

Resolution Supporting PhD Stipends

Whereas it should be a priority for a Tier I Research Institution adequately to support graduate education;

Whereas almost all peer Tier I Research Institutions, including Stony Brook and Binghamton within the SUNY system, have set a minimum floor of \$20,000 per academic year for stipends for TAs and RAs, as advocated by UB's "living stipend" movement;

Whereas these same peer institutions are also paying TAs' and RAs' graduate student fees;

Whereas they are doing both these things without having made any material cuts in the number of their supported students;

Whereas the administration rejected a proposal of the faculty to create a committee composed of representatives of the faculty, graduate students, and administration for the purpose of finding ways to fund a comparable floor and fees;

Whereas, acting unilaterally, the administration has instead created an unfunded mandate by requiring an increase in graduate stipends without allocating any new funds to pay for the increase beyond a bridge allocation for two years, causing the number of graduate teaching assistants in CAS, for example, to be cut by almost 26% between 2019 and 2021 at the end of the bridge period and the number of funded PhD recruits to drop in many of its departments to at most one or two for 2021-22;

Whereas for some programs, particularly those in the sciences, these cuts will impede their ability to apply for the many external grants that have a training component, where a strong track record in graduate instruction is required;

Whereas in many fields in the social and physical sciences PhD students are key contributors to faculty members' research projects, so that the cuts will impede the progress of laboratory research;

Whereas an inability to recruit graduate students in sufficient numbers may jeopardize some programs' accreditation status;

Whereas reducing the PhD student-to-faculty ratio means that a faculty member in some programs can expect to be able to advise a student only every few years, damaging the program's ability to retain and attract top faculty;

Whereas, moreover, unlike many of its peers, UB's administration has no institutional commitment to "backstopping" the RA positions funded by external research grants to faculty in the event of the end or non-renewal of such grants, a situation of precarity that makes it more difficult to attract top graduate students, especially in the health sciences;

Be it resolved that the Faculty Senate strongly urges the administration to supply financial support sufficient to fund the graduate stipend increase moving forward, to ensure that the number of funded PhD students is brought back at least to its 2019 level, to provide unit heads with the flexibility of offering some level of backstopping, and to do these things permanently, dedicating funds for that purpose over and above base unit budgets, by prioritizing them among “provostial initiatives” or by other means, as a stated policy of UB.

Reviewed and Approved by FSEC: 5/5/2021 18 for – 2 against – 3 abstain

First Reading FS: 05/11/2021

Second Reading FS: 05/11/2021 47 For – 4 Against – 5 Abstain

Promulgated by President: