

## OHIO STATE UNIVERSITY SENATE ANNUAL REPORT FORM

### Executive Summary

Period: 2024-2025

**Current Committee Chair:** Brian Rocha

**Incoming Committee Chair:** Bryan Perez Soto

**Committee Members:** Bryan Perez Soto, CGS; Alan Nair, CGS; Deb Pathak, CGS; Syed Murtaza Arshad, CGS; Veeramani Karupuchamy, CGS; Keith Gooch, Faculty Council; Danielle Fosler-Lussier, Grad Council Faculty; Andrew Blatter, Dean of Graduate School/Designee; Natalia Higueta-Castro, VP Office of Research/Designee; Dawn Shrimplin, VP Office of Human Resources/Designee; Sabrina Dye, VP Office of Human Resources/Designee

**Number of Meetings:** 10 meetings of the full committee, additional 7 meetings with smaller teams working on specific items/research/issues.

**Do you have Bylaws?**

**If yes, please attach:** See Attached

*Briefly describe the key accomplishments of your committee this year:* See below.

*Please reflect on the goals set for this committee identified in the prior Annual Review and describe how they were addressed:* N/A

*Please indicate key goals that you would like to accomplish in 2025-2026.*

The charge of this committee needs to be addressed by the Senate. Please refer to the "State of the Committee" section on page 2. Senate leadership should facilitate a discussion with incoming GCBC leadership to discuss how the charge of the committee functions within the larger structure of the university, as many decisions impacting graduate associate compensation and benefits are made without the input of GCBC.

*Did you consult with any other Senate Committees? Are there other committees with which you feel this committee should connect in 2025-2026?*

We had brief communication with URC, this should continue in the coming year to try and identify ways to improve disparities in research and teaching assignments amongst GAs. I think collaboration with FCBC would be beneficial to see how that committee functions. There could be an opportunity for GCBC and FCBC to work together and have time dedicated during a senate meeting to address cross cutting issues of compensation and benefits.

**Graduate Compensation and Benefits Committee (GCBC)**  
**2024-2025 Annual Report**  
**The Ohio State University Senate**  
**Approved: 05/14/2025**

**Duties and Responsibilities**

The Graduate Associate Compensation and Benefits Committee (GCBC) is a standing committee of the University Senate and operates pursuant to section 3335-5-48.18 of the Faculty Rules and is governed by the provisions of rule 3335-5-46 of the Administrative Code.

1. Study the adequacy and other attributes of the university's policies and provisions including stipends, outside professional services, and supplemental compensation.
2. Conduct research and provide advice on economic support of graduate associates, professional development, quality and design of benefit programs, and appointment terms.
3. Make recommendations to the university senate, the graduate council, the graduate school, and the office of academic affairs as appropriate.

**State of the Committee**

The committee did not meet during the 2023-2024 academic year, and we spent time during the autumn semester discussing structure and operating procedures to try and give some shape to the committee. In years past, the committee has made expansive and wide-ranging recommendations on a variety of issues concerning graduate associate compensation and benefits. This year, the committee decided to focus on a few pressing issues: we gathered information about compensation at peer institution and about graduate student housing. We also found that other advocacy bodies and offices at OSU have tackled issues in recent years, such as the Graduate Council subcommittee on leave policies for Graduate Associates. These issues are incredibly important to overall quality of life, safety, and security of graduate associates and the committee did gather and will continue to monitor and maintain records related to these issues and concerns.

One barrier we faced this academic year was contemplating where GCBC fits in the overall procedure and decision-making processes impacting graduate associate compensation and benefits. Our committee spent considerable time during the autumn semester gathering data to estimate cost and feasibility of various levels of compensation increase for the next academic year, including the gathering and study of projections based on current enrollments and numbers of students at the minimum stipend. The decision of an 8% increase to the minimum stipend for the 2025 - 2026 academic year was decided without direct input from this committee. We question whether the gathering and study of data was a good use of this committee's time. We ask the Senate to clarify this committee's role among the various university offices that contribute to decisions about graduate compensation and to align its charge with that role.

## **Recommendation One: Graduate Associate Compensation**

Graduate associates are divided into three main categories, Graduate Research Associates (GRAs), Graduate Teaching Associates (GTAs), and Graduate Administrative Associates (GAAs). Graduate associates may assume several of these titles during their time at OSU and depending on the administrative and financial structure of their program, they may receive compensation to cover their graduate associateship from multiple units. Graduate Associates are usually appointed for either 9- or 12-month terms for a specified period of years outlined in an offer letter generated by their respective programs during the recruitment period. Units have great leeway in crafting offers to incoming graduate associates and many compensate their GAs above the university minimum stipend amount in order to remain competitive in their respective fields.

Most graduate associates are appointed on a .5 FTE basis which translates to 20 hours of work per week. The maximum appointment a graduate associate can hold is a .75 FTE or 30 hours of work per week. The expectation is that the graduate associate will have sufficient time during the week, outside of their GA duties, to make progress toward degree completion. There are various configurations of .25 and .5 FTE appointments and these combinations may include work in several different departments or units across the university.

Calculations from the Graduate School indicate, for AY 2024 – 2025, there were a total of 4,608 Graduate Associates holding at least one FTE appointment level. Of this figure, 5 were GAAs, 2,966 were GRAs and 1,637 were GTAs. The Graduate School also provided figures for the number of GAs who held a minimum of a .5 FTE, that figure for AY 2024 – 2025 is 4,237.

In conversation with Graduate Associates across the university, we find inequity in duties and responsibilities in GA appointments. Many GRAs are conducting research in a lab setting that directly advances their thesis or dissertation project, allowing them to simultaneously use time and resources to serve their projects whereas many GTAs provide instruction for courses tangentially or unrelated to their research and project, requiring considerable hours of research and preparation to complete their GA duties on top of their project. This distinction is not only evident between GA categories but also exists within the respective categories. A GTA appointment for one GA might include working as a TA or grader for a course in one unit; for another, it might involve developing an entire course curriculum and acting as an instructor of record, requiring considerably more time and preparation. The University Research Committee was in touch with GCBC this year as they are exploring this topic as well. There is an opportunity for our committees to work together examining these issues, and should continue in AY 2025 – 2026.

For AY 2024 – 2025, a .5 FTE 9 – month appointment carried a minimum stipend of \$22,347.00, a 12 – month appointment \$29,796.00 or \$2,483.00 per month before taxes and other deductions are applied. An 8% increase to the minimum stipend was announced for 2025 – 2026 which brings a .5 FTE for 9 – months up to \$24,138.00, a .5 FTE for 12 – months at \$32,184.00 or \$2,682.00 per month before taxes and other deductions.<sup>1</sup> This stipend does not come close to covering the cost of living in central Ohio. Appendix 1 and 2 benchmark the current monthly

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<sup>1</sup> <https://gradsch.osu.edu/graduate-school-handbook-gsh/gsh-section-9-graduate-associates>

stipends in the BIG10 as well as the stipend amounts compared to the cost-of-living data in each city where the respective universities are located, per the MIT cost of living index.<sup>2</sup> To correspond to the cost of living in central Ohio, **GCBC recommends the minimum stipend of a .5 FTE for 9 – months should be no less than \$32,850.00 and no less than \$43,800.00 for a .5 FTE for 12 – months, or \$3,650.00 per month.** The pressure of these increases to the minimum stipend should not fall entirely on departments, units, or colleges: in order to preserve college budgets and the sustainability of graduate programs, increases in graduate stipends must come from central funding sources.

### **Recommendation Two: Year-Round Funding Model for Graduate Associates**

Discussions of year-round funding for PhD students are happening at several institutions within the BIG10 and at institutions around the nation. Recently, Boston University came to an agreement with their graduate associates to increase stipends and move to a 12 -month funding model.<sup>3</sup> This change was not without consequences to programs, particularly in the humanities and social sciences, where admissions for the incoming academic year were suspended.<sup>4</sup> The committee feels that the university should work toward the goal of supporting more students on a 12-month basis. A 12-month funding model may shorten time to degree for students in some programs. GAs spend considerable time during the academic year trying to procure work opportunities for summer, and often their summer work has little or nothing to do with their degrees, impacting degree progress. Securing summer work is further complicated by the fact that GAs can only offer, at most, 3 months to potential employers and many businesses are unwilling to hire and train individuals for short term employment.

Within the last three years, both University of Michigan and Duke University have moved to a 12 -month funding model for PhD students. The University of Michigan's Rackham Graduate School, of comparable size to our Graduate School at The Ohio State University, offers block grants to departments that cannot otherwise offer spring and summer funding to graduate students.<sup>5</sup> Duke University takes a flexible approach to funding that may be interesting to explore to scale at our institution. Of note in Duke's model is their "Backstop" option for summer funding – PhD students are required to seek out several external funding opportunities and show that effort was made to secure funding, if they are unsuccessful, the respective college will cover the cost of summer funding. We recommend that Ohio State continue to work toward a viable model for increasing the number of students who are funded as 12-month Graduate Associates, with a particular focus on doctoral students, as they bear the highest opportunity cost of being in graduate school.

**The committee recommends a task force be established at the Graduate School to explore a transition to 12 -month funding for PhD students at Ohio State.** We hope this task force includes representation from stakeholders in the Provost's Office, OAA, HR, GCBC as well as

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<sup>2</sup> <https://livingwage.mit.edu/metros/18140>

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.bu.edu/articles/2024/new-contract-offered-to-graduate-students/>

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.insidehighered.com/news/admissions/graduate/2024/11/19/bu-suspends-admissions-humanities-other-phd-programs>

<sup>5</sup> <https://rackham.umich.edu/faculty-and-staff/faculty-and-program-funding/12-month-funding-policy-for-rackham-phd-students/>

representation from various colleges. Our research from the Graduate School indicates that, for AY 2024 – 2025, only 28.6% of GAs are funded for 9 -months. This number includes GAs that are enrolled at both the master's and doctoral level. Currently, 77.8% of all GAs are enrolled in a PhD program. We are advocating for this change to impact those students enrolled in a PhD program as financial and time to completion expectations are greater than those completing a freestanding master's degree.

### **Recommendation Three: Evaluate University Subsidized Graduate and Family Housing**

To analyze housing access and affordability for graduate associates in Columbus, information was gathered from several public sources and surveys of graduate students. In 2023, The Council of Graduate Students conducted a graduate housing survey. 948 graduate students responded to the survey and indicated the following: 71.3% of graduate students spend more than one-third of their income on rent; 42.8% spend over half their income on rent; 9.4% cannot afford their rent based on their current stipend; PhD students: 66.3% spend over a third of their stipend on rent, with 33% spending over half.<sup>6</sup> International students pay a higher proportion of their income on rent across all distance ranges; Single-parent students spend the highest share of income on rent and rely more on loans.

Information was gathered on off-campus housing and rent for 2025 – 2026 and indicates that out of 50+ 1-bedroom rental listings in University District area and nearby areas the average rent is \$1,440.00, the median rent is \$1,337.50 with a rent range: \$745.00 - \$3,800.00. Applying the increased 2025 – 2026 graduate associate stipend minimum of \$2,483.00 to the \$1,440.00 average rent rate in the University District, graduate associates are considered severely rent burdened, spending roughly 58% of their income on rent. These rental rates do not include utilities and renters insurance as well as other costs that come with obtaining a residence like deposits, and furniture costs.

If students choose to live in university operated graduate and professional housing, which many international students rely on as they have limited financial history in the US, there are few affordable options. Currently, the university has housing for graduate and professional students in the Neil Avenue Building, and the Gateway Apartments. The rates for AY 2024 – 2025 in the Neil Avenue Building are: \$1004.00 for an efficiency studio, or \$994.00 per person in a 4-bedroom apartment. The rates for AY 2024- 2025 in the Gateway Apartments are: \$1105.00 for a studio; \$1,184.00 for a 1-bedroom; \$1,153.00 per person in a 2-bedroom apartment; \$1004.00 per person in a 3-bedroom apartment. In the Neil Avenue Building a \$6.00 program fee is charged one month in each semester and in the Gateway Apartments, \$10.00 is required for water each month, aside from these fees, utilities are included in the rent.<sup>7</sup> The rental rates for university operated graduate and professional housing is evaluated and approved yearly by the Board of Trustees. The Board of trustees have increased these rents regularly, including in years where GA compensation has remained unchanged.

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<sup>6</sup> GCBC has unpublished copies of the data and presentation from the 2023 survey. Please contact GCBC if you are interested in reviewing this data.

<sup>7</sup> <https://housing.osu.edu/incoming-students/graduate-professional-and-non-traditional-housing/>

Another major issue with respect to housing is the lack of options for graduate students with families. Since the closure of Buckeye Village in 2021, there are no options for graduate and professional students with spouses or families to live “on campus.” Affordable housing and the built-in support network graduate students found in this community is still unaddressed at OSU.<sup>8</sup> University of Southern California, UCLA, Northwestern University; Rutgers University; University of Michigan; University of Washington; University of Oregon; University of Wisconsin; University of Illinois; Pennsylvania State University; Indiana University; University of Iowa; University of Minnesota; Michigan State University; University of Nebraska-Lincoln all offer some type of family housing. We are one of three institutions out of the entire BIG10 that does not offer any housing support for graduate students with families.

**The committee recommends that administration urge the Board of Trustees to evaluate the current rental rates of the existing graduate student housing (which is done yearly) and freeze any increase on rents until graduate stipends are at a level commensurate with cost of living in Columbus. The committee also recommends that the Graduate School coordinate with Planning, Architecture and Real Estate to explore possibilities for family housing utilizing existing campus property and resources or coordinate with private, off campus vendors to offer affordable options for family housing.**

### **Key Recommendations Summary**

- **One: Graduate Associate Compensation**
  - To correspond to the cost of living in central Ohio, GCBC recommends the minimum stipend of a .5 FTE for 9 – months should be no less than **\$32,850.00** and no less than **\$43,800.00** for a .5 FTE for 12 – months, or **\$3,650.00** per month.
- **Two: Year-Round Funding Model for PhD Students**
  - **Action Item (External):** The committee recommends a task force be established at the Graduate School to explore a transition to 12 -month funding for PhD students at Ohio State.
  - **Action Item (Internal):** GCBC should continue to gather case studies from comparable intuitions above and beyond what is cited in this report and work with Dean Stromberger on developing the task force.
- **Three: Evaluate University Subsidized Graduate and Family Housing**
  - **Action Item (External):** The committee recommends that the Graduate School urge the Board of Trustees to evaluate the current rental rates of the existing graduate student housing (which is done yearly) and **freeze any increase on rents until graduate stipends are at a level commensurate with cost of living in Columbus.** The committee also recommends that the Graduate School coordinate with Planning, Architecture and Real Estate to explore possibilities for family

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<sup>8</sup> <https://www.thelantern.com/projects/2021/06/30/with-ohio-states-demolition-of-buckeye-village-comes-increased-rent-few-choices-for-students-with-children/>

- housing utilizing existing campus property and resources or coordinate with private, off campus vendors to offer affordable options for family housing.
- **Action Item (Internal):** GCBC can work to benchmark family housing offerings at BIG10 institutions and open lines of communication between relevant stakeholders to start exploring solutions to this issue.

We would like to thank Dean Stromberger and the staff at the Graduate School for the help and support provided to GCBC this year. The Graduate School consistently included representatives of this committee in meetings of issues pertaining to graduate associate compensation and benefits. We hope this relationship continues to grow in coming years as the charge of this committee is solidified within the shared governance model of the University. We are also grateful to see the 8% increase in GA minimum stipends, and look forward to building relationships with relevant stakeholders as the committee continues to advocate and center Graduate Associates in these decision-making processes. Increasing GA stipends to be in line with the cost of living in Columbus, and steady, yearly increases that consider rising costs, are necessary for Graduate Associate quality of life and success. Any discussion of future increases to compensation needs to consider the strain placed on individual departments and units, and should consider central funding streams from the University to offset department/unit budgetary barriers.

## Appendix 1

Ranking	University	City	Required Income	Per-month Stipend	9-month Stipend	12-month Stipend	Stipend / Income Ratio
1	Northwestern U.	Cook County	\$50,790	\$3,750	\$33,750	\$45,000	0.886
2	U. of Michigan	Ann Arbor	\$49,540	\$3,442	\$30,982	\$41,309	0.834
3	Rutgers U.	Middlesex County	\$54,147	\$3,488	\$31,391	\$41,854	0.773
4	U. of Illinois	Champaign-Urbana	\$42,447	\$2,556	\$23,000	\$30,666	0.722
5	U. of Wisconsin	Madison	\$46,137	\$2,700	\$24,297	\$32,396	0.702
6	<b>Ohio State U.</b>	<b>Columbus</b>	<b>\$46,634</b>	<b>\$2,682</b>	<b>\$24,138</b>	<b>\$32,184</b>	<b>0.690</b>
7	U. of Oregon	Eugene	\$47,680	\$2,667	\$24,000	\$32,000	0.671
8	Purdue U.	West Lafayette	\$41,968	\$2,333	\$21,000	\$28,000	0.667
9	Indiana U.	Bloomington	\$43,378	\$2,300	\$20,700	\$27,600	0.636
10	Penn State U.	State College	\$50,712	\$2,620	\$23,580	\$31,440	0.620
11	U. of Iowa	Iowa City	\$43,614	\$2,237	\$20,131	\$26,841	0.615
12	U. of Maryland	Prince George's County	\$58,643	\$2,980	\$26,820	\$35,760	0.610
13	USC/UCLA	LA	\$60,077	\$3,042	\$27,375	\$36,500	0.608
14	U. of Minnesota	Minneapolis	\$48,195	\$2,423	\$21,809	\$29,078	0.603
15	Michigan State U.	East Lansing	\$42,189	\$1,900	\$17,100	\$22,800	0.540
16	U. of Washington	Seattle	\$61,241	\$2,238	\$20,142	\$26,856	0.439
17	U. of Nebraska	Lincoln	\$42,604	\$1,250	\$11,250	\$15,000	0.352

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This chart displays the current minimum stipend levels of BIG10 institutions and compares it to MIT living wage data. The chart reflects the OSU minimum stipend increase of 8% for the upcoming academic year. Please note that at the time of gathering data for this report, not all institutions have released their minimum stipend levels for the upcoming academic year, so the rankings are likely to change depending on upcoming increases at other institutions.



## Appendix 2

