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GC Minutes 2013-05-06

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Minutes Approved Via Email – May 2013

GRADUATE COUNCIL MINUTES

609th Meeting

May 6, 2013

MEMBERS PRESENT: Abdel-Motaleb, Anekwe, Arado, Bennardo, Bond, Buras, Chown, Garver, Gowen, Hathaway, L’Allier, Levin, Osorio, Rosalez, Rossetti, Sido, Sims, Sunderlin, Umoren, Walker, Wickman, Zhou

MEMBERS ABSENT: Bruce, Efanov, Schraufnagel, Wilkins

GUESTS: Judith Lukaszuk (Associate Professor, School of Family, Consumer and Nutrition Sciences), David Stone (Associate Vice President for Research)

OTHERS PRESENT: Hughes (Secretary), Smith (Catalog Editor/Curriculum Coordinator)

Bond called the meeting to order at 10:02 a.m. He welcomed and introduced the two guests. David Stone was present to answer any questions about the proposed *APPM* changes to the Research Integrity Policy. Judith Lukaszuk was invited to the meeting as an incoming College of Health and Human Sciences faculty representative to the Graduate Council. There are also two new College of Liberal Arts and Sciences faculty representatives who were invited but unable to attend: Leila Porter (ANTH) and Paul Stoddard (GEOL).

Bond announced that Bennardo, Sunderlin and Umoren were completing their terms on the Graduate Council. He stated that Anekwe, Bruce, Buras, and Rosalez, who were the graduate student representatives this year, were the most actively involved student representatives he had ever seen on the Graduate Council, serving on various university committees in addition to Graduate Council standing committees and the Graduate Student Advisory Committee. He noted that Arado, Gowen, Hathaway and Osorio were each reelected to serve another term. Bond thanked all members for their service on the Graduate Council and the various standing committees.

Approval of Minutes

Gowen moved approval of the April 1, 2013 minutes; Abdel-Motaleb seconded the motion, which carried unanimously.

Committee Reports

Graduate Colloquium Committee: Bond reported that there were 39 proposals submitted for fall. All proposals were funded, though a few were returned for further clarification.

Curriculum Committee: Chown presented the April 8, 2013 minutes for approval. The committee reviewed and approved minor curriculum changes. Hathaway moved approval of the minutes; Garver seconded the motion, which carried unanimously. (Curriculum Committee minutes and catalog changes are available at <http://www.niu.edu/provost/curriculum/committeeminutes.shtml>.)

Bond reported on the additional curricular item that was distributed prior to the meeting and required Graduate Council approval. He explained that the name change for the specialization in the Master of Public Administration, “Strategic Management and Leadership,” which was approved by the Graduate Council last fall, was forwarded to the President for review. President Peters requested confirmation that the College of Business was amenable to the change. The Provost’s Office followed-up with the College of Business, and the Dean’s Office was not amenable. Therefore, the Provost asked the deans of the College of Business and the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences to establish a mutually-agreed upon name for the specialization. The deans have proposed “Strategic Public Management and Leadership.” The Division of Public Administration is amenable to the change. Abdel-Motaleb moved approval of the proposed name change; Sunderlin seconded the motion, which carried unanimously.

New Business

Research Integrity Policy: Stone reviewed the revised policy pertaining to investigations of research misconduct, which was distributed for review prior to the meeting. He informed members that the current policy was not in compliance and needed to be rewritten. (The current policy is located in the *APPM* at <http://www.niu.edu/provost/policies/appm/I2.shtml>.)

Stone informed members that an outside expert was brought in to assist with the design of the policy to ensure compliance and institutional alignment with federal policy to reflect the three actions of the standard paradigm of research misconduct: 1) Fabrication; 2) Falsification; and 3) Plagiarism. He reviewed the three-stage process for research misconduct complaints and stated that the goal was for the Office of Research Integrity to complete investigations within 120 days.

Levin questioned the exclusion of definitions that are in the current policy: 1) Improper assignment of authorship; 2) Claiming another person’s research; 3) Manipulation of experiments or of statistical or analytical procedures; and 4) Misappropriation of research funds. Stone replied that the standard definitions of research misconduct are fabrication, falsification and plagiarism. He indicated that authorship and misappropriation are dealt with differently, and that the outside expert considered the language “old-school” and suggested removal, which is why the decision was made to exclude them. Stone admitted that some of the language with regard to student complaints is vague to allow meetings with judicial officers to determine whether the misconduct was academic or research in nature.

Sims moved approval of the revised policy for inclusion in the *APPM*; Abdel-Motaleb seconded the motion, which carried unanimously. (See attached document.)

Announcements

Report on the Survey of Graduate Assistants: Bond discussed the report that was distributed prior to the meeting. He stated that he was impressed with the 38% response rate and indicated that the students who responded were scattered across campus. Bond left the floor open for discussion.

Sims noted the common theme that graduate assistants do not make enough money, but questioned how the university could resolve the issue given the budget situation. Levin suggested that the report should be shared with the President and Board of Trustees. Bond stated that he would forward it to president designate Baker. Rosalez added that it should be shared with the perspective that graduate assistants' workload and quality of life affects undergraduate teaching, which, in turn, affects the university as a whole. Levin agreed that undergraduate education is suffering from overworked graduate assistants.

Bond reported that, in the open-response area of the survey, there were a few complaints about Health Services, but the vast majority of complaints were poverty-related issues due to extremely low pay and high student fees.

Sunderlin inquired about comments that referred to assistantships and outside employment and asked if there was a policy against outside employment. Bond responded that there is no such university policy. Sunderlin asked if it was enforceable if a department includes it in the contract. Bond replied that graduate assistants do not receive a contract; rather, they receive an offer letter. He added that he believes it would be difficult for a department to prevent graduate assistants from working off campus.

Zhou posed three questions, based on his observations, that need to be answered with regard to graduate assistantships: 1) Are assistantships supposed to carry a living wage or are they to help mitigate costs while in Graduate School and to gain experience?; 2) Are we considering the long-term effects of assistantships, which will ultimately affect lifetime income?; and 3) Given the budget situation, is it possible to increase stipends without decreasing the number of graduate assistantships, or would it be better to pay more and offer fewer?

Abdel-Motaleb suggested that reducing fees would increase income for graduate assistants. Bond agreed and stated that graduate student fees total around \$3,000 for fall and spring and an additional \$650 if enrolled full-time in the summer.

Bennardo commented that the issue needed to be addressed with the President and Board of Trustees. They may determine that the budget needs to be increased with the same number of assistantships and that budget cuts need to be made elsewhere.

Hathaway commented that there needed to be more mentoring and supervision of graduate assistants. She suggested one way to help would be to make students more aware of resources available to instructional staff.

Chown asked if the report would be ammunition to defend tuition waivers. Bond indicated that the tuition waiver discussion was not going away, especially with a new president coming on-board.

Bond referred to a comment that suggested that perhaps female students were placed more often in staff assistant positions. He indicated that he was able to verify that fact based on data and responses from the survey.

Bond stated that he would like to continue the conversation on this topic next academic year to seek a resolution, whatever that may be. (See attached report.)

Meeting adjourned at 11:09 a.m.

Preamble

Research at Northern Illinois University has traditionally and routinely been performed at a high level of quality and scholarly integrity. Faculty, students, staff, and administrators accept the obligation to exercise critical self-discipline and judgment in their investigations. They respect and defend free and open inquiry by associates and strive to be objective in their professional judgment of colleagues. They practice intellectual honesty, acknowledge academic debt and scholarly assistance, and take pride in their work. They are careful to acknowledge fully and generously the published and unpublished contributions of others. They give appropriate professional recognition, including authorship credit when warranted, to the intellectual and technical contributions of students and junior associates. The University has a responsibility to provide an intellectual climate in which open inquiry can flourish. This includes the freedom to pursue research on any intellectual path. Adherence to these standards protects the integrity of the scholarly enterprise, provides a positive climate to which future generations of scholars are exposed, promotes public appreciation of intellectual pursuit, and enhances public trust in the University and its stewardship of both public and private funds.

Scope

This policy covers research misconduct across all fields. This includes funded and non-funded projects. Certain funding agencies mandate additional regulatory requirements. These requirements will be addressed in later sections of the policy. For example, all research misconduct involving funding provided by the National Science Foundation (NSF) is subject to the provisions of 45 CFR 689. It is important to note all Public Health Service (PHS) funded research has additional requirements through the Office of Research Integrity (ORI). In cases where a funding agency's regulatory requirements differ from this policy, those regulatory requirements will supersede this policy. The University will notify the funding agency at any stage of the inquiry or investigation if it is ascertained that any of the following conditions exist:

1. Health or safety of the public is at risk, including an immediate need to protect human or animal subjects.
2. There is an immediate need to protect federal funds or equipment.
3. It is determined that violations have occurred that are so egregious that research activities should be suspended.
4. There is an immediate need to protect the interests of the person making the allegations or of the individual who is the subject of the allegations and his or her co-investigators and associates, if any.
5. There is a strong likelihood that the alleged incident is going to be reported publicly.
6. The university believes the research community or public should be informed.
7. There is a reasonable indication of violations of civil or criminal law.

This document applies to allegations of research misconduct (fabrication, falsification, or plagiarism in proposing, performing, or reviewing research, or in reporting research results) involving a person who, at the time of the alleged research misconduct, was employed by, was an agent of, or was affiliated by contract or agreement with Northern Illinois University.

Definitions

1. Research Integrity Officer (RIO) means the institutional official responsible for assessing the allegations of research misconduct to determine if they fall within the definition of research misconduct and warrant an inquiry on the basis that the allegation is sufficiently credible and specific so that potential evidence of research misconduct may be identified. The RIO also oversees inquires and investigations as well as additional responsibilities mentioned in this policy. The RIO is normally the Associate Vice President for Research and Graduate Studies or an individual in a similar position.
2. Deciding Official (DO) means the institutional official who makes final determinations on allegations of research misconduct and any institutional administrative actions. The DO will never be the same person as the RIO. A DO may appoint an individual to access allegations of research misconduct or serve on an inquiry committee. The DO is normally the Vice President for Research and Graduate Studies.
3. Complainant means the individual responsible for making allegations in good faith. They are responsible for maintaining confidentiality and cooperating with the inquiry and investigation is applicable.
4. Respondent means the individual accused of research misconduct. They are responsible for maintaining confidentiality and cooperating with the inquiry and investigation.

Misconduct in Research

All institutional members will report observed, suspected, or apparent research misconduct to the RIO. If an individual is unsure where a suspected incident falls within the definition of research misconduct, he or she may meet with or contact the RIO at the Division of Research and Graduate Studies to discuss the suspected research misconduct informally, which may include discussing it anonymously and/or hypothetically.

The key to defining research misconduct is intent. Research misconduct does not include honest error or differences of opinion. Free and open inquiry allows for honest differences in methodology and in the interpretation of or judgments about data. Research misconduct, therefore, consists of the intentional commission of one or more of the following:

1. Fabrication, falsification, or plagiarism in proposing, performing, or reviewing research, or in reporting research results.
 - (a) Fabrication is making up data or results and recording or reporting them.
 - (b) Falsification is manipulating research materials, equipment, or processes, or changing or omitting data or results such that the research is not accurately represented in the research record.
 - (c) Plagiarism is the appropriation of another person's ideas, processes, results, or words without giving appropriate credit.

Handling Allegations of Research Misconduct

The review process for cases of alleged misconduct consists of three phases: preliminary assessment by the RIO, inquiry, and investigation. Procedures for each phase are described below. There are also provisions for appealing a determination of research misconduct. If an administrative officer referred to herein has a conflict of interest in a case, then the next higher administrative officer or that person's designee will assume the responsibilities indicated.

The respondent shall be given the opportunity to admit that research misconduct occurred and that he/she committed the research misconduct. With the advice of the RIO and/or other institutional officials, the DO may terminate the institution's review of an allegation that has been admitted, if the institution's acceptance of the admission.

In the case of PHS funded research any proposed settlement must be approved by ORI.

Obligations and Rights of Parties

All involved University parties are obligated to cooperate with the proceedings by providing information relating to the case. All relevant documentary information must be provided to the respondent in a timely manner to facilitate the preparation of a response. The respondent shall be provided the opportunity during the investigation to address the charges and evidence in detail and may address the Investigation Committee in person if he or she desires. The complainant shall also have the opportunity to review the evidence to ensure completeness to ensure, for example, that no key documents are missing.

During any and all proceedings, reasonable attempts will be made to protect the confidentiality of respondents, complainants, and research subjects identifiable from research records or evidence.

In the course of an investigation, information may emerge that indicates the alleged research misconduct may go beyond the initial complaint. The Investigation Committee may then expand its investigation, but only after the respondent is informed in writing what this additional information is and what new directions the investigation is likely to take. The respondent will be provided the opportunity to review the new information and to address any expanded charges the Investigation Committee feels are warranted by the new evidence. In the event the new information involves other individuals, they should be provided the opportunity to review and respond to the new evidence.

I. Referral to the Research Integrity Officer

A. Preliminary Assessment

A complainant suspecting research misconduct should report directly to the RIO. In the event the complainant went to another individual, such as a dean or department chair, it is the responsibility of all University parties to refer the complainant to the RIO.

Promptly after receiving an allegation of research misconduct, defined as a disclosure of possible research misconduct through any means of communication, the RIO shall meet with the complainant in confidence to discuss the allegation. The preliminary assessment process may include interviews with other parties (including the respondent), analysis of documents, and any other investigating activities deemed necessary.

If the allegation does not fall within the scope of this document, the complainant will be referred to whatever institutional processes may be appropriate to the particular case (e.g., faculty or staff grievance procedures).

If the allegation is made against a student, the RIO will consult with the University Judicial Officer to determine whether the allegation should be pursued through these policies and procedures or those of the Student Judicial Code. A decision will be made if the misconduct falls under academic misconduct, research misconduct, or both. If the RIO determines that the allegation comes under the jurisdiction of the research integrity policies and procedures, he or she will discuss the inquiry and investigation procedures with the complainant.

No allegation of research misconduct will be received or inquiry instituted where the alleged misconduct took place more than six years to the day before the allegation was made.

If the RIO determines that the allegation: (1) meets the definition of research misconduct; and, (2) is sufficiently credible and specific so that potential evidence of research misconduct may be identified, the he/she will notify the DO in writing of the recommendation to move to an inquiry.

If the RIO determines that there is not sufficient evidence to move to an inquiry, he/she will notify the DO and the complainant of this determination in writing, as well.

Even if the respondent leaves the University before the case is resolved, the University will continue the examination of the allegations and reach a conclusion. Furthermore, the University will cooperate with other institutions' processes to resolve questions of misconduct.

B. Protection of Respondent and Complainant

The University will, to the greatest extent possible, protect the respondent and the complainant against capricious actions. Unsupported allegations not brought in good faith will lead to grievance proceedings or disciplinary action against the complainant. Acts of retaliation for good faith allegations will similarly lead to grievance proceedings or disciplinary action.

The University will make every effort to restore the reputations of persons alleged to have engaged in research misconduct when allegations are not confirmed. It will also protect the positions and reputations of any complainant who made allegations in good faith, witness, or committee member and to counter potential or actual retaliation against those complainants, witnesses and committee members.

II. Inquiry

Upon acceptance of the DO of the recommendation to move to inquiry, the RIO will initiate the inquiry process as soon as possible.

The purpose of the inquiry is to make a preliminary evaluation of the available evidence and testimony of the respondent, complainant, and key witnesses to determine whether there is sufficient evidence of possible research misconduct to warrant an investigation. The purpose of the inquiry is not to reach a final conclusion about whether misconduct definitely occurred or who was responsible. The findings of the inquiry will be set forth in an inquiry report.

The RIO must make a good faith effort to notify the respondent in writing of the decision to move to an inquiry. On or before the date on which the respondent is notified, or the inquiry begins, whichever is earlier, the RIO must take all reasonable and practical steps to obtain custody of all the research records and evidence needed to conduct the research misconduct proceeding, inventory the records and evidence, and sequester them in a secure manner. Where appropriate the respondent will be given copies of, or reasonable supervised access to, the research records. Any additional research records and evidence discovered during the course of the proceeding will also be sequestered by the RIO.

A. Composition of Research Standards Inquiry Committee

In order to address allegations of research misconduct, the University will establish for each case a Research Standards Inquiry Committee (hereafter called the Inquiry Committee). The Inquiry Committee will be made of no more than five (5) members. As allegations of misconduct vary on a case-by-case basis, it is at the discretion of the RIO who to appoint to the Inquiry Committee. Members may include faculty, professional staff, outside consultants, or members of the administration.

All reasonable steps will be taken to ensure an impartial and unbiased research misconduct proceeding to the maximum extent practicable. The DO will receive a list of the proposed members of the Inquiry Committee and has the ability to veto any person. The respondent will also receive a written copy of the proposed membership and within five business days may object to any member on the basis of conflict of interest. The DO will make a determination regarding the validity of any such objection and act accordingly.

The Inquiry Committee must ensure that it has access to the expertise necessary to judge the allegations being made; therefore, it may call upon on- or off-campus consultants as necessary to assist in reviewing a case.

B. Inquiry Process

An inquiry begins when the RIO appoints the Inquiry Committee and notifies the respondent of the charges and the process that will follow. Notification will be made in writing and copies will be securely maintained and held confidential in the office of the DO. The RIO will issue the

Inquiry Committee a written charge with their goals and responsibilities and will convene the committee as soon as possible.

Inquiries should be resolved expeditiously. The inquiry should be completed and the final written report of the findings submitted to the DO as soon as possible.

To the greatest extent possible, the inquiry proceedings will be kept confidential in order to protect the rights of all parties involved. During the inquiry stage, the respondent and complainant will normally be interviewed by the Inquiry Committee and may bring a personal advisor to this interview. However, this individual will not be allowed to address the Inquiry Committee in any way.

If the research is PHS funded the inquiry report must be submitted within 60 calendar days of the initiation of the inquiry, or within a shorter time period if so specified by PHS. If the Inquiry Committee anticipates that the established deadline cannot be met, it will submit to the DO a report citing the reasons for the delay and describing progress to date; it will also inform the respondent and other involved individuals. If the inquiry takes longer than 60 days to complete, the final report will include documentation of the reasons for exceeding 60 days

C. Inquiry Findings

The completion of an inquiry is marked by a conclusion of whether or not an investigation is warranted, and by submission of the written report of the inquiry findings to the DO. The inquiry report shall contain the following information: (1) The name and position of the respondent(s); (2) A description of the allegations of research misconduct; (3) If applicable, grant and funding information; (4) The basis for recommending that the alleged actions warrant an investigation; and (5) Any comments on the report by the respondent or the complainant. The respondent and the complainant will be informed in writing whether or not the allegations will result in an investigation.

III. Investigation

A. Composition of Research Standards Investigation Committee

If it is determined that a full investigation is required an investigation committee will be formed. Normally the inquiry committee will also serve as the investigation committee. It is at the discretion of the RIO whether to remove or add members.

B. Purpose of Investigation

The purpose of an investigation is to determine whether research misconduct has been committed, by whom and to what extent. The investigation will also determine whether there are additional instances of possible research misconduct that would justify broadening the scope beyond the initial allegation.

C. Investigation Process

If warranted, an investigation will be initiated within 30 days of such a finding by the DO. Investigations should be conducted as expeditiously as possible. An investigation ordinarily should be completed within 120 calendar days of its initiation, or as dictated by funding agencies' limitations (including submission of the final report). The investigation proceedings will be kept confidential to the greatest extent possible.

The respondent(s) will be notified sufficiently in advance of the scheduling of his/her interview with the Investigation Committee so that the respondent may prepare for the interview.

The investigation will consist of a combination of activities, including but not limited to the following:

1. Review and copying of data, proposals, correspondence, and other pertinent documents at the University, at the granting agency, or elsewhere.
2. Review of published materials and of manuscripts submitted or in preparation.
3. Inspection of laboratory or other facilities and materials (including data records and notebooks).
4. Interviewing of parties with an involvement in or knowledge about the case, including both the complainant and the respondent. Transcripts of the interviews may be recorded stenographically or electronically. Complete summaries of these interviews should be prepared, provided to the interviewed party for comment or revision, and included as part of the documentary record of the investigation.
5. Pursue diligently all significant issues and leads discovered that are determined relevant to the investigation, including any evidence of additional instances of possible research misconduct, and continue the investigation to completion.

The nature of some cases may render the deadline difficult to meet. If the Investigation Committee determines that the full process cannot be completed in 120 days, then an interim report is to be submitted to the DO before 120 days have expired with a request for an extension including an explanation of why an extension is necessary.

If the Research is PHS funded and if the investigation cannot be completed in 120 calendar days, then the RIO will submit to the Office of Research Integrity (ORI) a written request for an extension. If the request is granted, the University will file periodic progress reports as requested by the ORI.

Non-PHS funding agencies may have other guidelines or regulations to be followed. Any investigation-related communication with a funding agency will also be sent, in confidence, to the Director of the Office of Sponsored Projects.

D. Potential Findings

The findings of an investigation are either:

1. No research misconduct was committed (including a notation, if warranted, that the allegation was malicious or frivolous).
2. Research misconduct was committed.

A finding of research misconduct requires that:

- (a) There be a significant departure from accepted practices of the relevant research community; and
- (b) The misconduct be committed intentionally, knowingly, or recklessly; and
- (c) The allegation be proven by a preponderance of the evidence, which means more than fifty percent likely misconduct occurred.

In the course of an investigation, serious unintentional research errors may surface. In such instances, the Investigation Committee will advise the respondent on appropriate corrective action. It may also include in its final report specific recommendations for corrective action, such as notifying editors of journals in which the respondent's research was published or to which manuscripts were sent, and collaborators on such research.

E. Investigation Report

Documentation of the proceedings must be prepared and will be made available to the appropriate funding agency as required. The report shall include the following:

1. The nature of the allegation of research misconduct, including identification of the respondent;
2. Documentation and description of all PHS support, if applicable;
3. The specific allegations of research misconduct considered in the investigation;
4. The institutional policies and procedures under which the investigation was conducted;
5. Identification and summaries of the research records and evidence reviewed;
6. Any evidence taken into custody;
7. A statement of findings for each allegation. Each statement must:
 - a. Identify the type of research misconduct;
 - b. Identify the respondent's intent;
 - c. Summarize the facts and the analysis that support the conclusion;
 - d. Identify the PHS support, if applicable;
 - e. Identify any publications which require correction;
 - f. Identify the persons responsible for the misconduct;
 - g. List any current support or known applications for support the respondent has pending.

F. Respondent Review of Report

The Investigation Committee will provide a copy of the draft report to the respondent and complainant for comment, and incorporate or attach the respondent's and complainant's comments, if any, in the final report. This report is confidential and will be shared only with required bodies. The report will adhere to all applicable sponsor requirements.

G. Deciding Official Review of Final Report

The Investigation Committee then will submit the final investigation report to the DO for his/her review, including the respondent's comments for consideration. The DO will provide a written determination as to whether he/she accepts the findings of the Investigation Committee as well as the appropriate institutional actions based on the misconduct. The respondent also will receive a copy of this determination.

After the DO has reviewed and accepted the report of the investigation committee, the respondent may, within 10 calendar days of the date of the determination letter, file a written appeal with the DO. A time extension, where there is appropriate justification, may be requested of the DO. Either the findings, or the sanctions, or both, may be appealed. An appeal must be restricted to the body of evidence already presented, and the grounds for appeal must be limited to failure to follow appropriate procedures in the investigation, arbitrary and capricious decision-making, or sanctions not in keeping with the findings. The decision of the DO is the final University determination.

New evidence or newly discovered conflict of interest may warrant a new investigation, in which case they may direct that the original committee or a modified committee conduct a new inquiry.

The investigation is complete when the DO has confidentially submitted the determination letter with a description of any sanctions to be imposed by the University, to the respondent(s), each respondent's department chair and college dean, or the respondent's unit and divisional directors, and the funding agency, if any.

H. Additional PHS Requirements

This section describes the additional reporting requirements that are required when an allegation of research misconduct involves Public Health Service grants. At the completion of an inquiry, the Office of Research Integrity shall be provided with the written finding by the DO and a copy of the inquiry report containing the information required by 42 CFR Section 93.309(a). Upon a request from ORI, the university shall promptly send them: (1) a copy of our institutional policies and procedures under which the inquiry was conducted; (2) the research records and evidence reviewed, transcripts or recordings or any interviews, and copies of all relevant documents; and (3) the charges for the investigation to consider.

Any and all interviews of the respondent, complainant, and any other person who was interviewed during an investigation will be recorded or transcribed as required by PHS regulation. The respondent will be given the opportunity to provide written comments to the inquiry report. As well as, provide written comments on the draft investigation report that will be considered by the Investigation Committee before issuing the final report.

The University shall cooperate fully and on a continuing basis with ORI during its oversight reviews of this institution and its research misconduct proceedings and during the process under which the respondent may contest ORI findings of research misconduct and proposed HHS administrative actions. This includes providing, as necessary to develop a complete record of relevant evidence, all witnesses, research records, and other evidence under our control or custody, or in the possession of, or accessible to, all persons that are subject to our authority.

The University shall report to ORI any proposed settlements, admissions of research misconduct, or institutional findings of misconduct that arise at any stage of a misconduct proceeding, including the allegation and inquiry stages.

The DO will expeditiously take action on all recommendations or refer them to another appropriate office (e.g., department chair, director, dean, university judicial office, Civil Service personnel office) for action.

IV. Resolution of Investigation

A. Restoration of Respondent's Reputation

All persons and agencies informed of the inquiry or investigation must be notified promptly of the finding of no misconduct. Notification will be made by the Vice President for Research.

The Vice President for Research will work with appropriate persons to counter any adverse publicity experienced by the respondent during the inquiry or investigation.

Particular efforts will be made to redress damage to the respondent's reputation and status as a competent researcher.

If the unsubstantiated allegations of misconduct are found to have been maliciously motivated, appropriate grievance procedures or disciplinary action will be initiated against the complainant. If the allegations, however incorrect, are found to have been made in good faith, no disciplinary measures will be taken and diligent efforts will be made to prevent retaliatory action against the complainant.

Any findings-related communication with a funding agency will also be sent, in confidence, to the Director of the Office of Sponsored Projects.

B. Sanctions

University sanctions for committing research misconduct may include, but are not limited to: removal from the research project, a reprimand, financial restitution, and termination of association with the University. Other sanctions may include, if appropriate, actions such as notifying editors of journals in which the research in question was published or to which manuscripts were sent; other institutions with which the respondent has been affiliated; collaborators on such research; and professional societies, licensing boards, or criminal authorities.

The University response to a finding of research misconduct, including sanctions against the researcher, will reflect the severity of the misconduct and will be in compliance with the provisions of the University Constitution and Bylaws and other relevant documents.

If termination of faculty employment is to be considered, the due process provision of Section 7.3 of the University Bylaws will apply. If termination of a member of the Supportive Professional Staff is to be considered, due process procedures specified in Item I-12-1 of the Academic Policies and Procedures Manual will apply.

If dismissal of a member of the Operating Staff is to be considered, the procedures in the State Universities Civil Service System statute and rules will apply.

If dismissal of a student is to be considered, the Student Judicial Code appeal procedures will be followed. Sanctions or other actions may also be taken by the awarding funding agency.

V. Records

Any reports and all records will be retained in a confidential and secure file in the office of the DO for at least seven years after the completion of this review process. This file or parts of this file will not become a part of the respondent's confidential personnel record at the University, unless applicable sanctions include such a requirement.

Report on the Survey of Graduate Assistants

May 6, 2013

Background

At its February and March 2013 meetings, the Graduate Council, which is empowered by the *Academic Policies and Procedures Manual* to establish a minimum and maximum graduate assistant stipend, considered two options for setting stipend rates for AY 2013-2014: one option would continue to link the minimum and maximum rates to the cost of living index; the other option would more significantly raise both the minimum and maximum rates.

Recognizing that the Council lacked concrete information about the adequacy of current stipends, Dr. Jeffrey Chown suggested that the Council address the deficit in order to make a rational decision next year about minimum and maximum assistantship stipends. Dr. Chown suggested that a survey of graduate assistants be undertaken, and he joined Dr. Beth Wilkins and student member Amber Rosalez to craft a survey, which was administered online.

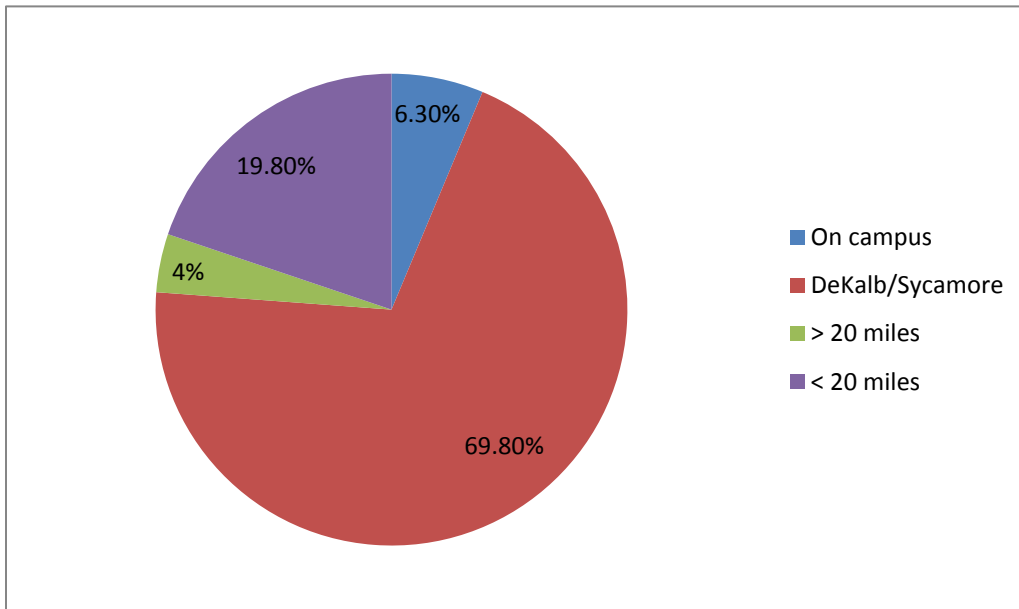
The survey consisted of 21 questions, four of which were purely demographic in nature. During the last weeks of March, Ms. Rosalez and Brad Bond invited approximately 1,300 graduate assistants to participate in the survey; 497 students (< 35% of assistants) responded.

Based on the academic program of respondents, their employing units, and their reported bi-weekly salaries, respondents were sufficiently representative of graduate assistants across campus to suggest that the results can be extrapolated. For example, in response to the question about bi-weekly take home pay, respondents reported an average salary of \$496.47 and a mean salary of \$510. Those figures correspond to a bi-weekly (pre-tax) salary of \$512 on average and mean of \$519, as calculated from payroll data.

Summary

The survey revealed little that was surprising about where graduate assistants lived or with whom they lived. 494 respondents supplied information about where they live. The vast majority of graduate

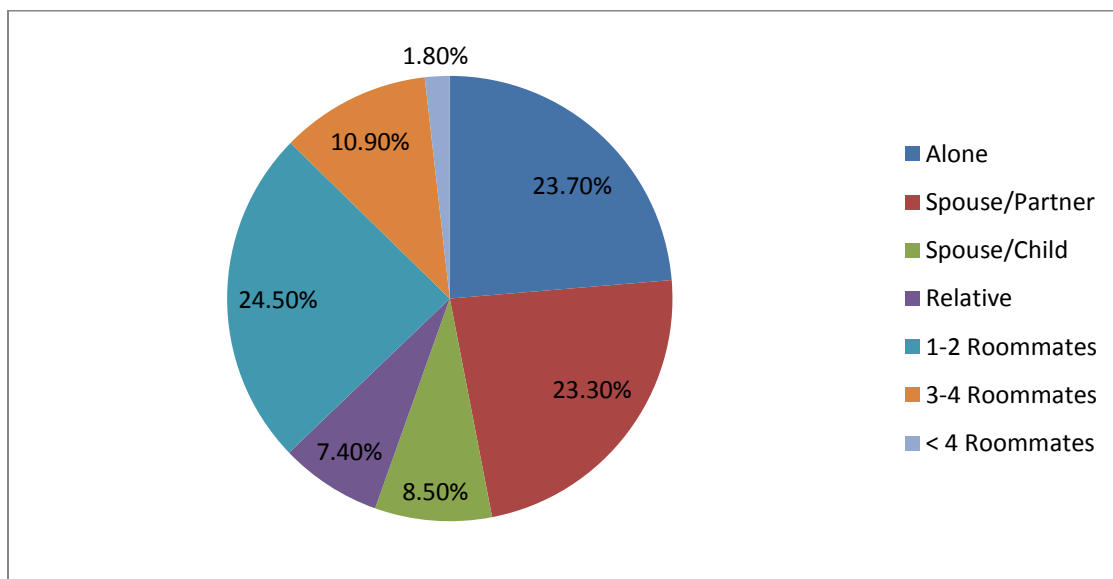
Where Graduate Assistants Live



assistants live in the immediate area. However, significantly more assistants live in excess of 20 miles from DeKalb/Sycamore than live less than 20 miles away from DeKalb/Sycamore.

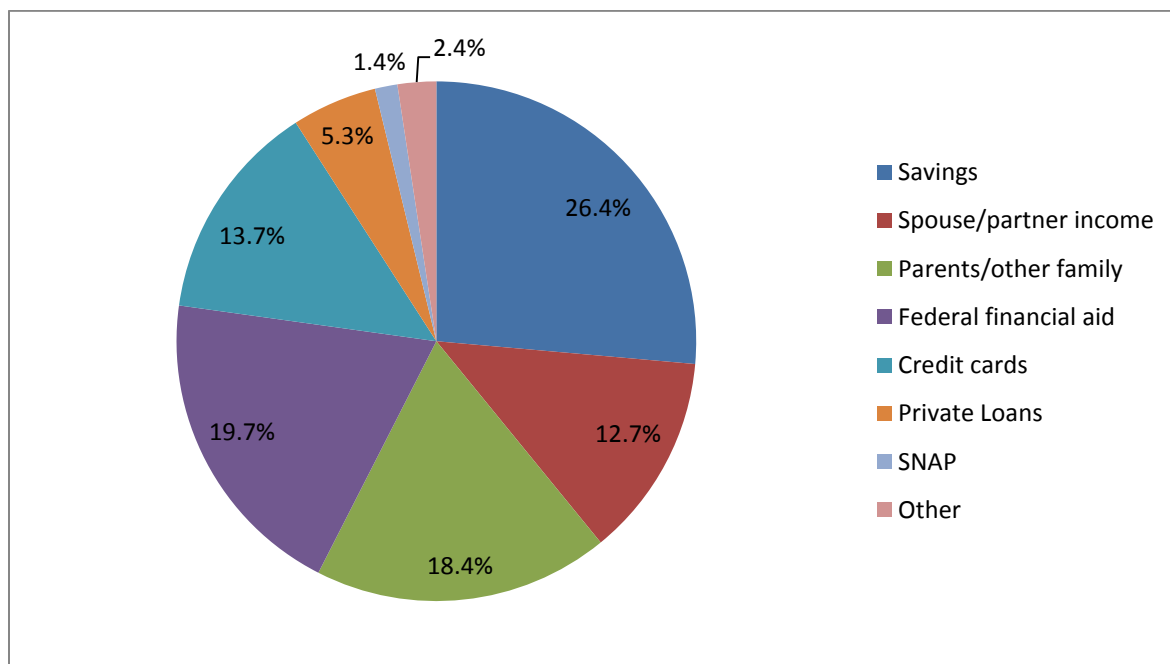
Respondents were asked about their living arrangements to provide an understanding of what graduate assistants do to stretch their budgets. When describing their living arrangements, nearly equal numbers of assistants lived alone, with a spouse or partner, or with 1-2 roommates. Domestic students are more likely to live alone than are non-immigrant students, who almost universally reported having at least one roommate.

Graduate Assistants' Housing Arrangements



Respondents to the survey were also asked to identify the non-employment related sources of support upon which they most relied. Because they were permitted to identify multiple sources of support, a total of 950 responses to the question were provided. Nearly 40 percent of graduate assistants reported that their savings or spousal/partner income helped sustain them; and an additional 18.4 percent identified gifts or loans from other family members as important to their sustenance. At the same time, nearly 40 percent reported that they depended on Federal financial aid, private loans, and/or credit cards to live.

Non-Employment Sources of Support



With 20 percent of respondents indicating that they receive Federal financial aid, the significance of financial aid indicated above is somewhat understated. Responses to a second question about financial aid confirm that conclusion: when assistants were asked the value of the Federal aid they received in the current academic year, 38 percent (n=191) replied to the question. (Over the past several years, the Graduate School has estimated that about 40% of *graduate students* receive loans; and anecdotal evidence, derived mostly from Satisfactory Academic Progress appeals, suggests that assistants borrowed at a rate similar to non-assistants. Results from the survey suggest that the anecdotal evidence is correct.) On average, respondents are receiving \$12,529.56 in federal loans in the present academic year; the median value of their loans is \$10,000.

Students do not take out loans in an unthinking manner, and they do worry about the consequences of their debt. One reported that he/she had been offered over \$10,000 during each semester of enrollment as a graduate student but had utilized the loan only once. Another reported that he/she no longer accepts loans because unsubsidized Stafford Loans are unavailable to graduate and professional

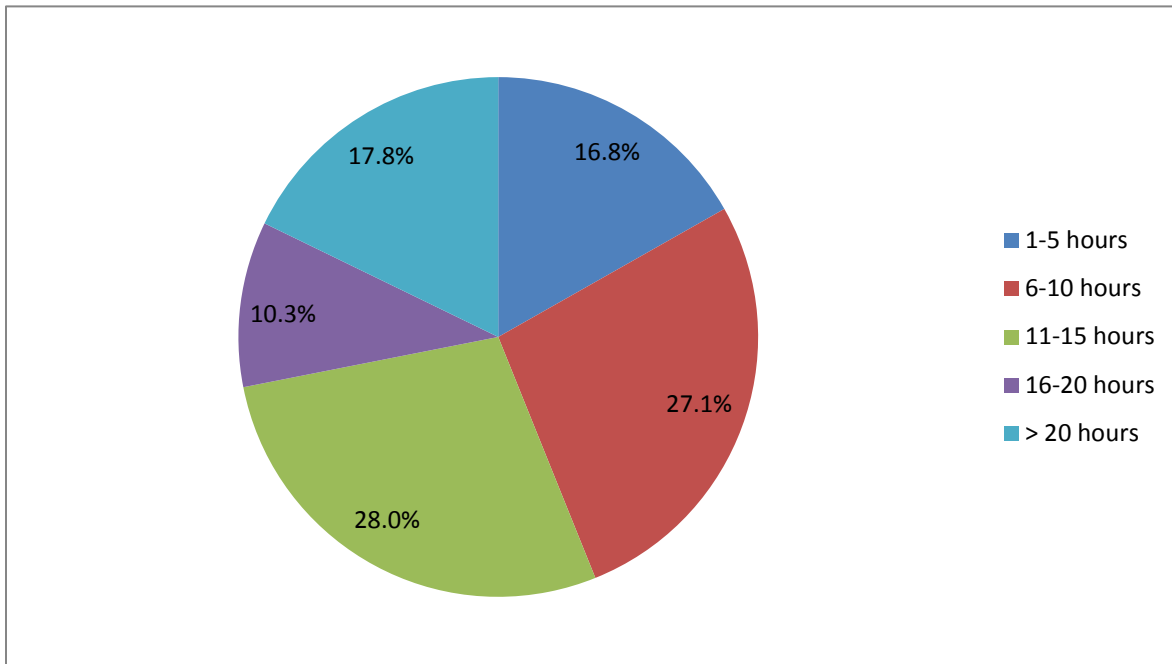
students. When asked to report their Federal financial loan debt burden, nearly 100 more students indicated that they were carrying a debt than indicated that they were currently accepting Federal financial aid. Income from savings, stipends, and spousal/domestic partners, the benefit of tuition waivers, and even several with inheritances allowed those students to avoid further debt while in graduate school. The debt burden that the 289 graduate assistants reported carrying is quite heavy, though not surprising considering the national context. On average, they reported a debt of \$50,362.43 (\$40,000 median), but forty respondents (14% of those who answered the question with a dollar figure) reported student loan debt in excess of \$100,000. A small number of respondents indicated that they did not want to know their precise debt load: “too much, I don’t want to think about it.” Yet, one respondent knew exactly how much debt he/she carried: “\$20,424 (\$18,447 in subsidized loans, \$1,977 in unsubsidized loans, and \$425 of interest on the unsubsidized loan).”

The calculus that graduate assistants use to plan for the financial present and future varies greatly. But a common approach to surviving and planning compels them to work outside of their assistantship. It is interesting to note that none of those who responded to the question about non-assistantship employment stated that they worked to gain experience.

About a quarter of respondents (n=130) reported that they worked outside their assistantship. Based on anecdotal evidence and on the fact that some respondents said that they would not report on their additional employment because they falsely believed that their “contracts” prohibited it, we think that the survey underrepresents the number of assistants who are employed outside of their assistantships. For example, data from Human Resources Services indicates that about 12 percent of graduate assistants work on campus in a non-assistantship role; but only 6 percent of respondents reported that they worked on campus in extra-employment positions.

Nonetheless, 103 of 130 respondents reported working off campus; 18 work at extra-employment positions on campus; and 12 work at extra-employment and at off-campus positions. The positions that the assistants hold off-campus defy easy categorization. But 30 reported working in service industries (food service, retail, clerical), and 20 reported working as adjuncts at community colleges, some of whom work at two such colleges. The rest worked as tutors, coaches, consultants, editors, web designers, and a host of other positions.

Average Hours Employed Outside of the Assistantship



Of the 107 students who reported the average number of hours they worked outside of their assistantships, a majority worked 6-15 hours per week. A surprising number (18 percent of the 107) reported working more than 20 hours per week outside of their assistantship. A significant majority of respondents to the question about non-assistantship employment hold 20 hour per week appointments.

Analysis

Based on information gleaned from the survey, the following table provides a sense of the minimum costs that a graduate assistant incurs. The table assumes fairly modest room and board costs for

| | Monthly Costs |
|---|----------------|
| Housing | \$400 |
| Food | \$120 |
| Utilities | \$75 |
| Auto insurance/maintenance/fuel | \$80 |
| Clothes | \$55 |
| Mandatory fees (full-time Fall and Spring only), including health insurance | \$333 |
| Books and school supplies (Fall and Spring only) | \$50 |
| Taxes | \$100 |
| TOTAL | \$1,213 |

one student, but it also assumes ownership of a vehicle but no car payment. It's possible to argue with any of the particulars, but for the purposes of the Graduate Council, this example should suffice. It indicates that to eke out an existence graduate assistants need about \$10,917 to live during the Fall and

Spring semesters. To live throughout a twelve-month period, they need \$15,351, if they are assumed to enroll in six hours during the Summer or about \$14,550, if they are not enrolled. The minimum cost of getting by works out to \$606.50 every two weeks. That minimum means that an assistant will have to find additional employment throughout the academic year or obtain a twelve-month assistantship in order to subsist during the summer. Such extra employment – employment that must generate almost \$5,000 in income – is necessary to close the gap between a nine-month assistantship appointment and the costs associated with subsistence for twelve months. The likelihood of a student obtaining summer employment that pays \$625 per week over an eight week period is negligible. Thus, the campus community should not be surprised that students work outside of the assistantship, especially if students are not on twelve-month assistantships.

Based on the survey, it is reasonable to assume that graduate assistants need to clear between \$606.50 and \$852.83 per pay period to exist at a subsistence level, depending on whether the student will take summer classes.¹ (Our AY 2013-2014 10-hour minimum rate of \$212.50 and 20-hour minimum rate of \$425 fall well short of this mark; in fact, according to the *APPM*, paying a stipend at the high end of the range would require approval of the Dean of the Graduate School, because that rate exceeds the established maximum rate.) Even then, students who report receiving stipends in the \$600 to \$850 range say that they cannot subsist without loans or additional employment.

As indicated by many of the open-ended responses included at the end of this document, the consequences of low salaries are at times alarming. Because of their low wages, graduate assistants describe the choices they are forced to make as “possibly . . . ruinous” and their academic journey as irrational and isolating, though the latter seems to be especially true when they believe their labor is insufficiently directed and their studies unappreciated by faculty: “It is unacceptable that we are paid so little when we have classes of up to 100 students and are payed \$500/month. It is also unacceptable that we are given so little training and there are no requirements of our supporting faculty member to monitor our progress or evaluate our teaching. I have become aware that the university holds specific standards for gen. eds. and we are not informed of these nor are they being documented in our classrooms.”

Low wages force assistants to engage in behavior that is inimical to their own well-being and to the educational mission of the institution. They are on the cusp of burn out: “Graduate Assistants who have had this lifestyle for more than two years feel desperate and undervalued. The lack of appreciation makes difficult situations that much more difficult;” “I feel like an indentured servant . . . who is treated quite unfairly, has no rights, . . . and no recourse if I am dissatisfied with my position.” They struggle to balance heavy (at times onerous) assistantship duties with the task of earning more income, a task that they admit causes them to diminish attention to their own education: “Sometimes I put my GA position above my schoolwork because I need the money.”

¹ Currently, one-half of our assistants (570 of 1,094) assigned to academic departments receive \$600 or more per pay period. Excluding assistants in the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences, virtually no assistants are paid at that rate.

Conclusions

The survey indicates that the majority of graduate assistants feel undervalued, under paid, and unappreciated. They are under extraordinary stress – the stress of meeting their own academic expectations and achieving their goals in a timely manner, the demands of their assistantship duties, and the need to pay bills.

The survey also raises interesting questions for the Graduate Council to consider.

Should graduate assistants be considered students, who, by virtue of their employment, are provided access to supervised mentoring in the classroom, the lab, and elsewhere? Or are they a category of student worker? Put another way, should graduate assistants be regarded as task-oriented laborers who provide a service or should they be regarded as students receiving a service?

How do we meld our concern for social justice with concerns about the ability to offer classes and concerns with enrollment?

Which is more important to the institution and to programs, potentially fewer better paid assistants or more assistants paid according to the current standard?

What are the consequences of our answers?

If the stipends paid NIU assistants are comparatively low, how do those stipends affect recruitment, retention, and time-to-degree?

Are the council and, ultimately, the institution responsible for ensuring that graduate assistants can pursue their academic studies without accruing great debt or suffering grave concern about survival?

What concrete steps can be taken to ensure that graduate assistantship appointments provide students with the experiences they need to be successful and content in their position and in their studies?

How should the institution think about the financial needs of students over the summer?

Should there be institutional policies limiting or otherwise defining the work load of graduate assistants, particularly those who are teaching?

Sample Open-Ended Responses

One of the last questions on the survey asked: What do you think faculty and administrators need to know about graduate student quality of life at NIU? The following is a sample of responses. These are the more critical responses that merit a look. A minority of open-ended responses were absolutely positive.

The following themes emerge: low stipends, undernourishment, high fees, heavy responsibilities as TAs, and lack of connection with the institution and faculty.

1. Everything is fine. only concern is the difference in pays. It is seen that the pay differs a lot with departments. A person in computer science department earns around 1400\$ per month and only works for 6 hours a week. but others(Electrical, technology) work for more and get a mere amount of 800\$ per month
2. That it is crazy, and busy, and I hardly ever have time to think. In order to keep on top of rent and other bills I need the 20 hours, but it is really too much on top of a full time course load, and my grades have suffered.
3. Balancing life at the graduate level is much more challenging than undergraduate
4. They feel less connected with their faculty.
5. it's hard to get all the information you need
6. they should care about who they let in instead of letting in as many students as possible to make money. Quality over quantity. NIU wil never out last its reputation of low standards at this point
7. Compared to other graduate schools, we pay more in fees and make less. Between a corrupt police department and the "coffee fund" scandal, this school is an embarassment and I'm ashamed that I will have paid years of student fees to have NIU's name on my PhD. I want my money back.
8. I am grateful for tuition waiver. Some tenured full prof faculty are less effective and don't seem to care any more (which is frustrating).
9. The professors often look down on GTAs having outside jobs, and expect us to be able to move our schedules around easily. If we are paid a living wage it would be doable, however it's just not realistic at this pay level.
10. They know but don't care because they had to do it too.
11. There's more that can be done to provide social support to students.
12. We are not payed nearly enough for the work that we do. This is ESPECIALLY true of graduate teaching "assistants" who teach a course on their own, create the syllabus and course schedule, and are responsible for every aspect of the course. **It is unacceptable that we are paid so little when we have classes of up to 100 students and are payed \$500/month. It is also unacceptable that we are given so**

little training and there are no requirements of our supporting faculty member to monitor our progress or evaluate our teaching. I have become aware that the university holds specific standards for gen. eds. and we are not informed of these nor are they being documented in our classrooms.

13. The pay (grateful that I get it) is really low and is not enough to make ends meet alone, especially as a student who already has student loans. The fact that tuition is covered is great, but we students still pay fee, which greatly adds up.

14. It's financially difficult. If I hadn't been awarded the assistantship I probably would not have decided to attend NIU. That being said, I've still had to take out student loans to cover the rest of the costs to attend graduate school and I'll have a huge amount of debt when I graduate.

15. I work many more hours than I am paid for in order to accomplish my stated duties. I am paid for 20 hours a week, but work at least 35-40 hours a week on teaching assistant responsibilities alone.

16. Graduate school is extremely expensive and my stipend never even covered my rent each month. Books are way overpriced and I was forced to choose books that I had to live without. I would also say that people are more than brains on sticks. It would have been nice to have at least a little time to exercise while I was in graduate school. I will be no good to my profession if I am burned out, stressed out, and in lousy health. Graduate school could take a more holistic approach, rather than pounding us with academic assignments due around the clock. It would be beneficial to make assignments more practical and cut less important busy work. Finally, faculty need to know that many students commute from far distances, so respecting time is important.

17. We make very little money, but too much to qualify for public aid. Also, we are put a position where, as smart people, we are expected to make unwise financial decisions (e.g., use credit cards, take out more loans) in order to pay for things like travel to conferences and practicum placements, professional clothing, dependable transportation, internship interviews, etc. I carry a great financial burden because I cannot rationalize the use of credit cards or unsubsidized loans to supplement my income.

18. It stinks, We cannot afford, financially, to focus 150% on academics like they want us to.

19. Graduate students are very busy people. My faculty advisor is never available for questions that I have about my duties. She often takes several days to respond to emails and if I stop in her office will say to "make it quick" that she doesn't have time to answer my questions. It is very frustrating as it makes my job that much harder and I often make mistakes that could have been avoided. I have reapplied for a GA position next year but I have requested a different position. It is too bad because this position could really benefit from some continuity but no one ever wants to stay.

20. Our assistantships need to pay us more...I have to use financial aid to cover most of my living expenses

21. . . . assistantships don't make enough to sustain on which really affects the students ability to produce work

22. I know it may not be within their control, but it really is hard to live off of what we get, especially when we go 3 months through the summer without funding.

23. We need more summer assistant ship opportunities, and they should last the entire summer, rather than only 6 weeks

24. **It is hard to survive (financially) as a full time international graduate student, especially, as there is no funding in Summer. Though, as a graduate assistant I do not have to pay tuition, other fees per semester turns out to be over \$1600 every semester which I was not aware of before coming to NIU. I came with my wife and 2 kids. I had to send them back to my country as it was not possible to meet the expenses. I think, atleast a part of the fees can be made optional like use of Sports facilities (Recreation Center, Fields House or other sports activities). I also find the Health Center of NIU to be very inefficient and incapable of addressing health issues.**

25. **Its all good until the summer. So if you don't intend to pay us, don't expect us to do masters work over the summer because we have to keep a roof over our head and eat dinner like everybody else.**

26. Graduate students are consistently more disrespected than undergraduates by their professors and advisers because they seek more independence in decision making.

27. **The stipends do not cover a student's cost of living AND the semesterly student fees. For commuting students, this is even more difficult.**

28. Some people hold that if we have assistantship at NIU we should not be working outside the college/department. Well, guess what, I cannot support my family on the assistantship alone and I'm not willing to take out that much student loan either.

29. We don't like to see the infighting among the college professors, and staff. It is borderline dysfunctional.

30. unorganized (confusing responsibilities), isolating

31. I'm sure this is news to no one, but graduate student quality of life, despite the tuition waiver and stipend, is financially meager and possibly even ruinous.

32. We are not paid nearly enough money. We do more than 20 hours of work considering scoring assignments, unpaid tutoring, unpaid counseling, and emotional distress. I feel the system exploits GA's. We're paid less than minimum wage with no medical/dental. The tuition waver does not even pay for our books or fees. The system is unfair and unjust. I'm looking for full-time employment. The NIU (GA) system has not changed with the current society.

33. Despite the tuition waiver, fees and textbooks are still a huge amount of money. Housing prices in DeKalb, and the Northern Illinois region generally, are high enough such that the stipend offered cannot possibly cover the cost of living. **Fees alone were about a month's worth of stipends.**

34. **how much we dont feel part of the campus as i did while undergrad at niu**

35. **At least in my field, TAs are underpaid compared to other programs even before we account for fees. While there are other, more important factors at work here, it will be very difficult for this department to grow and develop without increasing compensation for graduate students. Waiving**

fees as well as tuition seems like an easy first step to remedy that, especially considering the various fictions that separate fees from tuition for undergrads are even less applicable to graduate students.

36. It sucks

37. I want to make all my money at NIU, but I know that is not possible. I need to know my GA schedule as soon as possible to plan other work. I like NIU to be my priority, but they often wait until months after I need to select my adjunct courses. I live 50 miles from campus and can't afford to move closer. With \$1000 in private student loans a month, I spend all my money on gas and keep going to school fulltime to keep my federal loans deferred.

38. quality of food provided on campus

39. the grad school fees are the main reason I will have debt

40. Working 20 hours a week is a huge load to add onto full time graduate school

41. That they need to pay more attention to what we are dealing with in terms of school and our assistantship life. There is a lot of dissatisfaction circulating regarding our academic program and some of our assistantships.

42. The cost of fees and health insurance absorb nearly 30% of my income. I need loans to cover those costs.

43. I work way more than 20 hours per week and everyone else in . . . does too. I am not compensated any extra for driving to . . . every day and I hear about other departments where the graduate assistants have nothing to do. It is very upsetting.

44. Quality of life is poor, in my opinion. First, as much as I'm thankful for it, the stipend that we get is much lower than other schools I looked into and it's difficult living off of such a low income without having to get federal financial aid and therefore putting myself in further debt. Second, quality of life is low because it is very difficult to live a healthy lifestyle with the incredible load that is laid on us; finding time to eat healthy, exercise, relax once in awhile, and have a social life is hard to come by; I'm doing all I can just to keep my head above water.

45. I do not think that they are unaware, but the current stipend is extremely low compared to other universities.

46. There is no quality of GA's life. We are underpaid. **The fee basically took off my two month salary in this semester.** If I can graduate soon, I will.

47. Graduate students often need more than one job just to earn enough money to survive. Though assistantships cover tuition costs, the fees every semester are still up to the student to find a way to pay. Even though students may not use the fees they pay for (i.e. athletic events, computer labs), they still have to pay for them, and the financial burden can be crippling for students already on a very tight budget. I know the university needs this revenue, but there has to be another way to get it besides mandatory payments from struggling grad students.

48. There are different levels of teaching assistantships. Some require grading and assisting, while others require full instruction of a course and all the responsibilities that accompany it. They should be paid according to the work required of them.

50. I think that there should be more mixing of Grad groups.

51. Requirements as a grad assistant far exceed the monetary compensation; the compensation is not enough to live on even meagerly, and I am having to work constantly and not focus on my studies just so I can make ends meet.

52. The amount of money we are paid is not a living wage, particularly considering the cost of rent in the area. If I didn't have a partner to cohabitat with, I would not be able to afford my monthly bills.

53. Graduate Assistants who have had this lifestyle for more than two years feel desperate and undervalued. The lack of appreciation makes difficult situations that much more difficult. Also, the low rate of pay requires too many graduate students to seek additional employment, increasing the amount of stress in an already stressful program.

54. A 10 hour assistantship is not enough to support oneself, 20 hours takes away from studying

55. Many of the jobs that we will get once we get out will not be enough to pay off all of our loans. It's important to understand that having employment outside of school is necessary and it's not always possible to live in Dekalb or have cheaper housing.

56. Life as a graduate student is hectic, busy, and sometimes we feel unappreciated for what we do and the degrees we are seeking. **Often times we are treated as undergraduates, yet expected to behave like faculty members.**

57. **I think the department is pretty supportive of its graduate students overall. I'm sure it is no surprise that most of us are poor and stressed out, but I think that kind of comes with the territory. The only thing I think would really help would be some sort of assistance during the summer. I don't expect to receive paychecks for nothing, but it would be nice if there were some resources for finding summer work. It's hard enough to live on the stipend as it is, but once that runs out in the summer and I am still enrolled in summer courses to meet the language requirements, I am not sure how I will make it work. It's almost impossible to find work in DeKalb for such a short period of time. I just wonder if there is a way that the graduate school could coordinate something with student employment for graduate students who desperately need the work.**

58. Our schedules aren't as flexible as they think.

59. **It is important to understand that they are students first.**

60. **It is simply impossible to survive on a GA stipend at NIU. After fees (almost \$3000/yr), I take home about \$10,500/yr, gross, or an average of \$875/month if I can't find summer work (as has been the case for 2 of the 4 years of my studies). My share of rent amounts to \$380/month, and my share of groceries amounts to about \$120/month. I have no cable or data plan on my cell phone, but utilities pile on another \$70/month, and gasoline adds \$60 or so, despite my high-MPG and relatively new car. If I buy one shirt, one pair of pants, one set of underwear, and one pair of socks per month (averaged**

over the course of a year, to account for the wearing-out of my current clothing), I'll spend another \$55 (averaged) on clothing, My share of annual auto maintenance runs to about \$250/year on average, or about another \$20/month. Thus, if I never purchase a personal item, never take my fiancée out to dinner, never see a movie, and never take a road trip to see my family members, I've already spent \$705 of my GROSS, PRE-TAX income just surviving each month. Taxes alone put me in the red, and even after I take out considerable loans from my family to pay bills, I have to pray that I never have an emergency, need to make an unexpected roadtrip or, heaven forbid, get sick. Vacations are simply out of the question, and during the school year I typically work 60-70-hour weeks, between classes and teaching. Now, if MY situation sounds bad, the Master's GAs in my department only make about \$9,500 before fees, and take home \$6,500. How the hell are we supposed to be able to be good teachers when the REAL question that we're wrestling with is how we're going to be able to pay for food and shelter.

61. **We are not paid enough for the work we do that is often equivalent to full-time faculty.**

62. We pay incredibly high fees and most of them go to services that we don't use or participate in.

63. Our stipend can barely cover the cost of living and we pay for fees that we don't even use. It's difficult to not be allowed outside employment to help with the cost of living.

64. If assistantships are offered over summer, it needs to be more plainly advertised. Also, resources to allow for field school study and research need to be more available to students.

65. **An . . . student gets \$648 a month for being a TA. If you think a person can live off that you have got to be living in the 1970s. I pay \$450 in rent per month, and out of that 648 that leaves me \$198 PER MONTH to pay phone, electric, DeKalb city bill, and internet bill. NO ONE can live on \$648 a month. Aside from this issue, graduate students pay FEES for school services that we may not use...I do not use the school gym, why should I pay the outrageous fees for it? You may have an assistantship as a graduate student, but it is the fees that will kill you.**

66. **They should know that the NIU's funding is very weak and fees are so high, so many students specially internationals, who can not have any other resources for living (Because of F1 Visa), suffer undernourishment problem.**

67. I am barely making a living with my wages and considering leaving the program.

68. **Everything I make goes to sending my children to pre-school for approximately 27 hours per week. That means that I only can afford care for them 7 hours more than my assistantship so to get everything else done! It is not possible! And the extra \$1000 to \$1500 in fees and health insurance is really difficult to come up with every semester.**

69. increase the pay level to NIH standards. <http://grants.nih.gov/grants/guide/notice-files/not-od-12-033.html>

70. Most of the graduate students I have seen are very polite and helpful, and working very hard. Lots of them are too busy working and taking courses, and cannot have healthy food and exercise regularly.

71. As a grad student, I realize that there are pros and cons of being enrolled in a graduate program. Pro: we get paid to go to school. Pro: we get a tuition waiver. Pro: we get an awesome education. Con: we barely make enough money to live. Con: even though we are paid for a 20 hour a week position, we generally put in about 40 to 60 hours for any given week. Con: even if there were a possibility to make extra money outside of the grad assistantship, there is not time to do so. Con: waiving the tuition is nice but the student's fees kill me.

72. It is frenetic, money and time are always an issue, but this is really a very subjective question; various personalities will find the challenges either interesting or oppressive depending on their coping tendencies; overall, the thing I have found most problematic is health care

73. I wish we could work through the summer without having to enroll in classes in the summer, because the summer course offering is extremely limited. I'd have to take an unnecessary class in order to ensure I can have a paycheck to rely on during the summer months. Additionally, it would be nice if graduate assistants could have the option to purchase blue parking permits because there are always plenty of open spaces and yellow spaces are hard to come by if you happen to come to campus later than 8 AM.

74. I feel like an indentured servant with who is treated quite unfairly, has no rights, no ability to stop and enjoy life, and no recourse if I am dissatisfied with my position.

75. That teaching assistantships require more than ten hours a week and that the quality of scholarship a student produces is inversely related to the amount of additional responsibilities students are required to undertake.

76. Lack of self-care/encouragement from faculty to engage in self-care is an issue

77. Many student workers are not getting paid anywhere near enough, even when tuition waivers are taken into account. A student could get paid significantly more doing almost anything else.

78. The wages for all grad assistants, while we're grateful for them, are insufficient to live on; **when we discover what other graduate schools pay their GAs, it certainly makes us question how much we're valued here. This is not a departmental but a university-level issue.**

79. It sucks. The cost of living in IL is pretty high and we do not make that much in take-home pay. Advisors need to understand this and not punish students for having outside jobs. They should also try to graduate us as quickly as possible so we don't accrue further debt.

80. It is really difficult to be fully engaged in the academic experience when you have to hold down multiple jobs to be able to afford to eat.

81. . . . student TAs need and deserve to be given a full 20-hour stipend. Instead of hiring faculty, I was hired as a half-time TA to direct and teach a university organization. Students are also hired to teach classes of 50-plus students. Giving them a 10 hour stipend is not enough considering the amount of prep and hands on work we do.

82. We literally pay to teach at NIU. Even with the tuition waiver and stipend, you have to take out the maximum amount of loans allowed and/or work full-time somewhere else to pay the bills.

83. As a graduate assistant, I have absolutely gained important skills and experience that I know will serve me well in the future. However, I do not receive enough pay to adequately support myself. I rely heavily on federal student loans and my own savings. Also, the graduate assistant experience varies wildly, even within . . . , the division where I work. Hours, flexibility, and expectation of evening work vary considerably across positions. I am fortunate that my assistantship offers excellent working conditions, but that is certainly not always the case. Faculty and administrators might be interested to know that having a graduate assistantship and going to school is like having two jobs: Three days per week, I work during the day and have class in the evening, meaning that I am gone from my house from about 7:30 a.m. until 9:30 p.m.

84. The wages offered are more than sufficient for paying for good meals and full utilities from month to month but students need outside money to pay any sort of rent from month to month.

85. I think our professors are overworked and unable to give graduate students the assistance we need to not be perpetual adjuncts (rather than tenure-track contenders) once we leave NIU. I have not always felt that student-faculty collaborative papers were prioritized in terms of getting them under review in a timely fashion. Finally, I have also noticed that female graduate students appear to be more pressured than male graduate students to take service-heavy assistantships rather than assistantships that will better enable them to be competitive on the job market (e.g., research and teaching experience).

86. We are drastically under payed and our health insurance is shoddy at best with no prescription drug coverage, dental or optical

87. Certain professors abuse their power and conduct unethical research. There should be mechanisms to prevent that and outlets for graduate assistants to confidentially report it without backlash on their academic experience.

88. We do not make nearly as much money as other universities' Graduate students

89. Living below the federal poverty line (after student fees are considered) as a form of "sacrifice" is not always feasible

90. Sometimes I put my GA position above my schoolwork because I need the money.

91. I think there could be more done to improve the social life of graduate students- find ways for graduate students to know/meet other grad students

92. University fees are huge for International student on assistantship

93. Being forced to pay fees for services we don't use is silly.

94. It is extremely hard to pay the huge University fees