FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
Contact: Rachel Owen
Director of National Affairs
Graduate Professional Council
gpc.legislative@missouri.edu

On Friday, March 23, 2018, Congress passed a bipartisan FY18 omnibus spending bill which includes several important provisions for graduate and professional students across the country. The Graduate Professional Council at the University of Missouri applauds leaders in the House and Senate for reaching a compromise that supports higher education and research.

We commend Senator Roy Blunt (R-MO) for his leadership on the appropriations committee to increase research funding for NIH, NSF, and several other federal research agencies. These agencies fund fundamental research which advances health, innovation, and sustainability. Federal research funding provides opportunities contributing to the success of the University of Missouri’s goal to increase grant funding and research output in the coming years.

The budget deal also increases funding for the Public Service Loan Forgiveness (PSLF), which provides crucial financial resources for graduate and professional students at the University of Missouri. We are pleased that Congress recognizes the importance of funding this program; however, we remain concerned with ongoing efforts to eliminate PSLF, Grad PLUS Loans, and greatly reduce federal work study opportunities via the reauthorization of the Higher Education Act, known as PROSPER Act (H.R. 4508). We urge our leaders to work towards policies that do not eliminate opportunities for any person to pursue higher education in the United States.

Finally, the spending bill appropriates $5 Million to develop free and affordable college textbooks. In the current budget climate, at the federal and state level, we encourage all efforts to reduce the costs of higher education. Furthermore, we feel that open educational resources contribute to a reduction in costs and facilitate higher academic achievement at all levels of education.

While we are pleased with several provisions in the bipartisan spending bill, we are disappointed that no solution was presented for DACA recipients and Dreamers. We urge Congress to pass legislation that provides a permanent solution for individuals brought to America as children. We are proud to be home to graduate and professional students from all backgrounds and we will do whatever we can to support their pursuit of higher education at the University of Missouri.

We applaud our leaders in Congress for supporting this long-overdue spending bill to fund crucial programs through September 30, 2018. We are grateful for support to higher education provided in this bill, and we will continue to work with legislators to assure graduate and professional students are protected and supported moving forward.

Founded in 1983, the Graduate Professional Council (GPC) is the official student government for all graduate, professional, post-baccalaureate, and post-doctoral students at the University of Missouri.