

SAA Stipend Review Committee

Report to the Provost

April 1, 2011

Introduction

The BFC established the SAA Stipend Review Committee in 2009 to review SAA stipends on the Bloomington campus. The committee was formed based on a GPSO proposal to the BFC for a resolution that would mandate a campus-wide examination of SAA stipends because of concerns that IUB stipends are not on par with those of peers in the Big 10 and elsewhere. The committee is convened every other year and is organized under and reports to the Provost. The membership of the committee includes administrators, faculty members, and graduate or professional students from the College and each school that awards SAA fellowships, and is chaired by the dean of the University Graduate School.

The Committee began meeting March 2010 and completed its work March 2011, taking a full year to organize itself and determine how best to evaluate stipends going forward.

Recommendations

Norms for compensating graduate academic appointees differ widely across disciplines and in comparison with peer institutions. We do not anticipate that our own programs can compete for the best students if we try to develop rigid standards across every unit, and we do not realistically foresee any mechanism outside departments and programs better able to gauge appropriate differences than the departments and programs themselves.

However, budget pressures, tight overhead limits on grants, uncertain course enrollments and a host of other issues affect decisions regarding SAA contracts. We do recognize that differences in practices exist which lead to legitimate concerns that some SAAs are not treated fairly compared to others. These concerns are serious, affecting as they do a key component of the complex, interdependent system which is a major research university.

Consequently, the SAA Review Committee prioritizes 1) commitment to minimum standards for support, and 2) transparency in practices, with the attendant accountability, as areas for action. The Committee makes the following recommendations in support of both these priorities.

Recommendation 1: Require a Student Support Report from each unit biannually to be delivered to the SAA Review Committee in advance of its fall meeting. The Student Support Report covers:

- statement of the floor set by the unit for SAA stipends in that unit
- report of the median, as well as the lowest and highest, stipends paid in the unit based on a 10-month, base budget 50% FTE student academic appointment.
- the number of graduate or professional students enrolled in degree programs in the unit, and the number receiving base-funded student academic appointments.
- the number (or proportion) of SAAs in the unit receiving a full SAA stipend (50% FTE) and number of those receiving less
- statement of the procedures used within the unit to set the amount of stipends, select students to hold academic appointments, and finance those appointments; this statement should cover a minimum of three distinct situations chosen to illustrate the variety of procedures used in the unit. We further recommend that units establish guidelines for use by department and programs
- statement of current policy within the unit regarding:
 - students holding academic appointments within the unit whose degree program is not housed in the unit
 - students whose degree program is housed in the unit and who are holding academic appointments within that unit, but who are taking the majority of their coursework in a different unit

The report will be used by the Committee as a starting point for continued discussion of practices and policies. Following any clarifications requested from the unit, the reports are synthesized and forwarded to the Provost by the Committee together with any recommendations from the Committee.

Recommendation 2: Require units to publish policies regarding academic and medical leaves of absence for students with SAA.

Recommendation 3: When campus-wide salary increases are implemented, student academic appointees should receive a similar percentage increase in their stipends.

Recommendation 4: Request that the University Graduate School report comparable stipend data for Big 10 schools and for peer institutions every two years.

SAA Stipend Review Committee Members for 2010/2011

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Elizabeth Boling (Education)
Anthony Fargo (Journalism)

Geoffrey Fox (Informatics and Computing)
Diana Lambdin (Education)
Joseph Mace (Music)
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