- For students forced to move from off-campus housing into EVGR, the average immediate rent increase per person is **\$277.03/month**. There are not enough “Junior 2 Bedroom/2 Bathroom” units (576 beds at approx. \$1202/month) to accommodate the 1011 off-campus residents whose rent is \$1293/month or lower; the next available alternative in EVGR would be \$1593/month if calculated at the Kennedy rate for a 2bed/2bath apartment.
- **If we consider “affordable housing” to be that which costs at most 30% of income, currently only “efficiency” housing qualifies, accounting for approx. 18% of available single graduate housing (if Munger and GSB are included, 15%).**
- **Subtracting off-campus housing options and factoring in EVGR, affordable housing drops to 7% (7.8% with Munger/GSB).**
- If we're generous and define “affordable-ish” housing as housing that costs under 40% of academic year income, currently 79.3% (65.9% with Munger/GSB) of single graduate housing is “affordable-ish”. This drops to 51.3% (44.5% with Munger/GSB) when off-campus options are replaced with EVGR.

### **Making Ends Meet, Month-to-Month**

Given that the average minimum pre-tax pay of a graduate TA or RA is \$3718/month, subtracting the 40% for “affordable-ish” rent per month leaves \$2230/month\* to cover all other expenses, which include taxes, Cardinal Care insurance (\$1864/quarter if not covered by the department), other insurance (home, auto), parking fees (\$35/month in EV), before typical living expenses. Graduate students must frequently pay in advance for conference travel and fees or professional development (sometimes \$500 - \$1000 upfront) only to be reimbursed much later, contingent on whether it can be covered by a department or funding source; these heavy up-front costs can syphon savings and cash-on-hand, leaving little left for unexpected and emergency expenses.

*\*Graduate students are paid a flat rate per quarter but each quarter varies in length, so the timing and variance of paychecks makes financial planning exceedingly difficult. There are gaps in time during breaks when we are not paid, and the amount of our take-home pay varies each quarter. And that still doesn't address the problem of summer funding, which often leaves large gaps of time without any income at all. Furthermore, Stanford's financial reporting software (on Axess) is notoriously unclear, making it often difficult to know how much and when we will be paid, and almost impossible to understand the charges posted to our account.*

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**Factoring in Families**

While unmarried couples and families living in Stanford Graduate Housing will not be as affected by EVGR, by calculating rent as a percentage of income using the single TA/RA rate, we can see in the below data that working as a graduate student at Stanford with a partner who cannot work (due to visa status or for any other reason) is untenable without an outside source of income. Stanford does not provide affordable options for dependent healthcare (Cardinal Care is \$461.63/mo. for a spouse, \$240.04/mo. for a child, and \$432.07/mo. for 2 or more children), nor does it provide affordable childcare (it is currently piloting a childcare grant of \$10,000 per year, but full-time childcare at an on-campus center such as [CCSC](#) costs between \$1800-2600/month, more than the entire monthly take-home pay of a single graduate earner). Given the high costs associate with caring for a family, couples and families in our community are especially susceptible to economic hardship when unexpected expenses arise, such as illnesses and accidents. **Stanford has a wealth of resources at its disposal. The university should be expected to provide for the well-being of its entire community of students, researchers and workers—and especially for the most vulnerable members of this community.**

Couples and Families	Monthly	Fall	Winter	Spring	Summer	AY	# of Units
Couples (Studio Avg)	\$ 1,760	6160	5632	4858	4453	\$ 16,649.60	268
Couples (1bed/1bath)	\$ 2,103	7361	6730	5804	5321	\$ 19,894.38	324
Couples (Off-Campus Avg)	\$ 2,103	7361	6730	5804	5321	\$ 19,894.38	120
Couples Average	\$ 1,974	6908.6	6316.5	5447.9	4993.9	\$ 18,673.03	712
Family (3 bed/2 bath)	\$ 2,246	7861	7187	6199	5682	\$ 21,247.16	180
Family (2 bed/1 bath)	\$ 2,714	9499	8685	7491	6866	\$ 25,674.44	76
Family Average	\$ 2,385	8347.3	7631.8	6582.4	6033.9	\$ 22,561.51	256
Couples (Studio Avg)		55%	50%	44%		50%	268
Couples (1bed/1bath)		66%	60%	52%		59%	324
Couples (Off-Campus Avg)		66%	60%	52%		59%	120
Couples % of Income		61.9%	56.6%	48.8%		55.8%	712
Family (3 bed/2 bath)		70%	64%	56%		63%	180
Family (2 bed/1 bath)		85%	78%	67%		77%	76
Family % of Income		74.8%	68.4%	59.0%		67.4%	256

**Additional Notes**

- Because summer funding varies by department and program, we cannot accurately calculate rent-as-a-percentage-of-income for the summer quarter; rent cost percentages are calculated for the academic year for accuracy and consistency.
- Due to the lack of available housing and resulting loss of priority on the campus housing waitlist, administrators actively discourage students from moving out of housing during summer months, forcing students who will be away to sublease to a restricted pool of Stanford-affiliated graduate and postgraduate researchers.
- The projected allocation of studio apartments in EVGR will be split between singles and unmarried couples, which would slightly alter the availability percentages. Ostensibly couples living in EVGR studio housing will be charged at the same rate, incentivizing domestic partnerships as a viable channel for supplementary income.
- While it isn't possible to accurately project average rent as a percentage of income for couples/families due to the high degree of variation between individual cases, qualitative research (as well as common sense) suggests that families with two working parents, and graduate students with partners who have health insurance through their workplace generally experience less anxiety with regards to their financial situation.

[End Appendix]