



**Graduate Compensation and Benefits Committee (GCBC)
2020-2021 Annual Report
The Ohio State University Senate**

Members of the 2020-2021 Graduate Compensation and Benefits Committee

Member	Constituency
Stephen Post, Chair	Council of Graduate Students
Nick Messenger	Council of Graduate Students
Shahwar Ali	Council of Graduate Students
Erica Maiger	Council of Graduate Students
Caleb Davis	Council of Graduate Students
Steph Charles	Council of Graduate Students
Rebeka Campos Astorkiza	Faculty Council
Annika Peters	Faculty Council
Matt Page	Dean of Graduate School/Designee
Jen Prak	VP Office of Human Resources/Designee
Brad Harris/Jan Wiesenberger	VP Office of Research/Designee

Duties and Responsibilities

The Graduate Associate Compensation and Benefits Committee (GCBC) is a standing committee of the University Senate at The Ohio State University as defined in the University Faculty Rules, Chapter 3335-5-48.18.

The following are the duties and responsibilities of the GCBC, as defined under Chapter 3335-5-48.18. (B) of the University Faculty Rules.

- 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.*

Overview

The COVID-19 pandemic highlighted existing gaps in resources that graduate students needed to be successful and kept the Graduate Compensation and Benefits Committee (GCBC) very busy collaborating to address policy and provide support. We met multiple times formally monthly and informally to discuss a variety of policy changes that we thought would provide more robust financial, institutional, and support for graduate students. This year, GCBC was active in helping achieve and implement a [2-year \\$4,000 minimum stipend increase](#) that will raise the university's minimum stipend for a nine-month, 50% Graduate Associate (GA) appointments to \$21,280 by fall 2021. Our efforts to get further Senate support for this increase and our strong collaboration with President Kristina Johnson, Provost Bruce McPherson, and Graduate School Dean Alicia Bertone is what allowed this change during a time of great hardship for the university. We



continued to collaborate with the newly formed Parenting and Pregnant Student Support Committee (PPSSC), the Committee on Physical Environment (COPE), the Office of Student Life, and the Office of Administration and Planning on concerns from graduate, international, and parenting students for a new multi-family housing facility with additional childcare support. GCBC must continue to be looped in as the executive sponsor group moves forward with planning. In January, GCBC followed through on graduate students request for a central, independent resource for solving conflicts and giving guidance on resources, by collaborating to establish Dr. Rebeka Campos-Astorkiza as the inaugural [Graduate and Professional Student Ombudsperson](#). We are excited to see the great work of this new position and will continue to work to establish a formal Office of Ombudspersons to ensure continuity. With the help of the Graduate School, GCBC collaborated with the Graduate Council to establish a specific Graduate Student Emergency Fund so those students most in need can be supported. These emergency funds were bolstered by other financial programs like the [Matching Fee and Tuition Authorization \(MFTA\) program](#) because of demand from impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic. Additionally, GCBC did reflect on internal operations alongside the recommendations of the Senate Ad Hoc Committee on Senate Committees and created our first ever set of GCBC Bylaws (Appendix A). The remainder of this report will walk through an analysis of the impacts of the minimum stipend increase, review accommodations used to mitigate the impact of COVID-19, considerations for increasing the minimum stipend in the future, and recommendations for taking other administrative actions that will benefit Graduate Associates throughout The Ohio State University. We would like to acknowledge the help of the Graduate School, the Office of Human Resources, the Office of the President, and the Office of Academic Affairs, all of whom assisted in obtaining the necessary data required to make our determinations, and without who's assistance we would not have been able to fulfill our mission of increasing the minimum stipend.

Policy & Provisions

Impact of Minimum Stipend Increase

This report presents a review of the results of a nine year period in which the Graduate Administrative Associates (GAA), Research Associates (GRA), and Teaching Associates (GTA) minimum stipend at The Ohio State University increased from \$13,500 in 2015-2016 to \$21,280 in 2021-2022 in the face of increasing costs of attendance and costs of living in the City of Columbus. In gathering and analyzing the data contained in this report, the intention of GCBC was to evaluate the impact of the 2-year \$4,000 minimum stipend increase on academic competitiveness and identify whether it resulted in our desired level of competitiveness and livable wage. These recommendations evolved as COVID-19 continued to impact graduate students and it became evident that further resources would be necessary. While 77% of Graduate Associates were already above minimum, about 3,500 graduate associates will be paid more under the initiative.

Based on the attached benchmarking conducted by OSU's Office of Academic Affairs (Appendix B), one can see that the increases over the past 4 years have resulted in Ohio State increasing its academic competitiveness for the minimum stipend levels of GAAs (6th to 3rd), GRAs (8th to 3rd), and GTAs (8th to 3rd). The recent stipend increase successfully progressed us to a competitiveness level where Ohio State graduate stipend levels are in the top 3rd of benchmark institutions. We must continue to monitor the gaps between Ohio State and the schools above it



if we are to maintain Ohio State's competitive edge in attracting and retaining the best possible graduate students to its programs. Although OSU's stipend rank has remained generally constant, recent increases in minimum stipends at peer institutions threaten to undermine the university's ability to attract top students to its programs. Benchmark rankings of Ohio State's mean graduate associate stipend and the differences amongst GAAs, GRAs, and GTAs across institutions was not available for this report this year as the full HR comparisons were not yet available.

With the recent emphasis at the university on the importance of teaching and learning through the Michael V. Drake Institute for Teaching and Learning, Ohio State should continue to take the necessary steps to supporting a high quality of life for current GTAs that were put under more pressure with COVID-19. Increasing costs--including rising student health fees, parking fees and rents--have still the ability of students to maintain themselves with the minimum stipend. In 2018-19, of 13 peer institutions, Ohio State had the 5th highest Student Health Fee for funded students (portion paid by the student). While six institutions do not charge GAs for their health insurance, we have seen steady incremental increases at Ohio State brought include a \$39 median increase this year. Although perhaps not specifically considered a "cost of attendance", campus parking is a requirement for many graduate associates. The minimum that a graduate student can pay for central campus area surface parking (C- lot) is now \$405 (CampusParc, 2020)¹. Annual minimum parking and additional fees (\$1447) borne by graduate associates now consume 6.8% of the minimum stipend.

We believe continued investment in graduate student stipends, fee coverage, and support resources are necessary to maintain institutional quality. We recommend that the university make a commitment to including the cost of additional fees (~\$1000) in the existing tuition and fee waiver to cover the Student Activity Graduate Fee, Student Union Fee, Recreational Fee, Technology Fee, and Health Insurance. The following "Other Student Fees" would ideally be included as well if assessed by the graduate program and/or college in which the Graduate Associate, Graduate Fellow, or Graduate Trainee is enrolled: Equipment Fees, Field Practicum, Clinical Fees, Program Fees, and Distance Learning Fee; the COTA Fee and Annual Student Legal Services would still have to be paid from the GAs' net personal income per the contracts of those fees. Additionally, we must continue to monitor the impact of the recent stipend increase to ensure that we maintain our competitive positioning and provide graduate students with a livable wage. This includes addressing the compression within departments and the need to increase Fellowship stipends.

COVID-19 Accommodations

GCBC addressed a number of concerns that arose out of the COVID-19 pandemic. Of immediate concern was ensure international students had support whether they were learning and working abroad or here in the U.S. We collaborated with OIA and the Graduate School on advocacy to ensure that stipend and tuition and fee waivers could be administered regardless of a student's geographic location. More work is still to be done generally in supporting our international student populations. A safe work environment though was an important issue for all graduate students at Ohio State. Thus we worked with the Office of Human Resources on their COVID-19 work accommodations to ensure at least 92 parents, immunocompromised, and other affected

¹ <https://osu.campusparc.com/get-a-permit/c-central-campus/>



students who requested to be able to work from home were given that additional support in their role. This support was also given in the form of academic accommodations presented by CESP of which GCBC and CGS provided feedback and advocacy.

One of the most important resources GCBC helped monitor were the financial resources made available to graduate students. With the help of the Graduate School and Student Advocacy, a specific graduate student emergency fund was created in addition to the funds made available for COVID-19. As of AU20, Overall there were at least 1091 graduate student who applied of which at least 661 students were approved and awarded. A total of at least \$807,875 was awarded in 2020 with the average award amounting to \$1,222 according to the Office of Student Academic Success. The other major financial resource made available was specifically for Graduate Associates that had been affected by COVID-19. GCBC advocated for the Matching Fee and Tuition Authorization (MFTA) program which was administered by the Graduate School. This program has thus far offered over 57 GA positions to affected students who may have lost funding due to having their time to degree or research delayed by COVID-19. Over \$450,000 dollars was awarded to 46 graduate students through the MFTA program and at least 30 are still available until the end of the 2021 calendar year. Lastly, GCBC did provide feedback on the Graduate School’s newly created Graduate Performance Award that allocated \$20,000 to deserving parents and caregivers that worked as Graduate Associates.

Data Analysis and Comparisons

Yearly Count of Graduate Associates per Summary of Annual Graduate Stipends

Graduate Associate Type	FY19	FY20	FY21
Graduate Administrative Associates (GAA)	325	304	243
Graduate Research Associates (GRA)	1,944	2,029	2,218
Graduate Teaching Associates (GTA)	2,080	2,083	1,913
Total Graduate Associates	4,349	4,416	4,374

Graduate Associate Percentage of Total Enrollment by Year per Graduate School

Year	Total Graduate Enrollment²	Total Number of Students on a GA	% of Total Graduate Enrollment
FY19	11,097	4,349	39.19%
FY20	11,285	4,416	39.13%
FY21	11,110	4,374	39.36%

Ohio State Graduate Associate Minimum Stipend by Academic Year with Yearly Increases

The following table shows the minimum stipend, for a 9-month appointment, for Graduate Associates at Ohio State. The first row shows the academic year; the second, shows the minimum stipend; and the third, shows the increase in dollars to the minimum stipend from the previous academic year. Over the course of 9 academic years, the University will have raised the minimum Graduate Associate stipend by \$9,280.

² <http://enrollmentservices.osu.edu/report.pdf>

Year	2013-14	2014-15	2015-16	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19	2019-20	2020-21	2021-22
Min. Stipend	\$13,500	\$13,500	\$13,500	\$15,000	\$15,750	\$16,515	\$17,280	\$19,280	\$21,280
Increase from Previous Year	+\$1,500	+\$0	+\$0	+\$1,500	+\$750	+765	+\$765	+\$2,000	+\$2,000

2020-21 Typical Out-of-Pocket Fees.

The following table shows the fees that a graduate student is charged during the Autumn and Spring Semesters for the 2020-21 academic year. Parking pass is not included below. These fees are the typical Ohio State out-of-pocket expenses required of graduate associates. However, due to COVID-19, not all students were charged all of these fees this past year, especially if they were enrolled in only distanced learning courses. GCBC in coordination with the Council on Student Affairs should ensure fees are applied equitably in the coming years.

Fee	Autumn Semester	Spring Semester	Total
COTA Fee	\$13.50	\$13.50	\$27.00
Student Activity Fee Graduate	\$37.50	\$37.50	\$75.00
Student Legal Services (annual)	\$40.00 (opt out is available)	\$0.00	\$40.00
Student Union Fee	\$74.40	\$74.40	\$148.80
Rec Fee	\$123.00	\$123.00	\$246.00
Health Insurance	\$1,683-\$1,430= \$253 (15%)	\$1,683-\$1,430= \$253 (15%)	\$506
Total	\$537.10	\$497.10	\$1,042.80

Ranking of Ohio State Minimum Graduate Associate Stipend by Academic Year.

Year	2013-14	2014-15	2015-16	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19	2019-20	2020-21	2021-22
GAA	6 th of 8	6 th of 8	6 th of 8	-	5 th of 8	5 th of 7	5 th of 7	6 th of 13	*3 rd of 13
GRA	8 th of 14	8 th of 14	8 th of 14	-	6 th of 14	6 th of 13	6 th of 13	6 th of 13	*3 rd of 13
GTA	8 th of 14	8 th of 14	8 th of 14	-	6 th of 14	6 th of 13	6 th of 13	6 th of 13	*3 rd of 13

(-) Data unavailable; (*) Benchmark to BIG 10 only

Recommendations

1. Monitor and analyze impact of \$4,000 minimum stipend increase
 - a. Increase Fellowship min. stipends to address compression and remain competitive
2. Include all possible fees to be covered by tuition and fee authorization, including any Distance Education fee and departmental Technology Fee as to alleviate the after-tax burden on Graduate Associates net income.
3. Ensure GAA re-classification doesn't result in any increased tax burden on students.



4. Expand MFTA Program to continue to identify graduate students whose research, practicum, or degree progress has been impacted by COVID-19 whether through direct access restrictions, mental or physical health complications, or other reasonable impacts.
 - a. Allocate \$3-5 million dollars of central funding to ensure students can graduate without an additional COVID-19 financial burden for the foreseeable future.
5. Address time off/leave policies to create a more uniform and streamline structure that ensures all GAs have equitable access to take leave when needed.
6. Continue progress collaborating on development and building of a new graduate student and multi-family housing facility.
7. Collaborate with external consultants or receive further administrative support to perform a salary evaluation for graduate associates to identify any inequities.