DSC Resolution in Support of Equitable NYSHIP Mental Health and Substance Abuse Insurance Coverage

Whereas, the Doctoral Students’ Council represents students from all programs at the Graduate School and University Center of the City University of New York; and

Whereas, 2500 Graduate School and University Center of the City University of New York students and their families/partners are NYSHIP insurance policy holders as of 2012; and

Whereas, ValueOptions became the mental health and substance abuse (MHSA) issuer for NYSHIP insurance holders on January 1, 2014; and

Whereas, there has been no technical change in mental health and substance abuse benefits, yet the implementation of mental health coverage and reimbursements has significantly changed; and

Whereas, graduate students often suffer from mental health issues such as depression and anxiety; and

Whereas, the Mental Health Parity and Addiction Equity Act of 2008 (MHPAE) states that MHSA benefits cannot require treatment limitations that are more stringent than those of the medical and surgical benefits of the plan; and

Whereas, ValueOptions violates the MHPAE by requiring the prior authorization form solely for MHSA claims, as recognized by the New York State Psychiatric Association; and

Whereas, the previous MHSA provider for NYSHIP, OptumHealth, had imposed the prior authorization requirement but later discontinued this practice; and

Whereas, since July 1, 2014, CUNY has no Director of Employee Benefits and no liaison or representative in the New York State Department of Civil Services; therefore

Be it resolved, both CUNY’s Employee Benefits Office and the New York State Department of Civil Services must coordinate to have adequate representation for graduate student employee needs; and

Be it further resolved, ValueOptions must discontinue use of the prior authorization form or else the New York State Department of Civil Services must change the NYSHIP MHSA issuer to one which does not use the form; and
Be it further resolved, that the New York State Department of Civil Services takes these violations as well as ValueOptions’ failure to provide adequate health coverage into account during the next MHSA contract bidding process and in the awarding of a new MHSA contract; and

Be it finally resolved, New York State and the City University of New York recognize their obligation to provide adequate mental health and substance abuse coverage to students and act on their obligation by addressing this issue immediately.