

Pathway Goal: Research, Scholarship, and Creative Activity

Action Item #

2-4

Report:

Mid-Year: December 2016

Year-End: April 2017

Action Item Description:

Reevaluate the GA Program and realign to support Top Tier efforts.

Submitted By:

Name

Merrill Landers

Department

Physical Therapy

Working Group Members:

Name

Brianne Henle

Department

Graduate College

Jason Scott

Sociology

Kendall Hartley

Graduate College

Terry Miethe

Criminal Justice

Rod Metcalf

Geoscience

Hasan Deniz

Education

Pasha Rafat

Art

Rebecca Benfield

Nursing

Provide a written overview of the year-long process for your working group.

This committee met 4 times in Fall 2016 and once in Spring 2017 to address the charges given to the committee. The main charges were to come up with recommendations related to graduate student funding. A list of recommendations was generated in the Fall and then in Spring the committee was given an additional charge to review the graduate student applicants for the new graduate student summer funding program.

2016-17 Accomplishments

1. **Increased Tuition Support for State-Funded GAs:** Historically, state-funded GAs received a tuition waiver of approximately 75% of the per credit registration fee up to 10 credit per semester. The first goal of the Top Tier Investments for Graduate Assistants is covering 100% of all tuition and fees. Starting fall 2017 we will be able to cover the remaining 25% of the registration fee for up to 9 credits per semester for state-funded GAs, getting the university much closer to supporting this Top Tier Goal. Funds for this increase were made available using a surplus of funds for the 2017-2018 academic year. Starting fall 2018 and beyond this initiative will be supported with funds from the tuition increase earmarked for GA initiatives.
2. **Increased Masters Stipend from \$10,000 to \$11,250:** Masters GA stipends have been stagnant at \$10,000 for the last 20 years. With an infusion of funds from the tuition increase going to Graduate Assistant initiatives we were able to provide a small increase for our state-funded masters level GAs. While this is a step in the right direction, the preferable stipends for masters level GAs is \$15,000. A stipend of \$15,000 would be more inline UNR's current masters stipend
3. **Summer Support for Doctoral Students:** In March 2017 we put a call out for doctoral students to apply a summer doctoral fellowship. Using access funds we are able to provide approximately 50 doctoral students with a \$7,000 award during the summer session. This funding will keep campus active in the summer allowing a greater number of graduate students and faculty members to be engaged in research, scholarship and creative activities. Providing support during the summer months decreases time-to-degree helping our students accrue less debt and lowering opportunity costs, and moving us more quickly toward top tier goals.
4. **Increase the number of Ph.D. GAs:** In fall 2016 were able to add 10 new state-funded doctoral GA positons. This increase was made possible with funds from the tuition increase for FY 17. While the top-tier goal is to add 30 new state-state funded GAs per year, an increase of 10 is a small move in the right direction.
5. **50 Top Tier Doctoral Research GA positions for 2017-2020:** This committee worked with the Graduate College to review, rate, and rank approximately 100 faculty (or faculty team) proposals, from which the GC is able to fund approximately 50 of these 3-year doctoral GRA positions.

The committee generated a list of recommendations for graduate student funding that would align with the Top Tier Initiative (attached). Additionally, the committee reviewed and made recommendations (ongoing) to the Graduate College on the awardees for the 50 new Summer 2017 Doctoral Research Fellowships in the amount of \$7k/each.

Recommendations

Committee recommendations:**1. Promote Handbook**

- a. The committee recommends the following in order to “advertise” and “promote” the handbook: 1. increase GPSA links and also social media links (e.g., Grad Rebel Gateway); 2. send a link to the handbook to Graduate Coordinators yearly and encourage them to distribute it to graduate faculty in their departments; and 3. add the handbook to the GA training session in Fall.
- b. The committee also recommends that consideration be given to changing the name of the handbook to better reflect its intent. Our recommendation is that it be named “Graduate Assistantships: A Handbook for Graduate Assistants and Supervisors.”

2. Lead TTDGRA review and recommendation process

- a. The committee recommends that these assistantships be awarded to the applications that best support and impact the Top Tier Initiative and apportionment should not be based on equity among the different units.
 - i. Alternative funding sources should be made available to other disciplines who may not be competitive with the purpose of this funding mechanism.

3. Consult and collaborate on state distribution for AY17-20

- a. The committee recommends that the any decisions or redistribution about allocation should be made by the Graduate Council.

4. Begin assessing how state funds are expended: relationship between state funded GAs and scholarly productivity

- a. The committee recommends that the teaching/research allocation be made at the programmatic level and in accordance with current practice.

5. Who should teach at what level

- a. Being handled by Peter Gray’s committee

6. PTIs for GAs proposal

- a. Being handled by Peter Gray’s committee

7. Review and Recommendations of Sperlings Cost of Living Report

- a. The committee would like to make it known that the recently implemented increase in stipend has had an unintended consequence; the increase, in some cases, may make some students ineligible for Medicaid. Thus, the increased stipend actually costs the students more money as they must now purchase health insurance.
 - i. The committee recommends that individual units seek internal funds to handle these cases as they arise.
 - ii. The committee also recommends that a couple of questions be added to the yearly GA survey to better understand this and other issues related to graduate student funding (e.g., financial needs, child care, health insurance)
- b. The committee recommends that if additional money come available for distribution that those funds be allocated to paying a greater portion of the tuition/fees (full tuition waiver) and/or health insurance as those allocations do not carry the same tax burden as a stipend increase would.
- c. The committee recommends that individual units consider using their own internal resources to incentivize the progress of PhD students (e.g., additional stipend for those passing comprehensive exams).
- d. The committee recommends that the Graduate College consider hosting a grant writing seminar that specifically targets federal training grants programs with an emphasis on underrepresented graduate student education (e.g. NIH T32 grants).

2017-18 Next steps

- What should the goals / activities be for the subcommittee?
- Who should be responsible?

There are no additional goals or activities planned.

Please review the list below and “X” the appropriate box(es).

- Potential resources required
- Any reports generated by this working group
- Metrics to be used
- No additional reference material

Any additional information you wish to share.

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