2017-18 Compensation for Graduate Assistants

FINANCE AND AUDIT COMMITTEE

March 1, 2017

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 2017, the

Presentation Date: April 3, 2017

current average monthly stipend for full-time graduate assistants is $1,984 per month, which falls within step 12 of the 2016-17 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 2016-17, the university provided 90 percent of the $2,554 annual premium cost of the plan to 2,369 graduate students. The plan provided for a $400 in-network annual deductible, $5,750 per-person 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 2017-18

The university proposes the following actions:

The university proposes to advance the stipend scale for 2017-18 by implementing a 2.0 percent increase, effective August 10, 2017. The salary increase for 2017 is included in the General Assembly proposed budget. Consistent with prior years, the proposed minimum and maximum stipends for a full assistantship are displayed on the attached table.

- The university proposes adjusting the university share of the graduate assistant health insurance coverage from 90 to 88 percent, based upon the university's current estimate of a 14 to 19.5 percent cost increase for graduate student insurance coverage. This aligns the employer share of health insurance for graduate students with the employer share for other university employees.

RECOMMENDATION

That the graduate assistant compensation program for 2017-18 be approved.

April 3, 2017

2017-18 Full-Time Graduate Monthly Stipend Compensation
Effective August 10, 2017

2017-18

Components			Total Stipend					
Monthly Base		AY Supplement	Monthly		9 Month		12 Month	
$ 1,399 - $ 1,399		$ 400	$ 1,443 - $ 1,443		$ 12,987 - $ 12,987		$ 17,316 - $ 17,316	
1,400 - 1,455		400	1,444 - 1,499		12,996 - 13,491		17,328 - 17,988	
1,456 - 1,508		400	1,500 - 1,552		13,500 - 13,968		18,000 - 18,624	
1,509 - 1,561		400	1,553 - 1,605		13,977 - 14,445		18,636 - 19,260	
1,562 - 1,614		400	1,607 - 1,659		14,463 - 14,931		19,284 - 19,908	
1,615 - 1,670		400	1,660 - 1,715		14,940 - 15,435		19,920 - 20,580	
1,671 - 1,722		400	1,716 - 1,767		15,444 - 15,903		20,592 - 21,204	
1,723 - 1,778		400	1,768 - 1,823		15,912 - 16,407		21,216 - 21,876	
1,780 - 1,830		400	1,825 - 1,875		16,425 - 16,875		21,900 - 22,500	
1,831 - 1,886		400	1,876 - 1,931		16,884 - 17,379		22,512 - 23,172	
1,887 - 1,937		400	1,932 - 1,982		17,388 - 17,838		23,184 - 23,784	
1,939 - 1,989		400	1,984 - 2,034		17,856 - 18,306		23,808 - 24,408	
1,992 - 2,047		400	2,037 - 2,091		18,333 - 18,819		24,444 - 25,092	
2,048 - 2,100		400	2,092 - 2,144		18,828 - 19,296		25,104 - 25,728	
2,101 - 2,154		400	2,145 - 2,198		19,305 - 19,782		25,740 - 26,376	
2,155 - 2,207		400	2,199 - 2,251		19,791 - 20,259		26,388 - 27,012	
2,208 - 2,261		400	2,252 - 2,305		20,268 - 20,745		27,024 - 27,660	
2,262 - 2,317		400	2,306 - 2,361		20,754 - 21,249		27,672 - 28,332	
2,318 - 2,370		400	2,362 - 2,414		21,258 - 21,726		28,344 - 28,968	
2,371 - 2,423		400	2,415 - 2,467		21,735 - 22,203		28,980 - 29,604	
2,425 - 2,478		400	2,469 - 2,522		22,221 - 22,698		29,628 - 30,264	
2,479 - 2,529		400	2,523 - 2,573		22,707 - 23,157		30,276 - 30,876	
2,530 - 2,583		400	2,574 - 2,628		23,166 - 23,652		30,888 - 31,536	
2,584 - 2,638		400	2,629 - 2,683		23,661 - 24,147		31,548 - 32,196	
2,639 - 2,692		400	2,684 - 2,737		24,156 - 24,633		32,208 - 32,844	
2,693 - 2,744		400	2,738 - 2,789		24,642 - 25,101		32,856 - 33,468	
2,745 - 2,801		400	2,790 - 2,846		25,110 - 25,614		33,480 - 34,152	
2,802 - 2,853		400	2,847 - 2,898		25,623 - 26,082		34,164 - 34,776	
2,854 - 2,906		400	2,899 - 2,951		26,091 - 26,559		34,788 - 35,412	
2,907 - 2,961		400	2,952 - 3,006		26,568 - 27,054		35,424 - 36,072	
2,963 - 3,014		400	3,007 - 3,058		27,063 - 27,522		36,084 - 36,696	
3,015 - 3,068		400	3,059 - 3,112		27,531 - 28,008		36,708 - 37,344	
3,070 - 3,122		400	3,114 - 3,166		28,026 - 28,494		37,368 - 37,992	
3,123 - 3,176		400	3,167 - 3,220		28,503 - 28,980		38,004 - 38,640	
3,177 - 3,229		400	3,221 - 3,273		28,989 - 29,457		38,652 - 39,276	
3,230 - 3,283		400	3,274 - 3,327		29,466 - 29,943		39,288 - 39,924	
3,284 - 3,337		400	3,328 - 3,381		29,952 - 30,429		39,936 - 40,572	
3,338 - 3,391		400	3,382 - 3,435		30,438 - 30,915		40,584 - 41,220	
3,392 - 3,446		400	3,436 - 3,490		30,924 - 31,410		41,232 - 41,880	
3,447 - 3,498		400	3,491 - 3,542		31,419 - 31,878		41,892 - 42,504	
3,499 - 3,554		400	3,543 - 3,599		31,887 - 32,391		42,516 - 43,188	
3,555 - 3,606		400	3,600 - 3,651		32,400 - 32,859		43,200 - 43,812	
3,607 - 3,659		400	3,652 - 3,704		32,868 - 33,336		43,824 - 44,448	
3,660 - 3,714		400	3,705 - 3,759		33,345 - 33,831		44,460 - 45,108	
3,715 - 3,766		400	3,760 - 3,811		33,840 - 34,299		45,120 - 45,732	
3,767 - 3,823		400	3,812 - 3,868		34,308 - 34,812		45,744 - 46,416	
3,825 - 3,874		400	3,870 - 3,919		34,830 - 35,271		46,440 - 47,028	
3,875 - 3,930		400	3,920 - 3,975		35,280 - 35,775		47,040 - 47,700	
3,932 - 3,984		400	3,976 - 4,028		35,784 - 36,252		47,712 - 48,336	
3,985 - 4,038		400	4,029 - 4,082		36,261 - 36,738		48,348 - 48,984	