



President's Report to the Senate
Senate Meeting, February 15, 2017
Rajesh Kumar, GSO President

Graduate Assistant Stipend Increase

The University continues to pursue appropriate increases to graduate assistant stipends as evidenced by the closing gap in the minimum stipends compared to benchmark institutions. After four consecutive (2014-17) increases in the minimum stipend, the university has been able to bridge the gap compared to its peers. As per the preliminary analysis provided by the administration, approximately 75% of graduate assistants are earning above the minimum at SU. The analysis is based on data provided by the 28 peer institutions.

However, the administration must keep increasing graduate employee stipends to close the gap in the average stipends compared to benchmark institutions. Peter Vanable, Associate Provost (Graduate Studies) and Dean of Graduate School has affirmed the stipend increases for the academic year 2017-2018. Schools and Colleges are expected to target a 2.5% overall increase to stipends for graduate students (including new admits) who have a benefits-eligible TA/GA/RA position and who are above the minimum stipend amount.

All schools/colleges have been advised to finalize stipend increments based on the above assumptions and asked to communicate with individual departments, as soon as possible, so that recruitment offers for incoming students can be finalized in a timely fashion.

The administration continues to find program-level stipend data from peer institutions. The data will help the administration in planning the increase efficiently.

Sanctuary, DACA, and Travel Ban

Chancellor Syverud has been hesitant to declare SU a "Sanctuary Campus." However, he has been consistently communicating with the university community on the matter. An ad-hoc committee has been created on Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals/Undocumented students. The ad-hoc committee includes representatives from DPS, Enrollment & Student Experience, Diversity & Inclusion, and students. The University hosted an open forum where officials, including attorneys from University's Legal Counsel, addressed the concerns of more than two dozen students. Resources to assist those who may be impacted by recent immigration-related executive orders and decisions issued by the President of the United States and US courts are available.

Stipend Cut based on Qualifying Exam Result

The decision to cut the stipend with immediate effect has been reversed, however, there are a few students who will be affected from the following Fall. I am following up with appropriate authorities to get the decisions (that will affect student from the Fall) reversed as well. In addition, I have demanded to revise the policy and remove the clause that states the stipend cut based on qualification exam result. I have requested that the department must revise the stipend cut policy before it starts sending the admission and assistantship offer letter to incoming (returning) Ph.D. students. Peter Vanable, Associate Provost (Graduate Studies) and Dean of Graduate School is looking into the matter. I will keep the Senate posted on this matter.

Ombuds Office

I discussed the logistics of an Ombuds Office with LaVonda Reed, Associate Provost (Faculty Affairs), and Peter Vanable, Associate Provost (Graduate Studies). Most of the logistics, including the location, scope, reporting structure, and hours of availability, have been discussed and finalized. LaVonda will submit the final proposal to the Offices of Provost and Chancellor by the end of this semester.