UC Agenda 2014-04-30

Northern Illinois University

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UNIVERSITY COUNCIL AGENDA
Wednesday, April 30, 2014, 3 p.m.
Holmes Student Center, Sky Room

I. CALL TO ORDER

II. ADOPTION OF THE AGENDA

III. APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES OF THE APRIL 2, 2014 MEETING

IV. EXECUTIVE SESSION

 A. Report from the Committee to Evaluate the President of Faculty Senate/Executive Secretary of University Council

 B. Report from the UC-University Affairs Committee on the evaluation of the Ombudsperson

V. PRESIDENT’S ANNOUNCEMENTS

 A. Recognition of University Council members whose terms are completed, who have been re-elected and who are newly elected – Pages 4-5

VI. CONSENT AGENDA

VII. REPORTS FROM COUNCILS, BOARDS AND STANDING COMMITTEES

 A. FAC to IBHE – Sonya Armstrong – report – Page 6

 B. BOT Academic Affairs, Student Affairs and Personnel Committee – Dan Gebo and Andy Small – no report

 C. BOT Finance, Facilities, and Operations Committee – Alan Rosenbaum – no report

 D. BOT Legislation and External Affairs Committee – Deborah Haliczer and Rosita Lopez – no report

 E. BOT Compliance, Audit, Risk Management and Legal Affairs Committee – Deborah Haliczer and Alan Rosenbaum – no report

 F. BOT Ad Hoc Committee on Sponsored Research Activity and Technology Transfer – Greg Waas – no report
G. BOT – Alan Rosenbaum – no report

H. Academic Policy Committee – Sean Farrell, Chair – no report

I. Resources, Space and Budgets Committee – Paul Carpenter, Chair – report – Pages 7-9

J. Rules and Governance Committee – Jeff Kowalski, Chair – no report

K. University Affairs Committee – Bill Pitney, Chair – no report

L. Student Association – Jack Barry, President – report

M. Operating Staff Council – Andy Small, President – report – Page 10

N. Supportive Professional Staff Council – Deborah Haliczer, President – report – Page 11

O. University Benefits Committee – Deborah Haliczer, Chair; Therese Arado, FS-Committee on the Economic Status of the Profession Liaison – report – Pages 12-13

P. Elections and Legislative Oversight Committee – Abhijit Gupta, Chair
   1. University Council election of 2014-15
      Executive Secretary of University Council

VIII. UNFINISHED BUSINESS

   A. Review of Guidelines for Online Courses Carrying Undergraduate Credit Offered by NIU, APPM Section III, Item 23 – Sean Farrell – Pages 14-15

IX. NEW BUSINESS

X. COMMENTS AND QUESTIONS FROM THE FLOOR

XI. INFORMATION ITEMS

   A. Minutes, Academic Planning Council
   B. Minutes, Admissions Policies and Academic Standards Committee
   C. Minutes, Athletic Board
   D. Minutes, Campus Security and Environmental Quality Committee
   E. Minutes, Committee on Advanced Professional Certification in Education
   F. Minutes, Committee on the Improvement of Undergraduate Education
G. Minutes, Committee on Initial Teacher Certification
H. Minutes, Committee on the Undergraduate Academic Experience
I. Minutes, Committee on the Undergraduate Curriculum
J. Minutes, Computing Facilities Advisory Committee
K. Minutes, General Education Committee
L. Minutes, Honors Committee
M. Minutes, Operating Staff Council
N. Minutes, Supportive Professional Staff Council
O. Minutes, Undergraduate Coordinating Council
P. Minutes, University Assessment Panel
Q. Minutes, University Benefits Committee
S. Policies Pertaining to Graduate Assistantships – Pages 17-42

XII. ADJOURNMENT
UNIVERSITY COUNCIL MEMBER RECOGNITION  
April 30, 2014

Faculty who have completed their service:
Charles Downing, College of Business
David Walker, College of Education
Rosita Lopez, College of Education
Paul Carpenter, College of Education
Abhijit Gupta, College of Engineering and Engineering Technology
Tomis Kapitan, College of Liberal Arts and Sciences
Alan Rosenbaum, College of Liberal Arts and Sciences
Kendall Thu, College of Liberal Arts and Sciences
Leanne VandeCreek, University Libraries
Peter Middleton, College of Visual and Performing Arts
Charlotte Rollman, College of Visual and Performing Arts
Jeff Kowalski, College of Visual and Performing Arts

Students who have completed their terms:
Jack Barry, Student Association President
James Zanayed, Student Association (served fall semester)
Miki Grace, Student Association (served spring semester)
Mike Theodore, Student Association
Kaliah Smith, Student Association (served fall semester)
Paul Julion, Student Association (served spring semester)
Ivan Garcia, Student Association
Rebecca Clark, Student Association
Dillon Domke, Student Association
Benjamin Donovan, Student Association
Jacob Ferguson, Student Advisory Committee, College of Business
Elisa Lopez, Student Advisory Committee, College of Education
Anthony Roberts, Student Advisory Committee, College of Engineering and Eng. Technology
Ron Leonhardt, Student Advisory Committee, College of Liberal Arts and Sciences
Emily Perkins, Student Bar Association, College of Law
David Downs, Student Advisory Committee, Graduate School

Supportive Professional Staff and Operating Staff who have completed their terms:
Deborah Haliczer, Supportive Professional Staff Council President
Donna Smith, Supportive Professional Staff Council
Andy Small, Operating Staff Council President
Amy Polzin, Operating Staff Council
Faculty who have been re-elected:
Greg Long, School of Allied Health and Communicative Disorders
Donna Munroe, School of Nursing and Health Studies
Sean Farrell, Department of History

Faculty who have been newly elected:
Mark Riley, College of Business
Cynthia Campbell, College of Education
Gretchen Schlabach, College of Education
Shi-Jie (Gary) Chen, College of Engineering and Engineering Technology
William Baker, College of Liberal Arts and Sciences
Dhiman Chakraborty, College of Liberal Arts and Sciences
Doris Macdonald, College of Liberal Arts and Sciences
Jana Brubaker, University Libraries
Janet Hathaway, College of Visual and Performing Arts
Barbara Jaffee, College of Visual and Performing Arts
Report on the IBHE-FAC Meeting, April 1, 2014

The Illinois Board of Higher Education (IBHE) Faculty Advisory Council (FAC) met on April 1, 2014, at the College of Lake County. This was a shortened FAC meeting as it was held in conjunction with the scheduled IBHE meeting.

FAC Meeting
FAC Chair Abbas Aminmansour called the meeting to order and introduced IBHE Academic Affairs Deputy Director Dan Cullen, who discussed the implications of the rollout of the Common Core State Standards. He has been working with ICCB and ISBE on assessment in this area. He reported that the PARCC, which will measure if students are progressing toward college and career readiness, is currently being field-tested and will roll out for administration next year in grades 3 to 11.

The group then considered topics to bring up with Board members at lunch. The minutes from the March 21st meeting were approved. The FAC meeting was followed by lunch with members and staff of the IBHE. Following lunch was the regularly scheduled IBHE meeting.

IBHE Meeting Highlights
The IBHE meeting was called to order by Chair Lindsay Anderson. Following several introductions and welcome remarks was an update by Executive Director James Applegate on the 60% by 2025 goal and the current challenges faced in Illinois. Next were updates on the Public Agenda after 5 years, as well as Underrepresented Groups in Illinois Higher Education. PowerPoints and reports are available for review at http://www.ibhe.state.il.us/Board/agendas/2014/April/Default.htm

Full meeting minutes are posted to the FAC-IBHE website (once approved) for public viewing. These can be accessed at http://www.ibhe-fac.org/Meetings.html. In addition, the audio of the full IBHE meeting is available at http://www.ibhe.state.il.us/aboutBHE/audio.htm

Respectfully submitted,

Sonya L. Armstrong
Associate Professor in the Department of Literacy Education
NIU Representative to the IBHE Faculty Advisory Council

NOTE: This report is based on the minutes taken at that meeting by IBHE FAC Secretary, Steven Rock (WIU). Full meeting minutes can be accessed at http://www.ibhe-fac.org/Meetings.html.

ALSO NOTE: I welcome any questions, comments, or requests for clarification at sarmstrong@niu.edu.
Committee on Resources, Space, and Budgets
Meeting with the President and Provost

Wednesday, April 2\textsuperscript{nd}, 2014
14:00 - 15:00 Altgeld 300

Prior to the meeting the committee sent a list of 5 questions to the President and Provost to focus the meeting.

1. Progress on the new budget model and the process for the next budget cycle.

An update was provided on the upcoming vacancy hearing process and how this was aligned with the new budget model and guiding principles. This was framed in the context of the “perfect storm” the university is facing: decrease in state funding; non-renewal of the tax increase; falling enrollments; pension changes and potential for retirements; decrease in fees and revenue; flat hiring levels despite decrease in enrollments. The combination of the potential for a loss in revenue and the uncertainty as to the number of employees who may retire and from what operational areas is making it difficult to develop a comprehensive budget process for this year. As many budget decisions outside of NIU’s control have yet to be made, the situation is very fluid and dynamic.

The President, Provost, and CFO all stressed the need for the process to focus on prioritizing the central focus of NIU’s mission and the President’s pillars. A vacancy hearing process has been established with all units required to submit their permanent vacancies that need to be filled with a rationale and in priority order. The vacancy hearings will be focused on permanent replacements and the Provost’s Office is working on a pilot program with the College of Education to address temporary part-time and full-time instructional positions. Any position that becomes vacant sees the funds returned centrally and not to the unit. It was emphasized that there was no ‘automatic’ refilling or repurposing of any vacant position. The academic unit will be going first in this process due to the critical need to determine hires to cover classes. All units though will be subject to the vacancy hearing process. Each college will get to present their needs to their peers at budget hearings scheduled for April 16\textsuperscript{th} and April 30\textsuperscript{th} whether for teaching or support positions. The Provost’s Office will develop a rank order of the requests based on the mission, the pillars, and the priorities outlined by the Resource, Space, and Budget Committee (RSBC). The RSBC and the Academic Planning Council will meet on May 5\textsuperscript{th} to review the list and will be asked to comment on alignment of the requested positions with the mission, pillars, and RSBC priorities. A parallel process will operate for the non-academic units. Final decisions will be made through the President’s Cabinet.
As we moved forward it was stressed that we need to be looking for efficiencies and savings within and across units. The Provost shared that at Council of Deans colleges need to look at how best to deliver programs and for synergies across programs both in terms of instructional delivery and administrative support. It was stressed that this is an institutional issue that requires everyone to take collective responsibility and work as a team to build the processes necessary for change.

2. State budget update.

The President summarized the recent state appropriations committee meetings and that NIU had to present two scenarios: the impact of a 12.5% cut to the House and a 20% cut to the Senate. The President explained the different scenarios were related to differing interpretations of the impact of the non-renewal of the tax increase. It was noted that a 20% cut was equivalent to the current combined allocation of three colleges. There was some positive news in that the Governor was visiting NIU soon to announce an increase in MAP funding. No final decisions have been made at the state level and with the Governor to propose a flat budget for Higher Education the President is optimistic that NIU will not face the level of cuts presented to the House and Senate. However, with the uncertainty in the budget and the impact of the pension changes there is a need for prudent planning.

3. Impact of retirements due to pension changes.

There is considerable confusion over the pension changes going into effect. There is some ambiguity in the wording of the law that has led to several different dates being circulated as to when it is critical to make a decision on retirement. Injunctions have been filed but nothing has been through the court system yet. All state schools are experiencing the same pressures and frustrations and all are reporting that the potential for substantial retirements is high. Clarity is being sort on the pension questions and the President indicated he would work with all involved to get NIU employees the most up to date and reliable information. With the potential for so many retirements, the Provost’s Office has developed guidelines for hiring back retirees on a critical need basis for short-term cover.

4. Review of administrative structure provided by Provost Freeman.

Provost Freeman briefly talked through the documents she had circulated detailing NIU’s organization structure. She indicated that new administrative positions were being funded through the elimination of certain Provost Office positions and through streamlining operations and added no additional cost to the budget. Provost Freeman also elucidated the importance of the senior positions in the pipeline to addressing the President’s cornerstone goals and pillars. The Provost emphasized that everything was being done to improve efficiency and be as prudent as possible. This included reorganization office space and administrative support functions.
5. Faculty and staff recruitment and retention/competitive salaries.

The President reiterated his position that this is an important issue. He stressed that given the current economic conditions, this was not the time to address this issue. He acknowledged that a plan needs to be developed to address salary raises and this is something he will be considering. Concerns were raised about the impact on morale and the potential for increasing workloads as people retire and the budget may preclude rehiring.
To: The NIU University Council April 30th, 2014

Fr: Andy Small, President Operating Staff Council, Chair EAC

Re: Operating Staff Council Meeting, April 3rd, 2014, EAC meeting April 10th, 2014

The OSC meeting was called to order at 9:10 a.m. by President Andy Small. The subcommittee reports included:

A) Workplace Issues: The workplace survey has been returned and the results are being formatted. There was a 38% return rate on the survey. The committee also talked about offering a brown bag lunch series called “Steer your Career”.

B) Elections and Appointments: The candidate information forms have been returned for the OSC election. We have 10 candidates running for 5 seats on the council.

C) Public Relations:

The Dependent Scholarship Award winners were announced. They are:

Brittney Bonebright  Daughter of Sandra Bonebright from HSC food service
Jacqueline Lorusso  Daughter of Valerie Lorusso from Outreach, Engagement and Regional Development

The Outstanding Service Award winners were announced. They are:

Lisa Clark  Routing Supervisor  Physical Plant
Amy Deegan  Office Support Specialist  Faculty Development
Patricia Lee  Office Support Specialist  Campus Recreation
Liz Wright  Administrative Assistant  VP Research

Employee Advisory Committee (EAC)

EAC met at the State University Civil Service office in Urbana, IL on April 10th and 11th. It was called to order by chair Andy Small at 10:00 am. The two major topics of discussion were the recently revised Exemptions Procedures Manual and the different functions of the system’s office. The Exemptions Procedures Manual outlines the specific procedures used to determine whether a position is a civil service position or a Supportive Professional Staff position. All campuses were asked to review the document and be ready to formally discuss it with the Merit Board at their next meeting.

Respectfully submitted  Andy Small
The Supportive Professional Staff Council met on April 10. Council members were updated on the April 24 10:00 – 12:00 SURS presentation on Pension Reform at Sandburg Auditorium. A second session is scheduled for retirees on April 23, 5:00 – 7:00 at the same location. All were reminded to check out pension information on the Human Resource Services website.

Other announcements included the “Celebrating Excellence” events in April and May, Smart Money Week events, and an update on the annual SPS Evaluation process.

The Awards Committee reported on the April 15 SPS Awards event. Four Presidential Awards for Excellence will be given, five new recognitions, the service award for SPS Council, and 32 Certificates of Recognition. The Communications committee reported on the plans for a spring newsletter. Constitution and Elections committee announced the plans for the elections for an SPS Council president, and for representatives from all divisions. The Events committee reminded members about the April 10 mixer and a planned technology event, scheduled for April 23 (and subsequently rescheduled until May 5 due to a schedule conflict). The first and second SPS Dependent Scholarships will be presented at the Awards event. The Workplace Issues committee is analyzing the Survey results.

Committee summaries were presented. Council members discussed which guest speakers they wish to invite in the upcoming meetings. Search committee representatives reported on their respective searches and Council members were urged to attend the Provost candidate open forums. Wednesday, April 23 is the first Faculty/SPS Recognition luncheon that will acknowledge employees who have worked for 10, 15, 20 and more years, and will no longer have to wait 25 years to be recognized. Most Council members plan to attend the “Big Bold Event / Jazz Alley on April 24.

Council members discussed the impact of campus reconstruction plans and the planned demolition of Douglas Hall. Some concerns were raised regarding cost of such projects. Haliczer reported on the President’s initiating 360 degree evaluations of his Cabinet members. The new Student Grievance Policy was discussed, as well as the Operating Staff Council proposal for an Operating Staff Personnel Advisor, similar to the Faculty and SPS Personnel Advisor. Updates were made on the selection process for a new Executive Secretary and a new Faculty and Staff Personnel Advisor.

A committee was formed to report on how SPS members serve the mission of Student Career Success. An ad hoc committee was formed to discuss a proposed policy on university service.

Respectfully submitted, Deborah Haliczer, SPS Council President
The final meeting for the year of the University Benefits Committee was held on April 10, 2014. Guess reported on the upcoming Benefits Choice period (May 1-May 31) and what we know to date. The annual briefing for the benefit changes will take place on April 22, and Human Resources will send out a campus communication on any changes taking place. It appears there may be no increases in premiums, except dental, though it is likely there will be increases in deductibles and co-pays, but the amounts are not yet available. The State may be looking for a new administrator of flex spending programs, but nothing specific is known yet. Human Resources is considering scheduling benefit briefing presentations in early May, and arrangements are being made. There will not be a Benefits Fair this year since there are no substantive changes in benefit plans or vendors. At this time, the dependent audit is still scheduled for August. Details will be sent to employees closer to the time, when details are known.

Pension updates included discussion of the pension issues raised at the last Faculty Senate meeting, where more detailed information is being sought on the specific challenges to the pension law. Haliczer brought to the attention of the Committee the communications from the Annuitants Association and a synopsis posted on the SURS website regarding legal challenges to the pension law. It was reported that there will be a SURS Pension Reform presentation for employees on April 24, 10-12 at Sandburg auditorium, with overflow space at the Regency Room, and the presentation will be streamed for those who cannot attend. Retirement application processing sessions are taking place, and people are attending in anticipation of the upcoming increase in retirements in June. Human Resources has posted a range of pension information on their website. The Annuitants Association reported that a pension reform session will be presented by SURS for retirees on April 23, 5-7pm at the Holmes Student Center.
The Committee discussed salaries and increments, the budget process and presentations made by the Interim Provost and acting CFO. While the budget situation is quite serious, the Committee discussed the long-term impact of the lack of raises, and concerns about increasing workload and viability of academic programs when colleagues retire and it becomes harder to recruit new faculty and staff. The Committee urged that when the impact of retirements is known, and the budget situation becomes clearer, that the University needs to seek ways to address compensation concerns.

The UBC heard a discussion of a proposal by PCSW to address dual career hires. They reviewed a preliminary summary of the upcoming report. The Committee deferred any votes on the issue until the proposal is in its final version and they have an opportunity to review and discuss what is being proposed.

During the summer, the Committee’s annual report will be drafted for approval at the September meeting.

The chair thanked those members whose terms are ending for their service to the Committee. One SPS position, and one Operating Staff position will need to be filled. Other appointments will be reviewed.

The committee adjourned after tentatively scheduling a meeting for September 4 at noon.

Respectfully submitted,

Deborah Haliczer, Chair
Guidelines Policies for Distance Education Courses Carrying Undergraduate Credit Offered by Northern Illinois University

Section III. Item 23.

In conformity with federal guidelines, the Higher Learning Commission defines distance learning or distance education as:

*Education that delivers instruction to students who are separated from the instructor and that supports regular and substantive interaction between students and the instructor synchronously or asynchronously using one or more of the following technologies: the Internet; one-way and two-way transmission through open broadcast, closed-circuit cable, microwave, broadband lines, fiber optics, satellite, or wireless communication devices; audio-conferencing; or videocassettes, DVDs, and CD-ROMs used in conjunction with any of the other technologies.*

The Higher Learning Commission further defines a distance education course as one in which 75% or more of the instruction is offered by distance education. Courses that include some distance education component, but less than 75%, are referred to as hybrid or blended courses.

Except for those aspects noted below, distance education courses and hybrid courses are expected to be treated as equal to face-to-face courses. To ensure that distance education courses are equivalent in student outcomes, the following considerations should be given particular attention.

**Instructor Considerations**

Distance education courses must be accessible to all NIU students and should include significant interaction (e.g., email, discussion boards, chat lines, etc.) between students and instructor, and among students, when such opportunities would normally be part of the course if offered in traditional on-campus mode.

Instructors should pay particular attention to and provide explicit plans for assessing the effectiveness of teaching the course on-line and communicate these plans and the results of their implementation when requested to do so.

Ownership and use of online material is governed by the university intellectual property policy.

**Unit/College Considerations**

Because the usual criterion of "contact hours" may not be germane, proposals for undergraduate-level courses intended to be offered via distance education must include a rationale as to how the number of credit hours for each proposed course has been determined. This rationale must comply with the credit hour policies articulated in APPM Section III, Item 2.

The course status of distance education courses will be clearly indicated in the *Schedule of Classes*. Any special requirements, including limitations regarding who may enroll in a course in a given term, should also be announced.

The determination of the mode of delivery for a given course rests with the unit.
University Administrative Considerations

Persons receiving undergraduate academic credit for an online course must be admitted to NIU just as would be required for any other course for undergraduate credit.

All online courses carrying undergraduate credit must be assigned an official instructor of record.

HLC requires institutions to verify the identity of students who participate in courses or programs provided to the student through distance education.

Undergraduate distance education courses need not conform to the standard calendar defined in the Schedule of Classes. However, they will be assigned to an academic term for purposes of drop/add, withdrawal, refund policies, etc.

PERIODIC REVIEW: These Guidelines Policies shall be reviewed every five years by the Academic Policy Committee of the University Council.
# 2014-2015 Meeting Schedule

**Executive Committee of the Faculty Senate**  
**Steering Committee of the University Council**  
**Faculty Senate**  
**University Council**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>FS-EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE</th>
<th>FACULTY SENATE</th>
<th>UNIVERSITY COUNCIL</th>
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<td>1 – 2:30 p.m.</td>
<td>3 – 5 p.m.</td>
<td>3 – 5 p.m.</td>
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<tr>
<td>UC-STEERING COMMITTEE</td>
<td>Clara Sperling Sky Room Holmes Student Center</td>
<td>Clara Sperling Sky Room Holmes Student Center</td>
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<td>3 – 4:30 p.m.</td>
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- **August 27, 2014**  
- **September 3, 2014**  
- **September 10, 2014**

- **September 24, 2014**  
- **October 1, 2014**  
- **October 8, 2014**

- **October 22, 2014**  
- **October 29, 2014**  
- **November 5, 2014**

- **November 12, 2014**  
- **November 19, 2014**  
- **December 3, 2014**

- **January 14, 2015**  
- **January 21, 2015**  
- **January 28, 2015**

- **February 11, 2015**  
- **February 18, 2015**  
- **February 25, 2015**

- **March 18, 2015**  
- **March 25, 2015**  
- **April 1, 2015**

- **April 15, 2015**  
- **April 22, 2015**  
- **April 29, 2015**

*Spring Break March 8-15, 2015*
April 21, 2014

MEMORANDUM

TO: Alan Rosenbaum, Executive Secretary of the University Council

FROM: Bradley G. Bond

SUBJECT: Revisions to “Policies Pertaining to Graduate Assistants”

Per your request, I am providing a bulleted list of changes to the APPM that have been approved by the Graduate Council. The changes collectively form a dense document. Because of that, I’ll be happy to meet with the Executive Committee to discuss the proposed changes.

Generally, three varieties of changes have been proposed to the “Policies Pertaining to Graduate Assistants” section of the Academic Policies and Procedures Manual

- Minor rhetorical changes;
  - Section IV. Item 3,4: No substantive changes are suggested, but clarity is provided.
  - Section IV. Item 3,7: The substantive portion of this section was deleted several years ago, but the item has remained in the APPM.

- Changes made at the request of Human Resource Services to align practice and policy;
  - Item IV. Item 3 and Item 6: Much of these sections have been struck because the items required by the APPM to be stored in an assistants file are not always forwarded by hiring units.
  - Section IV. Item 4: This section has been struck. Hiring units have not routinely followed this policy.
  - Section IV. Item 5: Much of this section has been struck, though components have been re-written. By removing from the section specific processes that must be completed to hire a graduate assistant and by pointing to the online matrix, HRS gains some of the necessary flexibility to communicate changes when they are mandated by the State or Federal governments.
  - Section IV. Item 10:

- Changes made at the request of Human Resource Services and the Graduate School to address recurring issues.
  - The Preamble to the policy properly asserts the role of assistants.
  - Section IV. Item 1. Number 4: This clause clearly establishes that students on academic probation are not eligible to start a fresh appointment.
  - Section IV. Item 1. Number 12: Establishes more clearly than in previous versions that for extra-employment on campus students must secure all permissions prior to the start of the extra-employment. An entire section of the APPM makes the same point. This has been an ongoing issue. Addressing it is necessary to ensure that students maintain compliance with SEVIS regulations, and the institution needs to be prepared to address
benefit issues with folk who work more than 28-30 hours, because of the Affordable Care Act.

- Section IV. Item 1. Number 22. Because of the close association between graduate assistantships and assistants' student status, it's imperative that graduate assistants register in a timely manner. This clause will allow HRS and the Graduate School the opportunity to communicate with graduate assistants about the necessity of timely enrollment.

- Section IV. Item 1. Numbers 23-25: These clauses clarify the processes for securing overloads and underloads and the parameters for approving them as currently practiced.

- Section IV. Item 1. Numbers 27-32: These clauses clarify the meaning of the Council of Graduate School's Resolution on Assistants and Fellows and how they are treated at NIU. Additionally, termination proceedings are outlined, though more fully explained elsewhere in the document. Recent arrests of graduate assistants and confusion about the ability of hiring units to terminate assistants who are not showing up for work have, in part, prompted these proposed changes.

- Section IV. Item 7: Changes to the termination procedures are extensive. These procedures encourage units to place under-performing assistants on an improvement plan, and they allow units to terminate more easily (after appropriate consultation). This section has been written with the heavy input from university counsel. The objective has been to make the path toward termination clearer without allowing discriminatory or inappropriate terminations to be made.

- Section IV. Item 8: These are largely rhetorical changes. Two more substantive changes should be pointed out:
  - The tax-implications for staff assistants receiving a tuition waiver have been added. Unlike the information that had previously appeared in Item 3, 7 (now deleted), this information is accurate.
  - Tuition waivers for the trailing summer term require employment as an assistant for at least 8 weeks during the Spring semester. This 8 week requirement is aligned with the proposed text that allows any 8 weeks of employment during the period May 15-August 15 to count as a summer assistantship for the purpose of awarding a full waiver. See Item I. Number 14. Revising the summer TA employment information recognizes the increasingly "off-cycle" hiring of TAs in the intersession.
Policies Pertaining to Graduate Assistantships

Section IV. Item 1.

Northern Illinois University employs graduate assistants in order to provide them enriched learning experiences. Through their graduate assistantships, students receive intensive mentoring, which contributes to the development of the knowledge, skills, and abilities they need to become the next generation of innovators and scholar-experts in their fields of study.

As mentored researchers and teachers, graduate assistants help the university achieve its mission. They educate undergraduates and the public, and they contribute to the achievement of the university’s mission to provide significant service to the institution and the region.

Despite the important contributions that graduate assistants make to the institutional mission, the university primarily invests in graduate assistant stipends and any tuition waiver associated with assistantships in order to enhance the education and training of graduate students.

Consequently, graduate assistants are first and foremost students. As assistants, they perform conscientiously and professionally the tasks assigned them. At the same time, their supervisors respect graduate assistants’ conjoined roles as students and mentees; they ensure that assistantship assignments provide enriched opportunities to learn and to hone their craft; and they provide appropriate training, supervision and direction to assistants.

Appointment of a Graduate Assistant

1. Graduate assistants are appointed by administrative units of the university receiving a budgetary allocation for this purpose, subject to compliance with current applicable University policies and procedures.

2. Graduate students admitted by the Graduate School to a degree-granting program on a regular or conditional basis are eligible for appointment to a graduate assistantship. Assistant appointments are contingent upon students being admitted to the Graduate School. This admission may be regular or "conditional." Hiring units are cautioned against appointing any conditionally-admitted student to an assistantship. "tentative," "provisional," or "with stipulation." For conditional admission, if a conditionally-admitted student fails to meet the conditions designated, admission to the Graduate School is subject to termination, which results also in termination of any assistantship. Non-immigrant students admitted on a conditional basis in order to pursue intensive English language training are prohibited from holding an assistantship until they are regularly-admitted to a degree-granting program. Offers tendered prior to admission to the Graduate School must carry the condition that the appointment is contingent upon admission.

3. Graduate assistants shall be graduate students in good standing on the effective dates of their appointment. Students on academic probation are ineligible to begin a graduate assistantship appointment.
4. A graduate assistantship appointment may not begin before the end of the term preceding the students’ term of admission to the Graduate School. Students enrolled in the category of student-at-large are not eligible for appointments as graduate assistants.

5. Graduate assistants will be designated as:
   a. Teaching Assistants. Teaching Assistants aid in the instructional functions of the university. Their duties may include but are not limited to providing direct instruction in classroom, laboratory, and discussion sections, or in studio settings; tutoring students; mentoring engaged learning experiences for undergraduate students; grading tests and assignments; developing instructional materials; accompanying or coaching artistic performances; and proctoring examinations. When their duties include any form of oral instruction, assistants hired into this category must meet the requirements outlined in 35 below.
   b. Research Assistants. Research assistants apply research concepts, practices, or methods of scholarship by conducting experiments, analyzing data, presenting findings, collaborating with others in preparing publications, or conducting institutional research for an academic or administrative unit.
   c. Staff Assistants. Staff Assistants assist in roles other than teaching or research. Duties of a staff assistant may include but are not limited to serving as a resident adviser, counselor, academic adviser, secretary, receptionist, administrative assistant, office support, or library assistant.

6. The Dean of the Graduate School shall be responsible for approving the designation of each graduate assistant based on the duties assigned.

7. Each year the Graduate Council will determine and announce the maximum and the minimum monthly assistantship stipends for the following year (August 16 - August 15). The minimum will be half the maximum. Stipends outside of this range may be approved, in special cases, by the Dean of the Graduate School.

8. Students accept assistantship appointments for the specific time period specified in the offering letter and should not expect routine renewal or extension of appointments.

9. Appointments shall be full (20 hours)-, three-quarter (15 hours)-, or half-time (10 hours). It shall be the prerogative of the university hiring unit to determine the appropriate duties of graduate assistants. Assistants holding a full-time appointment will be expected to render not work no more than 20 hours of service per week; those on three-fourths appointment not more than 15 hours per week; and those on half-time appointment not more than 10 hours per week.

10. A student may hold two graduate assistantships for which the terms of appointment overlap, only if each of the assistantships is half-time during the period of overlap and if together the hours of the appointment do not exceed 20 per week.

11. Graduate assistants will be required to perform duties during periods of their appointment when the university faculty is regularly on duty. Requirements for performance of duties during university academic recess periods or other specific times must be agreed upon in advance in writing, preferably at the time of the appointment, between the graduate assistant and the employing university unit.

12. A graduate assistant may not accept additional employment in any capacity with Northern Illinois University except by permission of the chair of the major department, the student's academic adviser, the head of the unit in which the graduate assistantship is held, and the office of the Dean of the Graduate School. Hiring units must not permit
graduate assistants should not begin working outside their assistantship assignment without first securing permission from the Graduate School. Non-immigrant graduate students are strictly prohibited by federal regulations from working more than 20 hours per week while classes are in session.

Tuition Waivers, Fees, Student Health Insurance, and Parking

13. Full-, three-quarter- and half-time graduate assistants receive a full tuition waiver during the period of their appointment; however, all fees due are to be paid by the student. If an assistantship does not extend over an entire academic term, the student is liable for the payment of in-state or out-of-state tuition, depending upon his or her residency, for the remainder of the term.

14. A graduate assistant holding an assistantship for eight full weeks (or multiple appointments for a combination of 8 full weeks) between the date of spring semester graduation exercises and August 15 is eligible for a tuition waiver during the summer term. If an assistantship appointment(s) does not extend over any eight weeks during that time, the student is liable for a portion of in-state and/or out-of-state tuition in the summer as described above.

15. In addition, graduate assistants on appointment during a spring semester they may receive a tuition waiver for a the summer session adjacent to immediately following their term of appointment (either the preceding or the following summer), provided provided that they are enrolled graduate students during that summer.

16. Tuition waivers typically cannot be used for international study-abroad courses and are not applicable to some contract courses.

17. Graduate student fees automatically include student health insurance coverage only if the student is enrolled for at least 9 semester hours of course work in a semester or summer session. Other students may elect to purchase health insurance by contacting the Student Insurance Office prior to the start of the academic term. The University provides no life insurance coverage for graduate assistants.

18. No student holding a faculty, administrative, or civil service position at Northern Illinois University may concurrently hold a graduate assistantship.

19. Appointment as a graduate assistant does not give faculty status; an assistant's status is that of a graduate student. As such, the assistant is expected to abide by regulations pertaining to such students.

20. Graduate assistants are eligible to purchase parking permits, allowing them assistants to park in lots designated for graduate assistants.

21. Graduate assistants are eligible to apply for a Holmes Student Center Bookstore credit card and are eligible for a discount on books purchased at that bookstore Holmes Student Center Bookstore.

Enrollment Requirements for Graduate Assistants

22. Graduate students holding assistantships during a fall or spring semester are expected to enroll in 9 semester hours of course work no later than the close of business on the first day of classes. In the summer session, graduate assistants are expected to enroll for 6
semester hours no later than the close of business on the first day of classes. Failure to register as described or failure to remain enrolled for the prescribed number of hours may result in immediate termination of the appointment by the Office of Graduate Assistantship Employment.

23. Reduction of up to 3 semester hours in the course load must be approved by the assistant's major department chair with submission of an online underload petition to the Dean of the Graduate School. Reductions for up to 3 semester hours will be approved by the Graduate School, if approved by the assistant’s department chair and if the student is otherwise eligible for a reduction. (For eligibility restrictions, see 26 below).

24. Reduction of more than 3 semester hours in the course load must be approved in advance, in writing (via the online petition for underload petition for Graduate Student form), by the assistant's major department chair and the office of the Dean of the Graduate School.

25. Underloads for more than 3 semester hours will be granted only under extraordinary circumstances or as authorized in the Graduate Catalog. For example, an underload for more than 3 semester hours will be granted to a student whose assistantship duties require sustained participation in a summer field school, which because of the field school’s location precludes completion of additional coursework.

26. International graduate students on an F1 or J1 visa must enroll in 9 semester hours in the fall and spring semesters, unless receiving permission, in advance, for fewer hours from the office of the Dean of Graduate School. Such permission may be granted only in circumstances permitted by federal regulations.

Resignation and Termination

27. Northern Illinois University subscribes to the Resolution adopted by the Council of Graduate Schools, which, among other provisions, states that once an assistantship is accepted, the prospective student has until April 15 to accept an assistantship or fellowship offered by another institution. After April 15, the prospective student must secure written permission from the offering unit at NIU prior to accepting an assistantship or fellowship offered by another institution. Likewise, prospective students who have accepted another institution’s offer on or after April 15 are expected to secure a release from that institution in order to accept an assistantship or fellowship offer at NIU. In order to accept an offer of employment at another institution after April 15, prospective graduate assistants must first obtain a written release from any other institution to which a previous commitment has been made. At NIU, this release must come from the employing unit.

28. After April 15, a prospective assistant may rescind an accepted appointment provided that he/she does not accept an assistantship or fellowship at another institution. As a courtesy to the hiring unit and other prospective assistants, an individual who wishes to decline a previously-accepted appointment should first discuss the decision with the head of the hiring unit and convey the final decision in writing as soon as possible.

29. Prior to the start of an assistantship appointment, a hiring unit, the Graduate School, or Graduate Assistant Employment office may rescind an offer in writing, if the prospective assistant fails to meet academic or other expectations of the hiring unit or the Graduate School or in the case of an assistant being rehired, fails to meet performance expectations of the hiring unit or other requirements. Additionally, if the prospective assistant’s
conduct indicates that inauguration of an appointment may prove deleterious to the health or safety of others or impede or distract from achievement of the unit or institutional mission and goals, then an appointment may be rescinded. When a decision to rescind an offer is reached, the hiring unit, Graduate School, and Graduate Assistant Employment shall consult and agree to the decision before the hiring unit informs the prospective assistant.

30. After a graduate assistant begins an appointment, the assistant may with two weeks written notification, not resign that appointment. Whether the resignation is effective immediately, at some point prior to the conclusion of two weeks, or at the conclusion of two weeks shall be determined by the needs of the hiring unit as defined by the assistant’s supervisor and the head of the hiring unit. Hiring units must immediately notify the Office of Graduate Assistantship Employment by email to ensure that the assistant is not overpaid. Written notification of acceptance of the resignation, which must be sent to the student and which must include the date of resignation, shall be forwarded along with a PAF and the student’s resignation letter to the Office of Graduate Assistantship Employment and immediately accept another at NIU. A new appointment may commence no sooner than one month after the effective date of resignation, or the start of the academic term immediately following that date, whichever is later, unless a written release from the initial hiring unit is submitted.

31. A graduate assistant may be terminated for cause by the Office of Graduate Assistantship Employment, the Graduate School, or the employing unit after (1) notice of the proposed termination and the grounds for such action are communicated to the student and (2) the student is allowed one opportunity to state why he/she should not be terminated, may terminate an assistant for cause (see Section IV). Failure to report on the announced report date, failure to register for classes and to remain appropriately registered as required, and failure to report to work for one week without first securing approval from one’s supervisor are is grounds for immediate termination of the assistantship. If an assistantship is terminated during an academic term, the student should expect there to be some tuition liability for that term. Termination of a graduate assistant position cannot be in violation of federal or state employment law and university policy prohibiting discrimination.

32. Notwithstanding any other statements in University policy, practice or procedure, assistants shall have their appointments terminated immediately if, during the term of their appointments, they (1) are academically dismissed, suspended, or through disciplinary action have their on-campus movement or their interactions with others restricted in such a way as to preclude performance of assigned duties; (2) are placed in a probationary status; (3) are found otherwise to be ineligible according to university policy or federal or state law, fail to achieve good standing after one academic semester, excluding summer session, in probationary status. Any deviation from termination due to probationary status shall be possible only upon request from the major department with final approval by the office of the Dean of the Graduate School.

Legal Declarations

33. The Federal Tax Reform Act of 1986 (Public Law 99-514) and relevant state laws dictate the University’s treatment of stipends and tuition waivers. Graduate assistantship
stipends are considered wages and hence must be taxed and reported as taxable income. A portion of the tuition waiver awarded a staff assistant may be subject to taxation. Prior to accepting a graduate assistantship, prospective students are urged to consult an independent tax professional about their potential tax liability.

34. The Federal **Immigration Reform and Control Act (IRCA) of 1986** mandates that any graduate assistant employed by Northern Illinois University after November 6, 1986 must either be a U.S. citizen or possess current employment authorization from the U.S. Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS). According to federal law, the assistant must present original documentation of the U.S. citizenship or employment authorization within three days of the start of duties (the reporting date) or risk cancellation of the assistantship.

35. On the basis of Illinois law, a student whose native language is not English must demonstrate competence in spoken English in order to be appointed a graduate teaching assistant engaging in oral classroom instruction (unless the language of instruction is not English). A minimum score of 50 on the Speaking Proficiency English Assessment Kit (SPEAK) administered at NIU or the Test of Spoken English (TSE) has been set by the university for this purpose. Alternatively, a speaking subset score of 24 on the TOEFL or 7 on the IELTS may establish competency. Departments desiring to require higher TSE scores are free to do so. Those desiring to employ in an oral classroom instructional capacity a student whose TSE score is below the minimum level must receive advance approval from the office of the Dean of the Graduate School.

36. The State of Illinois mandates that no state agency (including a state university) may initially employ or retain in employment any individual who is in default on an educational loan for a period of six months or more and in the amount of $600 or more unless a satisfactory loan repayment arrangement is made no later than six months after the start of employment. As defined in Public Act 85-827 (paragraph 3552a), an educational loan includes any student loan made possible through funding from the State of Illinois or any other loan from public funds from Illinois or elsewhere, made for the purpose of financing an individual's attendance at an institution of higher education. In order to comply with the Act, every university employee must sign a written statement declaring whether he or she is in default as described above. The statement is contained on the **Personal Data Form**. If in default, the student must, in order to retain the assistantship for more than six months, make a "satisfactory repayment arrangement" with the lender/guarantor. The act specifies that a "satisfactory" repayment arrangement may not exceed 20 percent of the gross monthly income of the borrower.

37. Illinois statute (Illinois School Code 5/30-17.1, "Scholarships-Draft Registration" requires students receiving state funded financial aid (i.e., tuition waiver scholarship associated with a graduate assistantship appointment) submit Selective Service Registration Compliance documentation to the university.
Applying for a Graduate Assistantship

Section IV. Item 2.

Application for Graduate Assistantship

A prospective assistant is to submit a two-sided application form, which can be found on (see the samples that follow) to the department or other unit in which the appointment is desired. Application forms are available from the Human Resource Services website or the Graduate School's website.

A student may apply for an assistantship to more than one place, but holding two appointments simultaneously is only possible as described in Policies Pertaining to Graduate Assistantships (Section IV, Item 1, number 10).

Hiring offices may require information from applicants that is in addition to that specified on the application form, and additional selection processes (e.g., personal interviews) may be used.

Approved by Graduate Council, May 4, 1992; Modified June 30, 1997; April 7, 2014
Editorial Modifications April 2004, July 2010

Last Updated: 4/7/14
Offering a Graduate Assistantship

Section IV. Item 3.

1. The Offering Letter: An offer of a graduate assistantship will be made by the administrative unit to which funds are allocated for this purpose. The student will be notified of such an offer by letter which includes the information indicated in the Sample Offering Letter. No offer may be tendered prior to a student’s admission to the Graduate or Law School. Offers tendered must carry the stipulation that the appointment is contingent upon admission.

If an offer is accepted, the original offering letter must be sent to the Office of Graduate Assistantship Employment at Human Resource Services at the time (after acceptance) that as an attachment to the Personnel Action Form (PAF) is submitted. Additional information as deemed appropriate by the appointing unit may also be included in this letter. Relevant hiring documents listed in the Human Resource Service Required Forms Matrix should be provided as attachments to the offer letter. The following items will be enclosures with each offering letter:

   a. Policies Pertaining to Graduate Assistantships (Item 1 of this section)
   b. Council of Graduate Schools Resolution Regarding Scholars, Fellows, Trainees, and Graduate Assistants (approved by the Graduate Council, May 4, 1992; Modified July 1999).
   c. Notice to Graduate Assistants: Immigration Reform and Controls Act (IRCA) of 1986. As stated in the IRCA notice, the graduate assistant has three days from the official start of duties to submit appropriate documentation for verification of employment eligibility to the department of the office of Graduate Assistantship Employment at Human Resource Services. Types of documentation considered appropriate are listed on the “Employment Eligibility Verification” form (known as the “I-9 Form”) available at the Human Resource Services’ website.
   d. Effects of Tax Laws on Graduate Assistants’ Taxable Income.
   e. Employee's Withholding Allowance Certificate, Form W-4 (available online at the Human Resource Services' website).
   f. Personal Data Form (available online at the Human Resource Services' website). This form should be completed and returned with the acceptance letter.
   g. Selective Service Registration Compliance form. This form is required by state statute for any student receiving state funded financial aid (i.e., tuition waiver scholarship associated with a graduate assistantship). This is currently a separate form available on the Human Resource Services' website. This form should be completed and returned with the PAF.

2. Terms of Appointment. Graduate assistants are typically appointed for a semester, an academic year (August 16 through May 15), a summer session, or a full fiscal year (July 1 through June 30). If said appointment is for less than an academic term, the corresponding tuition waiver will be prorated according to the number of weeks of the appointment.
Notice to Graduate Assistants: Immigration Reform and Control Act (IRCA) of 1986

Section IV. Item 3, 4.

Federal law mandates that any graduate assistant employed by Northern Illinois University must provide documentation to establish identity and eligibility for employment as required on the form I-9 Employment Eligibility Verification. According to federal law, the assistant must complete Section I of the I-9 Employment Eligibility Verification no later than the effective date of appointment (first day of pay), which is indicated in the offering letter, and must, within three business days of the effective date (first day of pay), present original documentation proving eligibility for lawful employment to complete Section II of the I-9. The I-9 can be completed at any time after the appointment has been accepted and prior to the start date.

In compliance with the Immigration Reform and Control Act of 1986 (IRCA), every person hired by Northern Illinois University must verify identity and eligibility to work in the United States by completing an "Employment Eligibility Verification Form" (Form I-9), and provide specified documentation at the commencement of employment. Graduate assistants are considered employees of the university and are thus covered by this federal law. The IRCA pertains to those individuals newly appointed to positions beginning on or after November 7, 1986. All graduate assistants employed for the first time after November 6, 1986 must present original unexpired documentation attesting identity and employment authorization to the employing department/cost center or the Office of Graduate Assistantship Employment at Human Resource Services within three (3) days of the start date of their contract or risk cancellation of the assistantship. The reporting date should be indicated on the assistantship offering letter by the employing department/cost center. Final authorization of the assistantship contract is contingent upon employment verification. Assistants whose appointments are canceled will not receive a stipend for duties performed during the unauthorized period.

Please refer to page three of Form I-9 for a list of currently acceptable documents. This document may be found on the Human Resource Services' website.

Foreign Non-immigrant graduate assistants: In the event the employment documentation authorization (USCIS Employment Authorization, I-20, DS-2019, etc.) expires prior to the end of the appointment period, the verification process must be updated prior to the expiration date with renewed verification documents. Foreign Non-immigrant graduate assistants are advised to obtain employment authorization extensions well in advance, at least 3 months before the expiration date; if the extensions are not obtained by the expiration date, the assistant may not continue in the position. Contact the International Student and Faculty Office for further information (815-753-1346).

Approved by Graduate Council, May 4, 1992
Modified Editorially April 2004, July 2010, April 7, 2014
Last Updated: 4/7/14
Effect of Tax Laws on Graduate Assistants' Taxable Income

Section IV. Item 3,7.

This Section is currently being updated.

Approved by Graduate Council, May 4, 1992
Editorial Modifications October 2004

Last Updated: 4/12/11
Acknowledgement of Acceptance of Graduate Assistantship

Section IV. Item 4.

Upon receiving the prospective graduate assistant's written acceptance, the employing department/cost center may send an "acknowledgement of acceptance" letter to the student. This can serve as a reminder of the contingencies/stipulations concerning the appointment, as well as of employment eligibility regulation and other pertinent information (see sample letter below).

Such a letter is not required by the Graduate School or the Office of Graduate Assistantship Employment at Human Resource Services and may be sent at the option of the employing department/cost center (Graduate Council, December 6, 1993). If sent, a copy of this letter is to accompany the Personnel Action Form that the employing department/cost center sends to the office of Graduate Assistantship Employment.

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Sample Acknowledgement of Acceptance Letter

Download this sample letter in Word Format.

This will acknowledge receipt of your letter accepting a Graduate Assistantship at Northern Illinois University. All assistantship appointments are subject to formal confirmation by the appropriate college dean or division head and the Office of Graduate Assistantship Employment at Human Resource Services. However, if you meet all of the eligibility requirements as noted in your offering letter, your appointment will be confirmed.

To continue to hold this appointment, you must comply with any contingencies indicated in your offering letter and bring to the department office of the Office of Graduate Assistantship Employment, within 3 days of your report date, original documentation of your U.S. citizenship or current employment authorization as stipulated in the Immigration Reform and Control Act (IRCA) of 1986.

You will receive the stipend for your assistantship as follows:

(Here you may list the semi-monthly stipend and reaffirm that grads are paid on the 15th and last business day of each month.)

On ______________ you are to report to __________________. Your assistantship identification card can be picked up at the following departmental location although these cards may no longer be issued – we are currently trying to work out a way to discontinue issuing these cards.

Sincerely yours,

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Submitting the Personnel Action Form (PAF) for a Graduate Assistantship

Section IV. Item 5.

**Personnel Action Form (PAF)**

Simultaneously with the preparation of the acknowledgement of acceptance letter (if sent), The offering unit should prepare the Personnel Action Form (PAF), and obtain approval signatures of approval from the department chair and the college dean/division head. The PAF is then submitted to the Office of Graduate Assistantship Employment at Human Resource Services for final approval and processing. In order to be processed, the documents outlined in the Human Resource Services Forms Matrix following must accompany the PAF sent to the Office of Graduate Assistantship Employment: a completed graduate assistantship application form, the evaluation form, the original offering/acceptance letter, a copy of the acknowledgement of acceptance letter (if sent), the completed Personal Data Form, the Selective Service Registration Compliance form (unless it is contained on the GA application) and the completed W-4 form.

NOTE: If the assistantship is to be funded through a grant account or a Foundation account, the PAF must be approved by the office of Grants Fiscal Administration or the Foundation's controller prior to submission to the Office of Graduate Assistantship Employment.

NOTE: If the assistantship is funded through a cost center requiring additional approvals, these approvals are required prior to submission.

Incomplete forms will delay, and may terminate, the processing of an assistantship appointment. as will the following circumstances:

1. Student not admitted to Graduate School. The student must be an admitted graduate student (or a student admitted to Law School). Students-at-large are not eligible to hold graduate assistantships.
2. Stipend level not within approved range. Maximum and minimum stipend levels are specified each year. (See Section IV, Item 1-2.)
3. No Certification of Competency in Spoken English. Under Illinois law, students whose native language is not English must demonstrate competence in spoken English in order to receive graduate teaching assistantships involving oral classroom instructional duties (unless the language of instruction is not English). A minimum score of 50 (220 on the old version) on the Test of Spoken English (TSE/SPEAK) has been set for this purpose. Departments desiring to require higher TSE/SPEAK scores are free to do so.
4. Encumbrances. An encumbrance is an issue between the student and the university; it may pertain to such matters as lack of tuition or fee payment, parking or outstanding library fines, or an incomplete admission file. The Office of Graduate Assistantship Employment will notify the employing department/unit and the student that the PAF cannot be processed until the encumbrance is lifted.
Personnel Files for Graduate Assistants

Section IV. Item 6.

As part of the university's Human Resource Management System, the Office of Graduate Assistantship Employment at Human Resource Services is responsible for maintaining a personnel file on each graduate assistant. The file must include a complete record of all correspondence and forms pertaining to the appointment, including originals of the:

1. Graduate Assistantship Application Form
2. Evaluation form (how graduate assistant met departmental criteria for appointed assistantship appointment
3. Offering letter (a lot of department have the acceptance as part of the offering letter)
4. Acknowledgement of Acceptance letter (if sent) (Graduate Council, December 6, 1993)
5. Personnel Action Form
6. Employment Eligibility Form (the Form "I-9") and copies of accompanying documentation.
7. Personal Data Form
8. Selective Service Registration Compliance Form (until this becomes a part of the graduate assistantship application and for the Dept. of Accountancy who uses their own GA application).
9. Letter of Resignation (if applicable)
10. Other pertinent correspondence

The employing department/cost center is encouraged to keep copies of these materials in their own files.
Termination or Resignation of Graduate Assistantship

Section IV. Item 7.

Should the appointee fail to report for the assignment on the date noted in the offer letter he or she was notified, in writing, to report, the employing unit should, if it wishes to terminate employment, notify the Office of Graduate Assistantship Employment of Human Resource Services immediately, preferably via phone or email. The department should then submit a PAF (Personnel Action form) through the appropriate college dean or division head, so that the Payroll Office Human Resource Services may be notified that the appointment is being canceled. Similar notification should be made when a student resigns an assistantship before the official appointment end date. In this latter case, the letter must indicate the date on which the student last worked. Failure to report such situations promptly can result in over payment of the assistant's stipend payments to persons who do not deserve them, with the concomitant inappropriate reduction in the hiring unit's budget.

A student who accepts and later resigns a graduate assistantship (whether or not the term of appointment has begun) may accept another assistantship at Northern Illinois University only if its term of appointment begins no sooner than the start of the academic term following the effective date of resignation or at least one month after the effective date of the resignation, whichever is the later date, unless the written consent of the former employing unit is submitted to the Office of Graduate Assistantship Employment. A resignation should be submitted in writing to the employing unit and to the Office of Graduate Assistantship Employment. For purposes of subsequent appointment the effective date of resignation is considered to be the date on which the letter of resignation is received by the Office of Graduate Assistantship Employment. For purposes of this policy the fall term is considered to begin August 16, the spring term is considered to begin January 1, and the summer term is considered to begin May 16.

Among graduate schools nationally, it is considered unethical for a person who has accepted an assistantship appointment at one institution to accept an assistantship appointment at another institution without resigning the first position, in writing, by April 15, or, if after April 15, without also obtaining a written release from the employing unit at the first institution (see Council of Graduate Schools resolution in Section IV, Item 3 of this manual).

A graduate assistantship may be terminated, according to the following policies principles and procedures. (NOTE: Where reference is made to the "head of the employing unit," this should be understood to mean "head of the employing unit, or his or her designee.")

1. Failure to report for work on the reporting date specified in the offering letter constitutes grounds for termination of the assistantship, with no remuneration, at the discretion of the head of the employing unit. Notification of such termination is to be sent, immediately, to the Office of Graduate Assistantship Employment at Human Resource Services.

2. Notwithstanding any other University policy, practice or procedure, a graduate assistantship may be terminated by the Office of Graduate Assistantship Employment without notice if the assistant is found to be ineligible by virtue of noncompliance with
either Board of Trustees or University regulations or with federal and state laws and regulations.

3. A graduate assistant (GA) can be immediately removed from any particular work assignment without notice if, in the opinion of the supervisor or the head of the employing unit, continuation of the GA assistant in that assignment poses a threat to the safety or well-being (physically, academically, or otherwise) of the assistant or of others. In such a case, the GA assistant may be reassigned, at the discretion of the head of the employing unit, to other duties if another appropriate assignment exists within the unit, or if not, may be given notice of immediate termination as in (7) below. The grounds for the immediate termination shall be provided to the student in the notice. The student shall be given an opportunity to respond to the notice and to ask the head of the employing unit for reconsideration of the termination action. During this time, the student may be removed from employment and the workplace.

4. A graduate assistant may be given notice of immediate termination for poor performance of work assignments, for poor academic performance, contumacious conduct, or for any other reason that does not violate federal and state employment law and university policy prohibiting discrimination. The notice must contain the grounds for termination.

5. The Graduate School and Human Resource Services recommend, but do not require, that any decision (except as outlined in 1 and 3 above) to terminate an assistant be made after the assistant has been informed in writing of deficiencies and given an appropriate time to correct deficiencies. Copies of any such documentation should be signed by the assistant to acknowledge receipt and by his/her supervisor and the head of the hiring unit as evidence of concurrence; copies must be sent to the Graduate Assistant Employment Office and the Dean of the Graduate School.

6. Prior to making a decision to terminate an assistant (except as outlined in 1 and 3 above), the head of the hiring unit and the supervisor are required to consult with the Graduate Assistantship Employment Office and the Dean of the Graduate School.

7. If a graduate assistant is notified in writing of termination, the assistant’s supervisor and the head of the hiring unit, prior to the effective date of termination, must give the assistant one opportunity to state why he/she should not be terminated. In rare, exigent circumstances that require removal of the student from employment before he/she has had an opportunity to be heard, the student shall be provided this opportunity within a reasonably short period of time after the student is removed from employment. The decision to terminate the assistant’s employment is solely the responsibility of the supervisor and head of the hiring unit. Their decision is final.

8. A GA whose work performance is deemed to be unsatisfactory shall be advised by his or her supervisor.

9. If the deficiencies of the preceding paragraph are perceived by the supervisor to be severe enough that lack of amelioration would necessitate termination of the assistantship appointment, the GA shall be so notified in writing. Such notice shall include specification of the areas and nature of deficiency in work performance, and provide a reasonable period of time for the GA to address these deficiencies and demonstrate improved performance.

10. If, in the opinion of the supervisor, the GA fails to show sufficient improvement in work performance over the period allowed for remediation, the supervisor may give the GA and the Office of Graduate Assistantship Employment notice of termination. This notification
must be in writing should indicate reasons(s) for termination. must be submitted in duplicate simultaneously to the GA, and to the Office of Graduate Assistantship Employment. The written notice must indicate the effective date of the termination, which may not be sooner than fifteen calendar days from the date upon which the notice is hand-delivered to the GA or mailed, postage prepaid, to the GA's current local address as on file with the Office of Registration and Records.

11. Assessment of the quality of work performance is the sole right and responsibility of the employing unit, and is an academic and professional judgment. However, the GA may dispute any facts or procedures relating to the termination. The GA may appeal the termination to the head of the employing unit. Such appeal must be submitted, in writing, within five calendar days of the date upon which notice of termination is hand-delivered or mailed to the GA as described in (6). A copy of this appeal must be submitted simultaneously to the Associate Dean of the Graduate School. If the head of the unit declines to reverse the notice of termination, written appeal may be made to the Graduate School.

12. Appeal to the Graduate School of a decision to terminate a graduate assistantship must be submitted in writing by the GA to the Associate Dean of the Graduate School, with a copy to the head of the employing unit. Such appeal must be made within ten calendar days of the date of the notice of termination as defined in (6), unless the head of the employing unit has been unavailable for the appeal described in (7). In the latter case, the written appeal to the Graduate School must be submitted within five calendar days of the date upon which the decision of the unit head is hand-delivered to the GA or mailed, postage prepaid, to the GA's local address as defined above.

13. As soon as possible after receipt of the appeal, the Associate Dean of the Graduate School will convene the Graduate Council Appeals Committee (hereinafter known as "the Committee"), notifying the GA and employing unit as soon as a meeting time has been set. If any of the members on the Committee is from the employing unit in the case, that person may not serve while the Committee considers this case; the Dean of the Graduate School may choose an alternate from another unit may serve.

14. The Committee shall first consider whether a). the student has presented sufficient evidence to contradict relevant facts established by the supervisor in the improvement plan and termination letter; or b). whether the established processes for termination were followed.

15. The Committee, by majority vote of members present, may make one of three decisions:

a. The Committee may determine that facts underlying the improvement plan and termination letter are sufficient to warrant no further consideration of the appeal and that the process for termination was followed. The Dean of the Graduate School shall inform the GA, the supervisor, hiring unit, and the Office of Graduate Assistantship Employment of the decision. In such cases, the termination is affirmed, and the appeal is concluded. No further appeal is possible.

b. The Committee may determine that the student presented sufficient evidence that the hiring unit or that the supervisor violated the process for termination. In such cases, the termination is rescinded and the student is returned immediately without disruption to pay to an assistantship appointment within the hiring unit.
The Dean of the Graduate School shall inform the GA, the supervisor, hiring unit, and the Office of Graduate Assistantship Employment of the decision.

c. The Committee may determine that sufficient evidence exists to require the clarification of facts that led to the termination. In such cases, the Dean of the Graduate School will convene a meeting of the Committee.

16. The Committee's meetings will be closed. In addition to the Committee members, the only persons present will be the GA submitting the appeal, the head of the employing unit, the assistant's supervisor, and no more than one additional person accompanying each of these two, to advise, observe, and counsel. The latter person is prohibited from addressing the Committee or any person in the room.

17. The meeting of the Committee is not a legal proceeding, and there is no requirement that the GA be represented by legal counsel. However, if the GA chooses to be accompanied by such counsel, the representative of the employing unit may be accompanied by the University's General Counsel. No other persons shall be present.

18. The GA and the supervisor head of the employing unit may each present his or her case orally, the Committee members having the right to ask questions for clarification as necessary. The two parties may also present written supporting documentation, which may include statements from other parties having knowledge relevant to the case. If either contests the facts as stated by the other, the person contesting shall have the opportunity to express the objection(s) when asked to do so by the Committee. Either party may call or question witnesses, and witnesses may be questioned by the Committee. Since the issues involved are academic rather than legal, the Committee will not be bound by strict rules of legal evidence, and may entertain written statements, affidavits, or other evidence or information pertinent to deciding the issues involved. A tape-recorded record of the proceedings shall be maintained for a minimum of five years at the expense of the University, a duplicate tape copy of this record will be available on request to the GA during this period.

19. If the conclusion of the Committee is that the termination should be rescinded, the assistantship will be restored without break from the date of termination. The decision of the Committee is final; there is no further appeal process.

20. A GA whose assistantship is terminated or otherwise ended during a semester or term for reasons in (1) or (2) above should expect cancellation of the associated tuition-waiver scholarship. An GA whose assistantship is terminated or ended for deficient performance or for unexcused absence from duties during the term of the assistantship may receive a prorated waiver of tuition for that academic term.

Approved by Graduate Council, May 4, 1992
Amended by Graduate Council, April 7, 2014
Editorial modifications, April 16, 2004

Last Updated: 4/7/14
Tuition-Waivers Scholarships Associated with Graduate Assistantships

Section IV. Item 8.

After the Personnel Action Form (PAF) has been approved, information pertaining to the value of tuition waiver and stipend level are processed by the Office of Graduate Assistantship Employment and submitted given to the Office of Student Financial Aid (OSFA), and tuition waivers are entered into the Bursar's Office where the waiver is entered into the computerized billing system. Tuition waivers are authorized only after the PAF has been fully approved.

The amount value of the tuition-waiver scholarship is based upon the length of the assistantship and relevant policies. A student with a full academic year appointment will receive a full waiver for the number of hours that he or she is enrolled in that semester. Thus, if the student enrolls for 9 hours, the student will be credited for 9 hours of tuition. The student will not receive a refund for the difference between the maximum allowable waiver and the amount corresponding to actual enrollment. Tuition waivers will be prorated in instances where students are not on assistantship appointments for a full semester. For example, a student working only 11 weeks during a 16-week semester will receive a tuition waiver for only 11/16 of the number of hours in which he or she is enrolled. Tuition waivers cannot be used for international study abroad courses and are not applicable to contract courses.

For staff assistants, section 127/117 of the IRS Tax Code requires that the value of any tuition waiver in excess of $5,250 be added to the employees’ taxable wages and that employment taxes be withheld.

Tuition Waiver for the Summer Session. A student may receive a tuition-waiver scholarship tuition waiver for the summer term session, if they hold an assistantship during the summer term, or if held an assistantship appointment for at least 8 weeks during the spring semester. Receipt of a tuition waiver depends on proper enrollment during the semester or term, adjacent to (either preceding or following) the assistantship appointment period provided that the student is an admitted graduate student during that summer.

Should the student not complete the assistantship appointment, the summer waiver will be prorated based on the actual length of appointment. In instances where the tuition waiver has already been used the preceding summer, the Office of the Bursar will assess the student for the appropriate portion of the summer tuition due based on the percent time of actual employment. Where a student holds a graduate assistantship for only a part of the spring semester, the tuition-waiver scholarship granted for the following summer session will be prorated based on the percent employment for the spring semester.

Students desiring a tuition waiver for the summer preceding the appointment must submit a written request for the waiver to Human Resource Services, Office of Graduate Assistantship Employment. However, the Office of Graduate Assistantship Employment cannot process the request until a PAF has been submitted by the employing department/cost center and approved.
by the Graduate School. Should the PAF not have been submitted by the employing department/cost center, the student may have to pay tuition in order to confirm registration in the summer session. The student should then apply for tuition reimbursement from the Bursar's Office once the PAF has been submitted and approved. All applications for reimbursement must be submitted to the Bursar's Office IN WRITING WITHIN 60 DAYS after the close of the summer term so that the appropriate refund of summer tuition may be processed. In the event the waiver is not used for the summer preceding the appointment, and the student completed an academic-year appointment, a waiver will automatically be entered for the following summer.

Residency. For purposes of calculating the value of a tuition-waiver scholarship, tuition waiver associated with a graduate assistantship appointment, the graduate assistant is considered an in-state or out-of-state resident by the same criteria that are applied to other graduate students. (Provost, August 21, 1996.)

Approved by Graduate Council, May 4, 1992
Amended by Graduate Council, April 7, 2014
Editorial modifications, May 5, 1997; March 1, 1999; February 6, 2004

Last Updated: 4/7/14
Graduate Assistantship Payroll Distribution

Section IV. Item 9.

By University policy, all pay for employees is made by NIU’s policy is electronic direct deposit of pay for all employees. Payroll's distribution for employees is semi-monthly with distributions on the fifteenth (or prior business day) and the last business day of each month. An authorized (signed) agreement for automatic payments, which is included on the Personal Data Form, must be completed to initiate this process. This information is included on the Personal Data Form website.

The Payroll office Human Resource Services has firm deadlines for the submission of new employment processing; if the information is not received, the stipend payments will be delayed. Departments are expected to adhere to processing deadlines.

NOTE: Students should be timely in submission of all required documents. Students must also be made aware that encumbrances, incomplete admission, or other problems could result in further delays in their ability to assume assistantship duties and in the processing of the assistantship appointment.

Approved by Graduate Council, May 4, 1992
Modified by Graduate Council, November 24, 1998
Modified Editorially, July 1, 2002; April 16, 2004; July 13, 2010; April 7, 2014

Last Updated: 4/7/14
Extra Employment for Graduate Assistants

Section IV. Item 10.

In unusual instances, the Graduate School may allow for the extra employment of full-time (20-hour-per-week) graduate assistants if the additional work is "infrequent," and "irregular," and not aligned with their current assistantship. If a department wishes to employ a graduate assistant for extra time, the Request for Extra Employment for Graduate Assistant Form must be submitted to the office of the Associate Dean of the Graduate School by the department or other unit requesting the employment.

Extra employment of a graduate assistant holding a half-time (10 hours per week) or three-quarter time (15 hours per week) appointment may also be requested by completing the Request for Extra Employment for Graduate Assistant form. Students on these appointment types may be approved for the difference between the assistantship duty obligation and 20 hours per week. Departments desiring to hire a half- or quarter-time assistant for extra time may be required to make an additional assistantship appointment.

In addition to consideration of the information on this form, decisions to approve the request will be based on the student's good academic standing and satisfactory progress toward the degree. Permission may take as long as ten (10) days to process and is not guaranteed. The student should must not begin the extra work until permission has been granted by the Graduate School. Students will not be paid for additional work performed if this permission is not granted.

The Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS) strictly limits foreign students entering the United States on an F-1 a non-immigrant visa to 20 hours of total employment per week while the University is in session. During University recess periods, an F-1 student may work on campus 40 hours per week if he or she is eligible, has permission from his or her department chair/director of graduate studies and the Graduate School, and intends to register for the next term. A student entering the country on a J-1 visa is limited to the employment stipulations specifically noted on his or her visa. Students approved for extra employment will be paid via extra compensation. A time record sheet and an Additional Pay Form are to be submitted to the Office of Graduate Assistantship Employment at Human Resource Services in order for payment to be made.

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Modified by Graduate School, October 29, 1998
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