

**Graduate Compensation and Benefits Committee (GCBC)
2021-2022 Annual Report
The Ohio State University Senate**

Members of the 2021-2022 Graduate Compensation and Benefits Committee

Member	Constituency
Nick Messenger	Council of Graduate Students
Taylor Williams	Council of Graduate Students
Elena Cruz-Lopez	Council of Graduate Students
Aaron Argall	Council of Graduate Students
Garrett Tatum	Council of Graduate Students
Anna Poptic	Council of Graduate Students
Curtis Young	Faculty Council
Annika Peter	Faculty Council
Alicia Bertone/Matt Page	The Graduate School
Jen Prak	Office of Human Resources
Jan Weisenberger	Enterprise for Research, Innovation, and Knowledge

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.

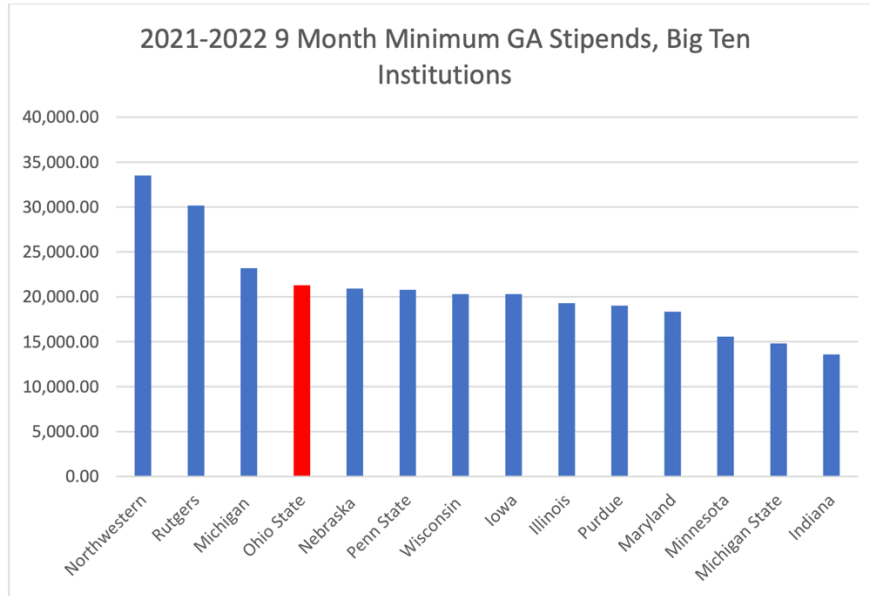
1. *Study the adequacy and other attributes of the university's policies and provisions including stipends, outside professional services, and supplemental compensation.*
2. *Conduct research and provide advice on economic support of graduate associates, professional development, quality and design of 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.*

Summary of the Committee's Work

Graduate Student Stipends:

As noted in 2020-2021's report, the COVID-19 pandemic highlighted gaps in resources that graduate students need to be successful. To that end, the committee's work this year was largely an extension of this work surrounding graduate compensation. Following the increase of the minimum stipend for a 50% nine-month Graduate Associate (GA) appointment to \$21,280 in 2021, the committee continued to discuss the possibility of future graduate stipend increases. Specifically, the committee collaborated with President Kristina Johnson, Provost Melissa

Gilliam, and Graduate School Dean Alicia Bertone to benchmark Ohio State's GA stipend to both Big Ten and aspirational peer groups. Ohio State currently ranks 4th in the Big Ten Conference and it is an aspirational goal to continue to advance within the Big Ten.



Several major challenges were discussed by the committee in regard to potential future increases to the minimum stipend:

1. The necessity for fellowship funding to scale proportionately. It would be antithetical to the goals of the university's robust and prestigious fellowship programs to ask graduate students to take an effective pay cut to accept a fellowship, particularly at the end of their program of study.
2. We must better understand the sources of funding for our current graduate student stipends. The committee began to make progress on this issue by collaborating with the Office of Human Resources. A breakdown of these sources, as of March 2022, is shown below.

Table 1: March 2022 Monthly Funding Sources for GAs

Fund	Prorated FTE	Prorated Monthly Stipend
FD100 General Fund	1,169.6	\$5,623,440
FD520 Grants and Contracts Sponsored Programs Fund	673.2	\$3,290,049
FD522 Grants and Contracts Non Sponsored Non Federal Fund	41.1	\$197,434
FD500 Current Use Development Activity Restricted Fund	34.3	\$167,017
FD111 Designated Other Fund	32.4	\$162,410
FD510 Endowment Distribution Restricted Fund	30.9	\$148,577
FD110 Designated Student Fees Fund	27.4	\$133,656
FD122 Earnings Other Fund	14.0	\$71,220
FD300 Health System Fund	7.5	\$48,552
FD524 State Line Items	9.1	\$44,184
FD200 Earnings Auxiliary Fund	14.8	\$38,275
FD108 Designated Practice Fund	2.8	\$13,108
FD101 Default Clearing Fund	3.0	\$12,445
FD521 Grants and Contracts Non Sponsored Federal Fund	2.0	\$9,458
FD121 Earnings Conferences Fund	1.8	\$8,722
FD113 Endowment Distribution Unrestricted Fund	0.5	\$2,364
Total	2,064.4	\$9,970,911

Table 2: March 2022 Monthly Funding Sources by GA Type

Spend Category	Fund	Prorated FTE	Prorated Monthly Stipend
Salaries Graduate Administrative Associate (SC10026)	FD100 General Fund	3.3	\$15,043
	FD300 Health System Fund	2.5	\$11,822
	FD500 Current Use Development Activity Restricted Fund	1.2	\$5,482
	FD200 Earnings Auxiliary Fund	1.0	\$4,728
	Total	7.9	\$37,075
Salaries Graduate Research Associate (SC10027)	FD520 Grants and Contracts Sponsored Programs Fund	669.8	\$3,273,039
	FD100 General Fund	335.7	\$1,623,920
	FD111 Designated Other Fund	31.9	\$159,795
	FD522 Grants and Contracts Non Sponsored Non Federal Fund	32.6	\$157,245
	FD500 Current Use Development Activity Restricted Fund	31.8	\$153,575
	FD510 Endowment Distribution Restricted Fund	26.8	\$128,376
	FD524 State Line Items	7.6	\$36,992
	FD300 Health System Fund	5.0	\$36,730
	FD122 Earnings Other Fund	6.9	\$35,887
	FD108 Designated Practice Fund	2.8	\$13,108
	FD101 Default Clearing Fund	3.0	\$12,445
	FD521 Grants and Contracts Non Sponsored Federal Fund	2.0	\$9,458
	FD121 Earnings Conferences Fund	1.6	\$7,540
	FD113 Endowment Distribution Unrestricted Fund	0.5	\$2,364
	FD200 Earnings Auxiliary Fund	0.5	\$2,364
Total	1,158.4	\$5,652,839	
Salaries Graduate Teaching Associate (SC10028)	FD100 General Fund	830.7	\$3,984,477
	FD110 Designated Student Fees Fund	27.4	\$133,656
	FD522 Grants and Contracts Non Sponsored Non Federal Fund	8.5	\$40,188
	FD122 Earnings Other Fund	7.2	\$35,333
	FD200 Earnings Auxiliary Fund	13.3	\$31,182
	FD510 Endowment Distribution Restricted Fund	4.1	\$20,201
	FD520 Grants and Contracts Sponsored Programs Fund	3.4	\$17,011
	FD500 Current Use Development Activity Restricted Fund	1.4	\$7,960
	FD524 State Line Items	1.5	\$7,192
	FD111 Designated Other Fund	0.5	\$2,614
	FD121 Earnings Conferences Fund	0.3	\$1,182
	Total	898.1	\$4,280,996
Total	2,064.4	\$9,970,911	

3. No matter the route the university takes on GA funding, their remains a fundamental blurring of lines between the role of GAs as employees of the institution versus students. It was discussed at length by the committee that while additional funding, particularly in an inflationary environment, is paramount it is also crucial for the university to work to solve several other quality of life and benefit issues facing graduate students including:
 - a. Establishing a universal basic commitment to graduate students that establishes a culture of valuing their contributions to the university while maintaining progress toward timely degree receipt.
 - b. Healthcare costs and affordability on campus, particularly for international students.
 - c. Access to mental health resources in a timely and graduate-student specific manner

- d. Improvement of culture within various graduate programs and a further fostering of a positive work environment and culture of care that encourages reasonable work-life balance.
- e. Improved practices relating to diversity, equity, and inclusion within our academic programs and between faculty and graduate students.
- f. Investments to maintain and/or expand access to family housing and affordable childcare for graduate students.

These larger problems face most institutions of higher education around the nation and will take true collaboration across the institution. It is our recommendation that these issues continue to be discussed within GCBC, with the incoming Dean of the Graduate School and Graduate Council, the Provost, and President. Additionally, we would like to refer these topics for discussion in the newly reconstituted Steering Ad Hoc to study graduate student issues. Currently, some of these quality of life and culture concerns lie outside of the scope of GCBC, which is the only university committee formally established to study and report on graduate student issues.

Logistic Concerns Surrounding Workday

A large portion of time was also dedicated to solving concerns with the University's transition to Workday to manage GA appointments. In Autumn 2021, a glitch in Workday that resulted from Summer '21 and Fall '21 end and start dates overlapping caused many GA appointments to drop from the system's automatic processing timeline. This resulted in hundreds of GA appointments which had to be manually rectified by the Graduate School staff. Further, this delay was not smoothly communicated with the bursar's office, resulting in many graduate students receiving warnings about late tuition and fee payments, due to delayed internal process of tuition and fee authorizations. The Council of Graduate Students in particular received many concerns from students wondering if they should pay themselves to avoid late fees being applied to their Buckeyelink accounts. This is unacceptable due to internal software errors.

Another major issue brought by Workday was incorrect and delayed paychecks for graduate students. The committee heard firsthand from graduate students who had been over-paid, under-paid, or experienced delays in pay by one month or more. Given the monthly expenses and commitments of graduate students, missing a paycheck, or receiving a wrong amount can cause severe and undue financial stress and potentially represents a breach of contract with graduate students signed at the time of their appointment. Additionally, over-paid graduate students reported and shared receiving strongly worded letters threatening referral to the Ohio Attorney General's Office for debt collection for not paying their over-pay back to the university. We felt this action and communication style wholly unnecessary, confusing, and threatening—particularly for international graduate students unfamiliar with debt collection practices in the United States. Further, the letter did not include an option to pay fee-free with an e-check although such an option does logistically exist, leading several of the students who reached out with this issue to believe they could only rectify the issue with a credit/debit card, which are subject to a processing fee from the university's financial payment partner. This, in essence, represented a punishment or tax on a student for simply trying to pay back the money which the university inadvertently gave them by accident due to Workday errors.

The committee worked to alleviate the issues above by taking the following steps:

1. Collaborated with HR to establish a taskforce of individuals from across HR, including payroll experts. This team has a higher degree of knowledge and met regularly so as to quickly resolve pay errors and issue off-cycle paychecks to GAs.
2. Established a dedicated email address (HR-GradPayHelp@osu.edu) which provided a direct and easy way for students to report errors to the aforementioned HR taskforce for quick resolution.
3. Requested and provided feedback to HR on the current Graduate Associate hiring process. As a result of this collaboration, multiple steps in the hiring process were eliminated, streamlining the process and reducing potential for errant entries.
4. Worked to ensure that HR and the bursar establish open lines of communication to prevent internal Workday errors from automatically triggering late fee assessments to GAs and emails that ask GAs to pay their own tuition.
5. Worked with Senior Vice President Dr. Jeff Risinger to shift the responsibility from the Graduate School to the HR Service Center for processing GA hiring errors. Although we hope that there will be fewer than the hundreds that occurred in 2021, the Graduate School does not have the full-time staff capacity to quickly process these.
6. Continued to advocate for additional features in Workday to reduce error and minimize hiring timelines. This includes most notably bulk uploads which would reduce errors in the new system, since GAs must be reentered each term rather than each academic year. At the time of this report, this issue was in process but remains unresolved.

Advancing Discussion Around Unpaid Internships and Field Experience

While the committee's work most often focuses on PhD students and GAs, this year we held direct conversations with President Johnson on the subject of unpaid work experiences for professional master's degree students. Prominent examples include students in the Master of Social Work (MSW) program, Master's in Speech-Language Pathology, and other students required to complete work experience with community partners. Currently, most of these experiences are unpaid. Although they are learning opportunities and required for licensure at the end of some programs, these requirements also represent a significant barrier to many students. In many of these programs, students pay tuition by taking loans, attend classes, and work what amounts to a day job. For MSW students alone, earning their degree requires hundreds of hours of unpaid professional work. Additionally, to earn income and pay for their own living expenses some students are forced to also work unrelated part-time jobs or take student loans beyond the cost of their program.

The committee recognizes there are many hurdles to instituting a stipend for professional master's degree students. Notably, the source of the funding. We believe that there is potential to explore donor and private funding sources for such a program and recognize that many community partners do not have the budget to absorb paying graduate students for their work. However, we also believe that the perpetuation of such programs exacerbates problems,

particularly in fields where degrees result in substantial debt and incomes are not particularly high. Simply put, graduate students should not be a source of completely unpaid labor for external partners while paying for the privilege to work in the form of tuition to the university. Again, there was recognition in the committee that graduate students would not be able nor be expected to receive compensation equivalent to a licensed, full-time professional. We hope that this is an avenue that the university will continue to explore in the coming years and that Ohio State can work to lead the nation on the issues surrounding unpaid internships, particularly at the graduate level.

Conclusion

In summary, it was a busy year for the Graduate Compensation and Benefits Committee. The committee strove to balance putting out fires due to the COVID-19 pandemic and Workday transition with holding robust discussions on innovative solutions and beginning to chart a course for the future of graduate compensation at Ohio State. We believe continuing to advance discussion around these issues is paramount and provides significant opportunity for collaboration, problem solving, and institutional leadership on graduate education.