

2016-17 Compensation for Graduate Assistants

FINANCE AND AUDIT COMMITTEE

January 27, 2016

Background

Graduate students who work as graduate assistants while pursuing their master's or doctoral degrees provide a valuable service to the university. Many teach undergraduate classes while others support faculty in scholarly and sponsored research activities. To be competitive in the recruitment and retention of high quality graduate students, it is important for the university to provide compensation packages that are comparable with those offered by peer institutions. The key components of the total compensation package are a stipend, tuition assistance, and health insurance benefit.

Graduate Stipends

One of the primary goals of Virginia Tech during the 1980's was to build a graduate compensation program that was competitive with those offered by comparable institutions. Across the campus, graduate assistants have a variety of responsibilities. To recognize the differences in services performed by these students, the university created a stipend scale that defines ranges of stipend amounts, providing academic and administrative unit's flexibility in compensating graduate assistants. The levels within the stipend table have been adjusted over the years to remain competitive.

To respond to increasing competition for quality graduate students among peer institutions, the graduate student stipend scale was revised for Fall 2003 and approved by the Board of Visitors. The revision better positioned Virginia Tech departments as compared to their national peers and reflected the minimum stipend levels authorized by the National Science Foundation at the time. The Fall 2004 stipend scale added 10 additional stipend steps, numbered 41-50, to increase the university's competitive position in attracting outstanding Ph.D. students. In 2004-05, the graduate stipend scale was enhanced to function as 50 pay ranges. These ranges provide flexibility in situations where a defined level of resources does not exactly match one of the existing steps, and allow for an actual stipend to be established within the range of a step.

In 2011-12, an academic year fixed dollar supplement was added to the graduate stipend scale to help offset university assigned costs such as the health fee. As a result, the graduate assistant stipend is currently comprised of two components: 1) a base stipend and 2) a fixed supplement. For administrative efficiency and processing, the two components are combined into the traditional stipend scale. As of January 2016, the

current average monthly stipend for full-time graduate assistants is \$1,935 per month, which falls within step 12 of the 2015-16 stipend scale.

Tuition Assistance

In the 1990's, the university developed a more comprehensive program of tuition remission for graduate students serving on assistantships. The tuition program is financed by four sources including: the General Fund appropriation for graduate student financial assistance, a tuition remission program in the Educational and General budget, tuition payments planned in the budgets of externally sponsored grants and contracts, and private funds. The tuition remission program for graduate students on assistantship includes the remission of tuition, mandatory E&G fees (excluding the state assigned Commonwealth Capital and Equipment Fee), and non-executive graduate program fees.

Health Insurance

At the March 2001 meeting of the Board of Visitors, a health insurance program for graduate students on assistantship was approved as a part of the graduate student compensation package to enhance the university's competitiveness in recruiting highly qualified graduate students. The program was designed to help full-time graduate students receiving a full or partial assistantship, including graduate research assistants, graduate teaching assistants, and graduate assistants, offset a portion of the cost of health insurance premiums. In 2009-10, university management worked with representatives of the graduate student community to review and improve the overall mix and value of benefits provided through the health insurance program; these enhancements were approved by the Board and included in the program for 2010-11. In 2011-12, the university reached the goal of supporting 90 percent of the graduate health insurance program.

In order to qualify for health insurance, full-time graduate students must have a 50 percent or greater appointment. Graduate students also have the option to decline coverage if they so choose. In 2015-16, the university provided 90 percent of the \$2,330 annual premium cost of the plan to 2,247 graduate students. The plan provided for a \$400 in-network annual deductible, \$5,000 out-of-pocket maximum, \$25 co-pay for in-network doctors' visits, and an unlimited maximum benefit. Students can obtain optional dental benefits for an additional cost.

Proposed Graduate Assistant Compensation Plan for 2016-17

The university proposes the following actions:

- The university proposes to advance the stipend scale for 2016-17 by implementing a 3.0 percent increase, effective November 2016. The salary increase for 2016 is included in the General Assembly proposed budget, and is contingent upon the state meeting certain revenue targets. If the state salary program is altered, the stipend scale would be revised for 2016-17. In conformity with the treatment of stipend increases in prior years, the university would establish the effective date of the increases as August 10, 2016, annualizing the amount that would otherwise be effective November 10, 2016. This process will result in an overall increase of 2.0 percent in the stipend scale for the 2016-17 academic year. The shift to the beginning of the Fall academic term does not affect the total compensation for the graduate students; rather, it spreads the increase over the entire academic year. Further, the university realizes administrative process savings and student recruitment advantages by making the adjustment to the effective date.

Consistent with prior years, the proposed minimum and maximum stipends for a full assistantship are displayed on the attached table.

- The university proposes continuing the graduate assistant health insurance coverage at 90 percent, based upon the university's current estimate of an 11 percent cost increase.

RECOMMENDATION

That the graduate assistant compensation program for 2016-17 be approved.

March 21, 2016

2016-17

Step	Components			Total Stipend					
	Monthly Base	AY Supplement		Monthly		9 Month		12 Month	
Step 1	\$ 1,371	- \$ 1,371	\$400	\$ 1,415	- \$ 1,415	\$ 12,735	- \$ 12,735	\$ 16,980	- \$ 16,980
Step 2	1,372	- 1,426	400	1,416	- 1,470	12,744	- 13,230	16,992	- 17,640
Step 3	1,427	- 1,478	400	1,471	- 1,522	13,239	- 13,698	17,652	- 18,264
Step 4	1,479	- 1,530	400	1,523	- 1,574	13,707	- 14,166	18,276	- 18,888
Step 5	1,531	- 1,582	400	1,575	- 1,626	14,175	- 14,634	18,900	- 19,512
Step 6	1,583	- 1,637	400	1,627	- 1,681	14,643	- 15,129	19,524	- 20,172
Step 7	1,638	- 1,688	400	1,682	- 1,732	15,138	- 15,588	20,184	- 20,784
Step 8	1,689	- 1,743	400	1,733	- 1,787	15,597	- 16,083	20,796	- 21,444
Step 9	1,745	- 1,794	400	1,789	- 1,838	16,101	- 16,542	21,468	- 22,056
Step 10	1,795	- 1,849	400	1,839	- 1,893	16,551	- 17,037	22,068	- 22,716
Step 11	1,850	- 1,899	400	1,894	- 1,943	17,046	- 17,487	22,728	- 23,316
Step 12	1,901	- 1,950	400	1,945	- 1,994	17,505	- 17,946	23,340	- 23,928
Step 13	1,953	- 2,006	400	1,997	- 2,050	17,973	- 18,450	23,964	- 24,600
Step 14	2,007	- 2,058	400	2,051	- 2,102	18,459	- 18,918	24,612	- 25,224
Step 15	2,059	- 2,111	400	2,103	- 2,155	18,927	- 19,395	25,236	- 25,860
Step 16	2,112	- 2,163	400	2,156	- 2,207	19,404	- 19,863	25,872	- 26,484
Step 17	2,164	- 2,216	400	2,208	- 2,260	19,872	- 20,340	26,496	- 27,120
Step 18	2,217	- 2,271	400	2,261	- 2,315	20,349	- 20,835	27,132	- 27,780
Step 19	2,272	- 2,323	400	2,316	- 2,367	20,844	- 21,303	27,792	- 28,404
Step 20	2,324	- 2,375	400	2,368	- 2,419	21,312	- 21,771	28,416	- 29,028
Step 21	2,377	- 2,429	400	2,421	- 2,473	21,789	- 22,257	29,052	- 29,676
Step 22	2,430	- 2,479	400	2,474	- 2,523	22,266	- 22,707	29,688	- 30,276
Step 23	2,480	- 2,532	400	2,524	- 2,576	22,716	- 23,184	30,288	- 30,912
Step 24	2,533	- 2,586	400	2,577	- 2,630	23,193	- 23,670	30,924	- 31,560
Step 25	2,587	- 2,639	400	2,631	- 2,683	23,679	- 24,147	31,572	- 32,196
Step 26	2,640	- 2,690	400	2,684	- 2,734	24,156	- 24,606	32,208	- 32,808
Step 27	2,691	- 2,746	400	2,735	- 2,790	24,615	- 25,110	32,820	- 33,480
Step 28	2,747	- 2,797	400	2,791	- 2,841	25,119	- 25,569	33,492	- 34,092
Step 29	2,798	- 2,849	400	2,842	- 2,893	25,578	- 26,037	34,104	- 34,716
Step 30	2,850	- 2,903	400	2,894	- 2,947	26,046	- 26,523	34,728	- 35,364
Step 31	2,904	- 2,954	400	2,948	- 2,998	26,532	- 26,982	35,376	- 35,976
Step 32	2,955	- 3,007	400	2,999	- 3,051	26,991	- 27,459	35,988	- 36,612
Step 33	3,009	- 3,060	400	3,053	- 3,104	27,477	- 27,936	36,636	- 37,248
Step 34	3,061	- 3,113	400	3,105	- 3,157	27,945	- 28,413	37,260	- 37,884
Step 35	3,114	- 3,165	400	3,158	- 3,209	28,422	- 28,881	37,896	- 38,508
Step 36	3,166	- 3,218	400	3,210	- 3,262	28,890	- 29,358	38,520	- 39,144
Step 37	3,219	- 3,271	400	3,263	- 3,315	29,367	- 29,835	39,156	- 39,780
Step 38	3,272	- 3,324	400	3,316	- 3,368	29,844	- 30,312	39,792	- 40,416
Step 39	3,325	- 3,378	400	3,369	- 3,422	30,321	- 30,798	40,428	- 41,064
Step 40	3,379	- 3,429	400	3,423	- 3,473	30,807	- 31,257	41,076	- 41,676
Step 41	3,430	- 3,484	400	3,474	- 3,528	31,266	- 31,752	41,688	- 42,336
Step 42	3,485	- 3,535	400	3,529	- 3,579	31,761	- 32,211	42,348	- 42,948
Step 43	3,536	- 3,587	400	3,580	- 3,631	32,220	- 32,679	42,960	- 43,572
Step 44	3,588	- 3,641	400	3,632	- 3,685	32,688	- 33,165	43,584	- 44,220
Step 45	3,642	- 3,692	400	3,686	- 3,736	33,174	- 33,624	44,232	- 44,832
Step 46	3,693	- 3,748	400	3,737	- 3,792	33,633	- 34,128	44,844	- 45,504
Step 47	3,750	- 3,798	400	3,794	- 3,842	34,146	- 34,578	45,528	- 46,104
Step 48	3,799	- 3,853	400	3,843	- 3,897	34,587	- 35,073	46,116	- 46,764
Step 49	3,854	- 3,905	400	3,898	- 3,949	35,082	- 35,541	46,776	- 47,388
Step 50	3,906	- 3,958	400	3,950	- 4,002	35,550	- 36,018	47,400	- 48,024