



TO: SUNY University Faculty Senate
FROM: UFS Graduate Programs and Research Committee
RE: To Re-institute the Graduate Fellowship Incentive Program
DATE: 180th Plenary, October 18-20, 2018
LOCATION: SUNY Binghamton
VOTE TALLY For: 36; Against: 4; Abstain: 4

RATIONALE:

WHEREAS proposal-writing is an important skill for graduate students to develop as the foundation for entering leadership positions in the workforce, especially if they desire to become professionals in academia; and

WHEREAS one of the Chancellor's goals is to provide an individualized and adaptive education to SUNY students; and

WHEREAS universities across the country commonly incentivize graduate students to submit pre-doctoral training proposals as a means to increase the number of proposal submissions and to increase extramural funding; and

WHEREAS graduate student fellowships allow SUNY faculty to reallocate their research funds to support other graduate students or to purchase supplies and/or equipment; and

WHEREAS the SUNY University Faculty Senate passed a resolution in 2015 that called for the establishment of a program to incentivize SUNY graduate students to write and submit grants for graduate fellowship awards; and

WHEREAS the SUNY RF provided \$40,000 over two years to operate a graduate incentive program jointly administered with the SUNY UFS Graduate and Research Committee; and

WHEREAS the graduate incentive program was established and operated in 2015 and 2016 to pay SUNY graduate students a maximum of \$1000 each to attend grant-writing training and to submit an NIH F30, F3, F30-Diversity, or F31-Diversity proposal for the December deadline; and

WHEREAS 164 SUNY graduate students attended proposal-writing training sessions and 40 students submitted proposals and received incentive awards; and

WHEREAS incentivized graduate students received NIH fellowship grants totaling \$712,000, which represents a 17-fold return on the initial investment of \$40,000:

RESOLUTION:

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the University Faculty Senate recommends that the SUNY Administration and the SUNY RF work together to provide funding and resources to restart and maintain a Graduate Fellowship Incentive Program modeled after the 2015-2016 program; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that funding be adequate to expand the incentive program to include other STEM graduate fellowship programs (e.g. NSF GRFP), additional NIH F30/F31 deadlines, and graduate fellowship programs in non-STEM fields.

BACKGROUND:

The 2015/2016 Graduate Incentive Program was created in response to a SUNY UFS resolution early in 2015. That same resolution called for an assessment of the program after a trial period. AS required by the resolution, an assessment report was prepared by the Graduate Programs and Research Committee of the SUNY UFS in 2017-2018, and the report was distributed to the UFS, SUNY RF, and the SUNY administration. The report detailed the program, analyzed the outcomes of the incentive program, and made recommendations for the incentives to be continued and expanded. Key excerpts from that report follow.

Excerpts from the 2018 Graduate Programs and Research Committee Report

Introduction

In January 2015, the SUNY University Faculty Senate passed a resolution prepared by the Graduate Programs and Research (G&R) Committee entitled “Resolution for Incentives to Support the Submission of STEM Graduate Research Grant Applications”. The resolution called on SUNY and the SUNY RF to create an incentive program that would reward STEM graduate students for submitting fellowship proposals. The resolution also called for an assessment of the program after 2 years to see if it should be expanded to non-STEM fields.

A subcommittee of the UFS G&R committee working with the SUNY RF received a \$40,000 budget to plan, implement, and evaluate the program for two years. The subcommittee then set out to design the program within the parameters of the budget request. The planning activities occurred in the Spring of 2015 and implementation began in Summer 2015.

2015-2016 Program Description

The 2015-2016 program had the following components:

1. *Advertisement.* An announcement was published and distributed through various channels. The program announcement stated that the incentive would be as much as \$1000, but the actual amount depended on the number of qualified applicants.
2. *Targeted programs.* Initially the December 2015 deadline for the NIH F31 programs was chosen for the incentive. In December 2016, the NIH F30 programs were also included after based on concerns voiced by faculty from the Health Science sector.
3. *Training.* To qualify for the incentive, students had to complete grant-writing training.

4. *Assessment.* Training participants were asked to complete questionnaires after the training. Incentive recipients were asked to respond to a survey.

Results

Over the two years the program was operated, 164 SUNY graduate students received proposal-writing training (Table 1). Of those 164 students, 40 submitted an F30 or F31 proposal by the December deadline and received a \$1000 incentive payment. The students receiving grants and amounts are shown in Table 2.

Table 1. Distribution of grant-writing training participants by campus

<i>campus</i>	<i>2015</i>	<i>2016</i>	<i>total</i>
<i>Stony Brook</i>	28	26	54
<i>Buffalo</i>	36	12	48
<i>Binghamton</i>	9	8	17
<i>Albany</i>	2	15	17
<i>Cornell</i>	4	10	14
<i>Downstate</i>	4	2	6
<i>Upstate</i>	0	6	6
<i>ESF</i>	1	0	1
<i>Poly</i>	0	1	1
<i>Total</i>	<i>84</i>	<i>80</i>	<i>164</i>

Table 2. Funding awards related to the incentive program

<i>Year</i>	<i>Student</i>	<i>Campus</i>	<i>NIH award</i>	<i>amount</i>	<i>total</i>
2015-16	Matthew Elmes	Stony Brook	F31	\$33,370/2 yrs	\$66,740
2015-16	Christian Ruiz	Stony Brook	F31-Diversity	\$33,371/3 yrs	\$101,113
2015-16	Alex Bott	Stony Brook	F31	\$38,468/3 yrs	\$115,404
2016-17	Aliona Tsypes	Binghamton	F31	\$34,472/2 yrs	\$68,944
2016-17	Erica Lachenauer	Cornell	F30	\$40,524/3 yrs	\$121,576
				<i>subtotal</i>	<i>\$473,777</i>
2015-16	Ellen Kessel	Stony Brook	F31*	\$36,893/3 yrs	\$110,679
2015-16	Emily Montal	Stony Brook	F31, F99/K00**	\$33,389/2 yrs	\$66,778

2016-17	Hayley Affronti	Buffalo	F99/K00***	\$30,550/2 yrs	\$61,100
				subtotal	\$238,557
				total	\$712,334

* F31 funded after resubmission.

** F31 funded after resubmission. Subsequently received an F99/K00 award. F31 budget is reported.

*** a modified version of the F31 grant was submitted to the F99/K00 program and funded. F99 budget is reported.

Recommendations

1. The Incentive program should be re-funded by the RF/SUNY for FY 2018-19 and beyond.
2. A *minimum* of \$60,000/year should be made available for the program to allow incentivizing NSF GRFP submissions (due in October) in addition to NIH F31/F30 proposals. NSF GRFP proposals are accepted for funding in Geoscience, Chemistry, Psychology, Social Sciences, STEM Education, Math, Engineering, Physics, Biology, and Computer Science. The NIH program only supports biomedical research.
3. If funding is available, the NIH F30/F31 incentive should be extended to include another submission deadline each year (April or August).
4. A \$1000 incentive seems to be adequate to motivate doctoral-level students to submit proposals, so this level of should be maintained.
5. The grant-writing training needs to include very specific information for each of the funding programs incentivized as well as general instruction on grant writing.
6. Advertising for the program needs to be improved. Students, faculty, and departments all need to be aware of the program.
7. The joint UFS/RF administration of the program worked well and should be retained.

Other Incentive Programs (dollar amount)

A partial list of other Universities using similar proposal-writing incentives

University of California Merced (\$200)

<https://graduatedivision.ucmerced.edu/node/275>

University of Iowa (\$500)

<https://www.grad.uiowa.edu/fellowship-incentive-program>

UCLA Bioscience (\$3,000)

<http://bioscience.ucla.edu/fellowship-incentive-program>

UNC Charlotte (\$1,500)

<https://graduateschool.uncc.edu/faip>

UAB (\$500)

<https://www.uab.edu/graduate/students/current-students/paying/financing/individual-fellowship-incentive-program>

Penn State College of Medicine (\$1478.25)

<https://students.med.psu.edu/graduate-students/fellowship-incentive-program/>