A win-win for everybody involved.

George Mason University sees saved staff hours and institution dollars after doing away with appeals process.

It can be difficult to estimate just how much university staff time is spent on appeals until no time is spent on them at all anymore.

"If you look at the entire lifecycle of an appeal, maybe five to eight hours total for each one, that's significant. It could be someone's entire day," Bill Cunningham, Director of Student Fiscal Services said.

The pandemic squeezed already tight staffing and budgets, so George Mason started evaluating the dollar amount the university was losing on medical withdrawals.

"We had to find a solution that still made the student whole, took some of the administration burden off of us, and took HIPAA stuff out of the Student Accounts Office."

George Mason implemented GradGuard's Tuition Protection Program in Spring 2021. Their appeals process ran concurrently for a year to get everybody on board with the program.

"There were times I'd think, "Oh, maybe we should wave it," but then I talked myself right out of it. For anything to be successful, you have to take a stand. It's a good reason, and it's so inexpensive."

Implementing the program freed up capacity that was previously spent on appeals. Now they're able to be more efficient in other areas, Cunningham said. Even when George Mason was granting appeals for students who medically withdrew, they didn't get a full housing refund. GradGuard's Tuition Insurance can provide up to 100% reimbursement for tuition, housing, and fees in the event of a covered medical withdrawal.

GradGuard's Tuition Protection Program is an optional, affordable way for students to insure their tuition, room and board, and academic fees. The offer is integrated with the campus' billing provider which enables students and families to protect their investment easily. Even if students don't opt in to the insurance, they must acknowledge they understand the school's refund policy before proceeding with paying their tuition bill.

BOTTOM LINE

- **No longer offering appeals, George Mason saves upwards of $500,000 a year since working with GradGuard.**

- "I think it's a win-win for everybody involved. The staff time involved in appeals and getting all the documentation and having the committee review, and reaching back out to the student. It was a time drain," Cunningham said.

GradGuard's Tuition Protection Program promotes financial literacy by helping schools disclose its refund policy and can protect families from a financial loss if their student is forced to withdraw due to a covered reason.

• 8 HRS

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