

A Report on Ohio University  
Graduate Employee Working Conditions  
Compared to Our Peer Institutions



A Report of the Ohio University Graduate Employee Organization (OU GEO)  
Updated September 15, 2017

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## 1. Summary

Over summer 2017, the OU Graduate Employee Organization (OU GEO) undertook a project to compare working conditions of Ohio University graduate employees—particularly graduate assistants—to those at our peer institutions. We chose to examine our peer universities, the ten universities self-selected by Ohio University as being of comparable ranking and student populations, to analyze how universities of similar caliber prioritize their graduate employees.

The data shows that Ohio University graduate assistants have significantly lower stipends and significantly higher health insurance premiums than graduate employees at our peer institutions. Ohio University stipends cover a much smaller percentage of the cost of living than at almost all of our peer institutions. Additionally, Ohio University international students are asked to bear a financial hardship that most of our peer universities do not require—purchasing the student health insurance plan regardless of whether or not they already have health insurance coverage.

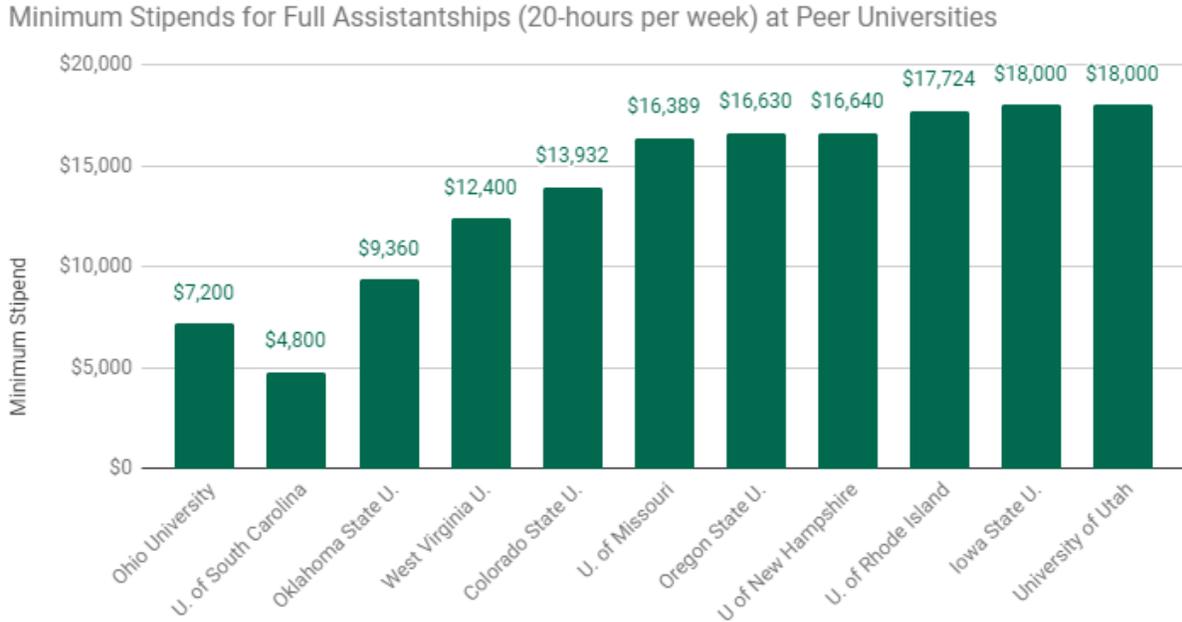
In the past, Ohio University's low assistantship stipends have been defended by the university with the claim that our tuition waivers are a part of our compensation. However, our peer institutions provide tuition waivers while also offering much higher stipends than Ohio University. This demonstrates that comparable universities to Ohio University prioritize their graduate assistants' wellbeing such that their tuition waivers do not excuse low stipends.

This report reflects data on graduate stipends, health insurance premiums, graduate fees, cost of living, graduate parental leave, immigration legal advice for students, and the mandate for international students to purchase student health insurance plans.

Through improving working conditions and providing competitive benefits for graduate assistants, Ohio University will sustain and increase its ability to attract high caliber graduate students domestically and internationally. These students will contribute high quality work to Ohio University in research and teaching. Better benefits will also allow current graduate employees to more effectively serve their existing students. As the slogan from the 2012 Chicago teachers' strike states, "Our working conditions are our students' learning conditions." Providing competitive benefits will ultimately serve the whole of Ohio University: our undergraduate students, the professors whom we assist in research, the institution's reputation, and graduate students and our families.

The Ohio University Graduate Employee Organization hopes that this report illuminates the challenges faced by Ohio University graduate assistants and other graduate employees of the university and that it serves to initiate a conversation about improving working conditions for all Ohio University graduate employees.

**2. Ohio University minimum graduate assistantship stipends are much lower than almost all of our peer institutions.**



The minimum stipend for a graduate assistant with a full appointment (15-20 hours per week) at Ohio University is \$7,200 annually.<sup>1</sup> Based on our research, nine of our peer institutions (90%) offer higher minimum stipends for their graduate assistants than Ohio University. Six of our peer institutions (60%) have minimum stipends more than double that of Ohio University. Ohio University’s assistantship stipends fall far below what is offered at comparable universities. For the full breakdown of how we calculated this data, please see **Appendix A: Data on minimum assistantship stipends at our peer universities**. Also note that most of our peer institutions publicly post this data, unlike Ohio University.

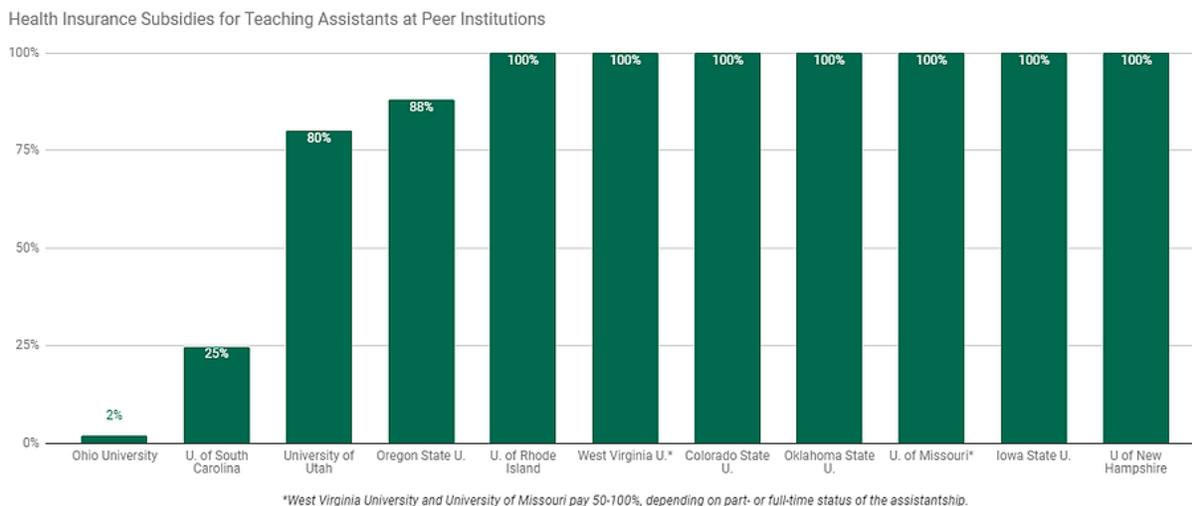
According to David Koonce, Associate Dean of the Graduate College, the average stipend in Fall 2016 for a graduate assistant with a full appointment was \$6,580 for the semester, or what would be \$13,160 annually, assuming the assistantship remained constant for the academic year.<sup>2</sup> The *average* stipend at Ohio University is lower than the *minimum* stipend at seven of our peer institutions (70%).

<sup>1</sup> Elliot Long, phone interview with Lisa Poston, Budget Manager, Graduate College, Ohio University, August 14, 2017.

<sup>2</sup> Elliot Long, meeting with David Koonce, Associate Dean, Graduate College, Ohio University, September 13, 2017.

**We ask that Ohio University raise the minimum stipend for graduate assistantships to match the average of our peer institutions: \$14,387.50 annually. This is almost double the current minimum assistantship. Addressing this difference will make Ohio University competitive with its peer institutions and recognize the hard work of its graduate assistants. Competitive benefits, higher stipends, would allow Ohio University to attract stronger prospective students to the university. This will strengthen the university's excellence in research and in teaching.**

### 3. Health insurance subsidies for graduate assistants with full appointments at Ohio University are lower than at all of our peer institutions.



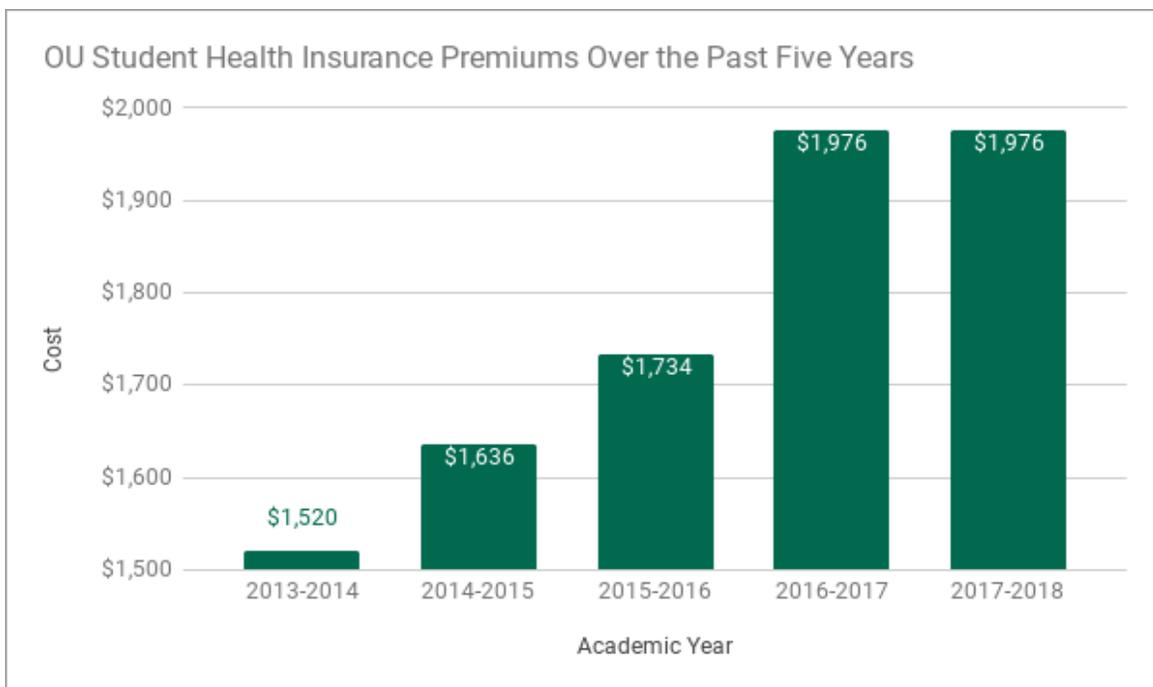
At seven out of ten of our peer institutions (70%), health insurance is entirely subsidized by the university for graduate assistants with full appointments.<sup>3</sup> Ohio University is lagging far behind *all* of our peer institutions in providing affordable health insurance for its graduate assistants. Ohio University currently subsidizes health insurance for students with graduate appointments by \$40 per semester.<sup>4</sup> With the cost of the student health insurance plan in 2017-2018, this amounts to about 2% of the total cost.

<sup>3</sup> “Financial Aid 2016-2017,” University of Rhode Island, accessed July 26, 2017, <http://web.uri.edu/catalog/financial-aid/>; “Mandatory Health Insurance – Student Health Services,” University of South Carolina, accessed July 26, 2017, <https://www.sa.sc.edu/shs/billing/insurance/>; “Graduate Assistant Insurance Plan – Student Health Services,” Oregon State University, accessed July 26, 2017, <http://studenthealth.oregonstate.edu/insurance/graduate-assistant-insurance-plan>; “Subsidized Graduate Student Health Insurance – Fellowships and Benefits,” University of Utah, accessed July 26, 2017, <https://gradschool.utah.edu/tbp/insurance-information/>; “Health Insurance – Graduate College,” Iowa State University, accessed July 26, 2017, [https://www.grad-college.iastate.edu/prospective/campus\\_services/health\\_insurance.php](https://www.grad-college.iastate.edu/prospective/campus_services/health_insurance.php); “Student Medical Insurance Subsidy Amount & Coverage – Office of Graduate Studies,” University of Missouri, last modified June 29, 2017, <http://gradstudies.missouri.edu/financials/student-medical-insurance/subsidy-program/amount-coverage.php>; “Benefits Education – Student Health Insurance,” Oklahoma State University, accessed July 26, 2017, <https://hr.okstate.edu/benefits-education-student-health-insurance/>; “Assistantship Health Insurance Contribution,” Colorado State University, accessed July 26, 2017, <http://graduateschool.colostate.edu/financial/assistantships/assistantship-health-contribution/>; “Graduate Assistants – Student Insurance Office,” West Virginia University, last modified July 18, 2017, <http://studentinsurance.wvu.edu/graduate-assistants/>; “Tuition and Fees,” Ohio University, accessed July 26, 2017, <https://www.ohio.edu/graduate/tuition.cfm>.

<sup>4</sup> This \$40 amount comes directly from student billing accounts; we could not find it listed on the OU Graduate College’s website. The subsidy has been \$40 for at least the past five years.

Further, at Oregon State University, they also subsidize health insurance for spouses and children of graduate assistants by 88%. Ohio University does not provide extra subsidies for family members.

Ohio University health insurance costs have increased by 30% in the past five years.<sup>5</sup> Meanwhile, graduate assistantship stipends have not similarly increased, and the health insurance subsidy from Ohio University has remained \$40 per semester. This increase in health insurance premiums has placed the full burden on the students paying for the plan out of pocket, particularly for international students who are unable to opt out of the student insurance plan even if they have their own insurance and for graduate students who are insuring spouses and/or children.



**We ask that Ohio University match the average health insurance subsidy of our peer institutions: 89% of the total cost. This would leave OU graduate assistants paying about \$217.36 for health insurance premiums per semester instead of \$1,936 per semester. Addressing this issue would alleviate a large financial burden that is placed on Ohio University graduate assistants, one that currently claims a significant portion of their low stipends. Increasing health insurance subsidies would particularly assist international students who are required to purchase the student health insurance under current policies.<sup>6</sup>**

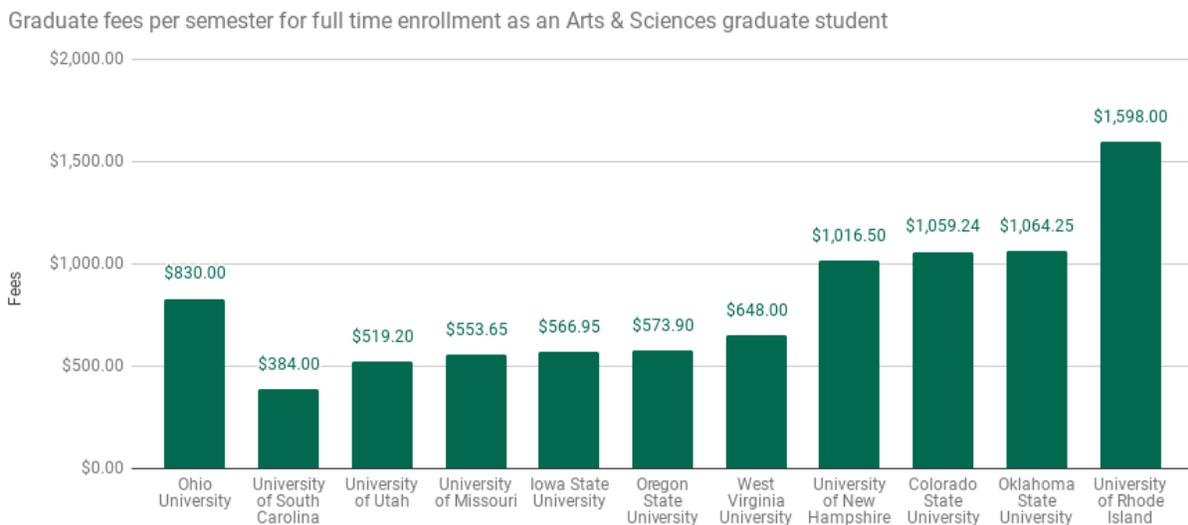
<sup>5</sup> These numbers come directly from student billing accounts. We were unable to find these amounts listed on Ohio University's website.

<sup>6</sup> See Section 8 of this document for information about this particular requirement of international students.

**4. Ohio University has higher graduate fees than average, and over half of the OU graduate general fee is used to support programs utilized mainly by undergraduate students, not graduate students.**

Comparing graduate fees across institutions is difficult as fees are calculated differently at each institution, but this does not mean that the fees cannot be compared. In order to understand how Ohio University’s graduate fees compare to peer institutions, we created a hypothetical situation to investigate the fees a typical graduate student incurs. We looked at the fees for a graduate student enrolled in the minimum number of credit hours to be considered full time (typically nine credit hours) who is a student in the College of Arts & Sciences. We did not include non-residential fees in our calculations. We included all mandatory and optional fees in our total. We also did not include subsidies for fees, which OU and several of our peer institutions provide for graduate assistants.

60% of our peer institutions have graduate fees lower than Ohio University.



Ohio University’s graduate fees for a full time graduate student in the College of Arts & Sciences for 2017-2018 include the graduate general fee (\$628 per semester), the FAR graduate technology fee (\$97), the student info systems and network fee (\$33), the student wellbeing fee (\$60), and the student legal services fee (\$12).<sup>7</sup> This totals \$830 per semester. We did not include parking fees in our calculations.

The average of all of our peer institution’s graduate fees is \$798.37, an amount that is less than our graduate fee total at Ohio University.<sup>8</sup> If we exclude the University of Rhode Island, an

<sup>7</sup> “Graduate Tuition and Fees,” Ohio University, accessed September 1, 2017, <https://www.ohio.edu/bursar/graduate-tuition.cfm>.

<sup>8</sup> “Graduate Tuition and Fees,” Colorado State University, accessed September 3, 2017, <https://webcms.colostate.edu/registrar/media/sites/29/2015/01/Graduate-Base-Tuition-and-Fees-17-18.pdf>; “Fees for

outlier with much higher fees than all of our other peer universities, from this calculation, the average graduate fees of the other nine institutions totals \$709.52—more than \$120 less than what we pay at Ohio University.

Comparing our graduate fees to our peer institutions shows that Ohio University graduate students are not paying less than our peers in fees. While the fees are much higher at four of our peer institutions, graduate assistants at those four institutions are also paid significantly more through their stipends, which makes these fees more affordable. **Ohio University graduate assistants are paid significantly less through their stipends, are paying significantly more for health insurance premiums, and are paying just as much if not more in fees than our peers.**

In considering how to reduce OU graduate fees, we look first and foremost to the graduate general fee. The Ohio University graduate general fee is \$628 per semester, or \$1,256 annually.<sup>9</sup> Ohio University currently subsidizes the graduate general fee for graduate assistants by \$268 annually, or about 19.7%.<sup>10</sup> Several of our peer universities also subsidize their graduate fees for graduate assistants, including Oregon State University (who subsidize 90% of their graduate fees)<sup>11</sup> and the University of Rhode Island (who subsidize 20% of their graduate fees).<sup>12</sup>

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Fall 2018 and Spring 2018,” Iowa State University, accessed September 3, 2017, <http://www.registrar.iastate.edu/sites/default/files/uploads/fees/Fall17-Spring18/updated/Gradfall17spring18.pdf>; “Tuition and Fees for 2017 - 2018,” Oklahoma State University, accessed September 3, 2017, <https://bursar.okstate.edu/tuition-and-fees>; “Oregon State University Tuition & Fee Schedules Academic Year 2017-18 and Summer Term 2018,” Oregon State University, accessed September 3, 2017, [http://fa.oregonstate.edu/sites/fa.oregonstate.edu/files/budget/tuition\\_fees/ay2017-2018-summer2018\\_oregon-state-university-tuition-fee-schedules-4.21.2017.pdf](http://fa.oregonstate.edu/sites/fa.oregonstate.edu/files/budget/tuition_fees/ay2017-2018-summer2018_oregon-state-university-tuition-fee-schedules-4.21.2017.pdf); “Fees - Fall 2017,” University of Missouri, accessed September 3, 2017, <http://cashiers.missouri.edu/costs/>; “Graduate,” University of New Hampshire, accessed September 3, 2017, <http://www.unh.edu/business-services/tuitgrad>; “Tuition and Fees,” University of Rhode Island, accessed September 3, 2017, <http://web.uri.edu/enrollment/tuition-and-fees-full-time/>; “Tuition & Fees,” University of South Carolina, accessed September 3, 2017, <http://www.gradschool.sc.edu/students/paying-tuition.asp>; “GeneralGraduateFeeRes,” University of Utah, accessed September 3, 2017, <http://fbs.admin.utah.edu/download/income/Graduate/GeneralGraduateFeeRes.pdf>; “Graduate Tuition and Fees,” West Virginia University, accessed September 3, 2017, <http://tuition.wvu.edu/graduate>.

<sup>9</sup> “Graduate Tuition and Fees,” Ohio University, accessed September 1, 2017, <https://www.ohio.edu/bursar/graduate-tuition.cfm>.

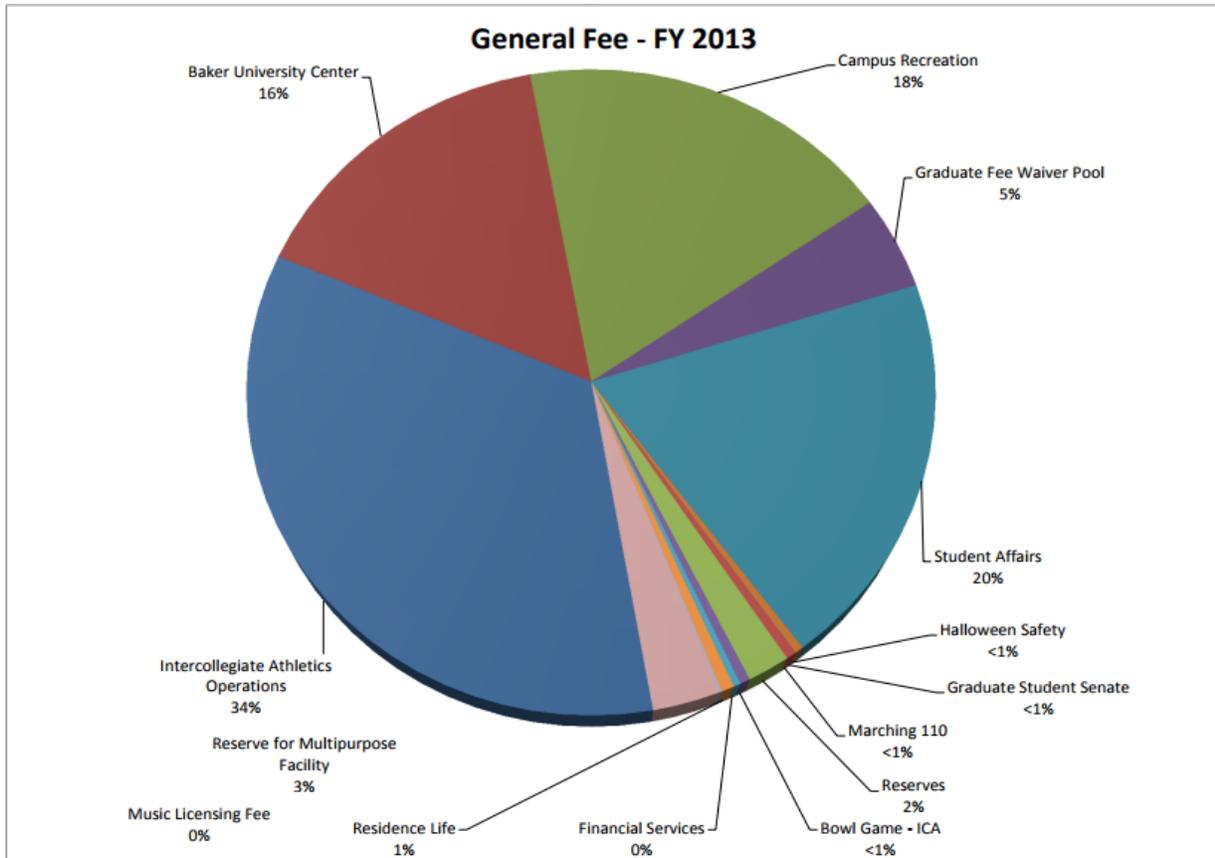
<sup>10</sup> This number comes from student billing accounts as the graduate general fee subsidy is not listed on the Graduate College website.

<sup>11</sup> “Collective Bargaining Agreement,” Coalition of Graduate Employees, accessed September 3, 2017, [http://cge6069.org/about/cba/#Article 12](http://cge6069.org/about/cba/#Article%2012).

<sup>12</sup> “AGREEMENT BETWEEN RHODE ISLAND COUNCIL ON POSTSECONDARY EDUCATION AND GRADUATE ASSISTANTS UNITED/ AMERICAN ASSOCIATION OF UNIVERSITY PROFESSORS (GAU/AAUP) 2014-2018,” University of Rhode Island, accessed September 3, 2017, <http://web.uri.edu/hr/files/GAU-AAUP-2014-2018-Contract-FINAL.pdf>.

This chart posted on the website for the Budget department of Ohio University details how the combined graduate and undergraduate general fee funds were allocated in FY 2013.<sup>13</sup> We are currently requesting a more recent breakdown of how the general fee funds are allocated. The largest expenses in FY 2013 were Intercollegiate Athletics Operations (34% of that total), Student Affairs (20%), and Campus Recreation (18%). These are services that graduate students, when surveyed by Graduate Student Senate in 2016-2017, stated that they rarely used.<sup>14</sup>

According to Katie Hensel, Budget Director of Ohio University’s Finance and Administration department, the graduate general fee amounted to approximately \$3.1 million in FY 2017. While the graduate general fee amount has remained constant, Hensel notes that “the undergraduate general fee revenue has been declining as a result of the [undergraduate tuition] guarantee.” Undergraduate contributions to these largely undergraduate services have been reduced while graduate student contributions remain unchanged.<sup>15</sup>



<sup>13</sup> This image was available on the Budget Department’s website, but it has since been removed. The image also appears in the Graduate Student Senate report “Ohio University Graduate Students and the General Fee: How Graduate Students Use and Value General Fee-Funded Programs” (see n.23).

<sup>14</sup> Angela Chapman and Ian Armstrong, “Ohio University Graduate Students and the General Fee: How Graduate Students Use and Value General Fee-Funded Programs,” Ohio University Graduate Student Senate, September 13, 2016.

<sup>15</sup> Elliot Long, email from Katie Hensel, Budget Director, Finance and Administration, Ohio University, September 8, 2017.

**We ask that Ohio University meet the recommendations of the 2016-2017 Graduate Student Senate regarding the graduate general fee by:**

1. Increasing the graduate general fee buydown,
2. Mentioning the graduate general fee in the admissions letters to the Graduate College, and
3. Making the campus recreation fee optional like the wellbeing and student legal services fees.<sup>16</sup>

**Addressing these three issues will bring our fees closer to the average fees of our peer universities, will increase transparency by informing incoming students of the fees that will be deducted from their stipends should they choose to attend Ohio University, and will recognize that graduate students do not utilize the same campus resources as undergraduate students.**

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<sup>16</sup> Ibid.

**5. Much of a graduate assistant’s stipend is paid back to the university for fees and health insurance premiums rather than going towards his or her living expenses.**

Percentage of a \$7,200 Stipend Spent on Fees and Insurance



For a student in the College of Arts and Sciences at the minimum stipend for a full graduate appointment, fees and insurance devour almost half of their stipend—47%.<sup>17</sup> This is taking into account the existing subsidies for the general fee and student health insurance plan, and this is if the student is only insuring him- or herself. This leaves only \$3,808.00 per year to cover living expenses: housing, food, transportation, childcare, and bills. This is not even enough to cover the average cost of housing in Athens County for a single person: \$6,600 per year.<sup>18</sup>

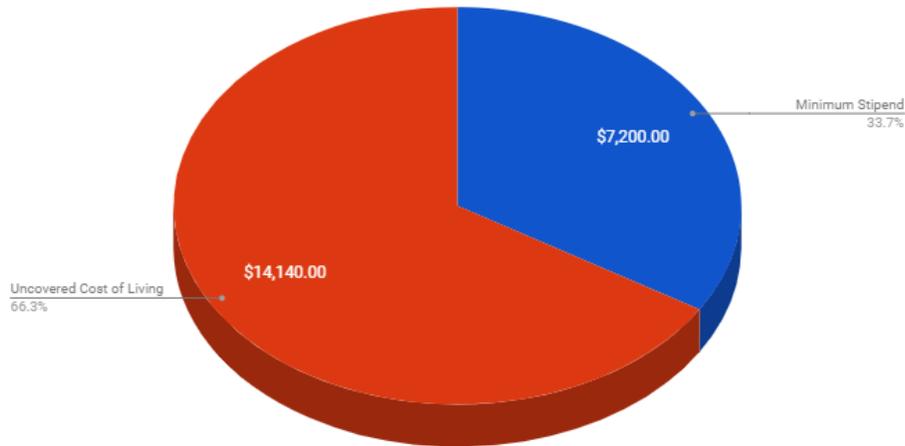
According to the MIT Living Wage calculator, a living wage in Athens County is \$21,331.<sup>19</sup> A \$7,200 stipend is only 33.7% of that total amount, and this is ignoring the fact that almost \$1,500 of that stipend is already going towards graduate fees. Further, students who have assistantships agree to not have outside employment to subsidize their cost of living, and international students are unable to work outside of the university due to visa requirements. This prohibits students from finding income elsewhere.

<sup>17</sup> “Premium Rates and Coverage Periods,” Ohio University, accessed September 3, 2017, <https://www.ohio.edu/student-insurance/rates-coverage.cfm>; “Graduate Tuition and Fees,” Ohio University, accessed September 3, 2017, <https://www.ohio.edu/bursar/graduate-tuition.cfm>.

<sup>18</sup> “Living Wage Calculator - Living Wage Calculation for Athens County, Ohio,” Living Wage Calculator, Massachusetts Institute of Technology, accessed September 3, 2017, <http://livingwage.mit.edu/counties/39009>.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid.

Percentage of the Cost of Living in Athens County Covered by the Minimum Graduate Assistantship Stipend: 33.7%



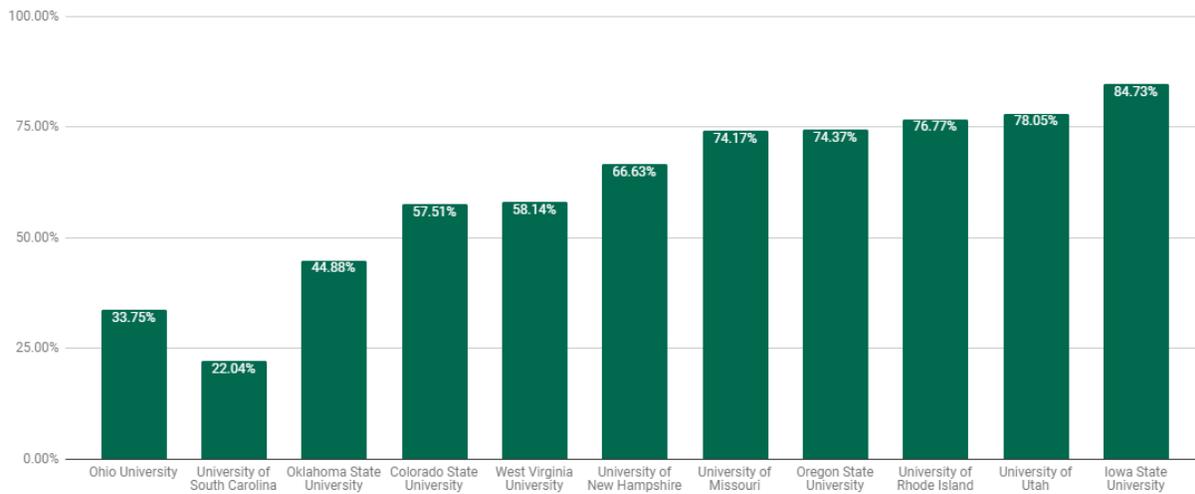
OU GEO wanted to consider the minimum stipend amounts at our peer institutions against the cost of living in those institutions' respective counties. While the cost of living in the counties of many of our peer institutions is higher than the cost of living in Athens County, Ohio, their stipends still cover a much larger percentage of the overall cost of living. At 80% of our peer institutions, the minimum stipend of a graduate student covered over one-half (50%) of the estimated cost of living. At 50% of our peer institutions, the minimum stipend of a graduate assistant covered about three-fourths (75%) of the cost of living.<sup>20</sup>

The following chart only examines the percentage of the cost of living covered by the minimum stipend at each university. It does not account for the varying amounts paid for health insurance premiums and fees out of those stipends at the different institutions. When one accounts for the fact that Ohio University graduate students are paying almost \$2,000 more in health insurance premiums than 70% of our peers and are paying just as much if not more than our peers in graduate fees, and that these amounts are being deducted from an already low stipend, the comparison is actually much more dire than it appears here.

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<sup>20</sup> The minimum stipend figures are cited in point 2 of this report. The cost of living for each of these institutions' respective counties was determined based on the MIT Living Wage Calculator: "Living Wage Calculator," Massachusetts Institute of Technology, accessed September 3, 2017, <http://livingwage.mit.edu/>.

Percentage of the Cost of Living covered by the minimum graduate assistantship stipend



**Ohio University's graduate assistantship stipends are far too low, and the fees and health insurance premium costs are far too high to support a single adult, let alone someone with a family. Though the cost of living at many of our peer institutions is higher than the cost of living in Athens County, the minimum assistantships at 90% of our peer institutions cover a much higher portion of that cost of living. Ohio University needs to address its low assistantship stipends, high health insurance costs, and high fees in order to make Ohio University competitive among its peers and to acknowledge the contributions of graduate employees to the overall university. Addressing these issues will help Ohio University graduate assistants approach a living wage for their work.**

## **6. Half of our peer institutions provide paid graduate parental leave, and most have policies providing extensions on deadlines for students who are new parents.**

Graduate parental leave is offered for graduate assistants at half of our peer institutions:

### **Up to six weeks paid leave for graduate employees:**

Iowa State University<sup>21</sup>

Colorado State University<sup>22</sup>

University of Rhode Island<sup>23</sup>

### **Up to twelve weeks paid leave for graduate employees:**

Oregon State University<sup>24</sup>

University of Utah<sup>25</sup>

The University of South Carolina also has a policy that provides students with up to a semester of leave for a birth or the adoption of a child under six years old. Their family leave policy does not guarantee paid leave, but departments “are strongly encouraged to” provide financial support and resume assistantships “whenever possible.”<sup>26</sup> The policy also allows students to continue their student health insurance plan and gives them extensions on completing their programs.

According to the University of South Carolina family leave policy:

The graduate student taking family leave will receive a one year extension of all academic responsibilities, including time to degree, removal of incomplete grades, and course in-date time. During family leave the graduate student will be on special enrollment (Z-status) status and must have health coverage.<sup>27</sup>

Ohio University has no graduate family leave or parental leave policy and does not offer paid leave for the birth or adoption of a child. Ohio University currently has process for requesting a leave of absence as a student, but this is not accompanied by a guaranteed extension of deadlines for one’s program. Further, it explicitly prohibits making “significant use of university resources

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<sup>21</sup> “Benefits,” Iowa State University, accessed September 3, 2017, [https://www.grad-college.iastate.edu/post\\_doc/benefits.php](https://www.grad-college.iastate.edu/post_doc/benefits.php).

<sup>22</sup> “CSU Policy: Graduate Student Parental Leave,” Colorado State University, accessed September 3, 2017, <http://policylibrary.colostate.edu/policy.aspx?id=743>.

<sup>23</sup> “AGREEMENT BETWEEN RHODE ISLAND COUNCIL ON POSTSECONDARY EDUCATION AND GRADUATE ASSISTANTS UNITED/ AMERICAN ASSOCIATION OF UNIVERSITY PROFESSORS (GAU/AAUP) 2014-2018,” University of Rhode Island, accessed September 3, 2017, <http://web.uri.edu/hr/files/GAU-AAUP-2014-2018-Contract-FINAL.pdf>.

<sup>24</sup> “Graduate Assistantships Family Medical Leave Policy,” Oregon State University, accessed September 3, 2017, <http://hr.oregonstate.edu/benefits/leaves/family-and-medical-leave-act-fmla/graduate-assistantships-family-medical-leave>.

<sup>25</sup> “Resources,” The Graduate School, University of Utah, accessed September 3, 2017, <http://gradschool.utah.edu/directors-of-graduate-studies/resources/>.

<sup>26</sup> “Graduate Academic Regulations,” University of South Carolina, accessed September 3, 2017, <http://bulletin.sc.edu/content.php?catoid=52&navoid=1287>.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid.

and services or engage in significant consultation with the faculty.”<sup>28</sup> There is no differentiation between parental leave and other kinds of leave, and there is no option to continue the Ohio University student health insurance plan while on leave—a necessity for new parents and their children. This lack of a parental leave policy leaves students who become new parents vulnerable to losing their positions and to not completing their programs.

**We urge Ohio University to create a parental leave policy that matches three of our peer institutions: offer up to six weeks of paid leave for birthing parents and up to three weeks of paid leave for non-birthing parents. This policy should include an extension of time to complete a student’s degree and to complete incompletes—an additional year per new child.**

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<sup>28</sup> “Academic Policies and Procedures,” Ohio University, accessed September 3, 2017, <http://www.catalogs.ohio.edu/content.php?catoid=55&navoid=4216&hl=%22leave%22&returnto=search#leave>.

**7. Ohio University currently offers no immigration legal advice for international students—a service several of our peer institutions offer.**

Ohio University does not provide immigration legal advice to international students through International Student and Faculty Services, the Office of Global Affairs, or through Student Legal Services.

Three of our peer universities explicitly state that they provide immigration legal advice for their students: Oregon State University,<sup>29</sup> Iowa State University,<sup>30</sup> and Colorado State University.<sup>31</sup> All of these provide immigration legal advice through student legal services on campus. Neither Ohio University nor OU student legal services currently offer legal advice for students regarding their immigration situations. This has become an even more urgent need as President Trump’s policies have affected many of our international students’ visa situations and abilities to travel.

A model for how Ohio University might provide international students with immigration legal advice is Colorado State University. According to CSU’s Student Legal Services’ website:

CSU Student Legal Services contracts with two experienced immigration attorneys from the community, Cristina Steele-Kaplan and Penny Gonzales-Soto, to advise undocumented and international students in the area of immigration law. They provide individual, confidential advisements on campus approximately one day per month during fall and spring semesters. There is no charge to students.<sup>32</sup>

Ohio University student legal services or ISFS could contract with local or nearby immigration lawyers to provide services to students once a month. This would make services available without too high of a cost to the university or student legal services.

**We urge Ohio University to follow this model practiced by Colorado State University or to create a similar service to offer immigration legal advice to Ohio University students at a minimal cost. This would meet an urgent need of many international students, many of whom are graduate employees.**

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<sup>29</sup> “ASOSU Student Legal Services,” Oregon State University, accessed September 3, 2017, <http://asosu.oregonstate.edu/asosu/legalservices>.

<sup>30</sup> “Services,” Student Legal Services, Iowa State University, accessed September 3, 2017, <http://www.studentlegal.dso.iastate.edu/services>.

<sup>31</sup> “Immigration,” Student Legal Services, Colorado State University, accessed September 3, 2017, <https://sls.colostate.edu/immigration/>.

<sup>32</sup> Ibid.

## **8. Most of our peer universities allow international students to opt out of the student health insurance plan if they have other insurance, unlike Ohio University.**

At Ohio University, international students *must* pay for the student health insurance for themselves and families with no option to waive the plan if they have other insurance (as domestic students can).<sup>33</sup> This creates a tremendous financial burden for international students, particularly those with families, particularly when Ohio University only subsidizes health insurance by 2% for students with assistantships.<sup>34</sup> In some cases, health insurance premiums alone can devour a graduate assistant's entire stipend. Insuring oneself, a spouse, and two children costs \$7,904 per year—an amount that exceeds OU's minimum stipend for graduate assistants.<sup>35</sup>

However, seven out of ten of our peer universities (70%) allow their international students to waive their student insurance plans if they have other insurance that (a) meets visa requirements and (b) meets the university's standards. This includes Colorado State University,<sup>36</sup> Iowa State University,<sup>37</sup> the University of Missouri,<sup>38</sup> the University of Rhode Island,<sup>39</sup> the University of South Carolina,<sup>40</sup> the University of Utah,<sup>41</sup> and West Virginia University.<sup>42</sup> At Oregon State University, international students who are non-residential students can opt out of health insurance. International students taking classes on campus must purchase their student health insurance policy.<sup>43</sup> Only at Oklahoma State University<sup>44</sup> and the University of New Hampshire<sup>45</sup>

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<sup>33</sup>“Ohio University Student Health Program,” Ohio University, accessed September 3, 2017, <https://www.ohio.edu/medicine/admissions/accepted/survival-manual/health-program.cfm>.

<sup>34</sup> See point 3 of this report, “Health insurance subsidies for graduate assistants with full appointments at Ohio University are lower than at all of our peer institutions.”

<sup>35</sup> “Premium Rates and Coverage Periods,” Ohio University, accessed September 3, 2017, <https://www.ohio.edu/student-insurance/rates-coverage.cfm>.

<sup>36</sup> “Health Care and Insurance,” Colorado State University, accessed September 3, 2017, [http://iss.colostate.edu/health\\_insurance/](http://iss.colostate.edu/health_insurance/).

<sup>37</sup> “Health Insurance,” International Students and Scholars Office, Iowa State University, accessed September 3, 2017, <https://www.iss.iastate.edu/info/new-and-incoming-scholars/j-1-pre-arrival/health-insurance>.

<sup>38</sup> “Insurance,” University of Missouri, accessed September 3, 2017, <https://international.missouri.edu/come-to-mu/students/insurance.php>.

<sup>39</sup> “Health Insurance Waiver,” University of Rhode Island, accessed September 3, 2017, <https://health.uri.edu/health-insurance-waiver/>.

<sup>40</sup> “Mandatory Health Insurance,” University of South Carolina, accessed September 3, 2017, <https://www.sa.sc.edu/shs/billing/insurance/>.

<sup>41</sup> “International Student Health and Insurance Information,” University of Utah, accessed September 3, 2017, <http://studenthealth.utah.edu/international-students/>.

<sup>42</sup> “Waiver Information,” West Virginia University, accessed August 29, 2017, <http://studentinsurance.wvu.edu/waiver-information>.

<sup>43</sup> “International Student Insurance Plan,” Oregon State University, accessed August 29, 2017, <http://studenthealth.oregonstate.edu/insurance/international-student-insurance-plan>.

<sup>44</sup> “Insurance,” International Students & Scholars, Oklahoma State University, accessed August 29, 2017, <http://iss.okstate.edu/insurance>.

<sup>45</sup> “UNH SHBP Enrollment/Waiver Portal,” University of New Hampshire, accessed August 29, 2017, <https://unh.healthplansinc.com/members/about-the-shbp/>.

must international students always buy the student health insurance plan, regardless of whether or not they are already insured.

**We urge Ohio University to change its policy to match those of the majority of our peer institutions. If an international student already has a health insurance plan that meets visa requirements, that student should not be required to spend their already limited stipend on even more health insurance for him- or herself and family members. Eliminating this requirement removes a tremendous financial burden unnecessarily placed on many international students.**

## **9. Conclusion**

Ohio University is lagging far behind its peer institutions in terms of wages and benefits for graduate assistants. These peer universities, schools of similar size and resources to Ohio University, are providing far better stipends and benefits for graduate assistants, showing that they value their graduate assistants' work and prioritize their graduate assistants' wellbeing. The Ohio University Graduate Employee Organization requests that Ohio University evaluate this assembled data, examine its financial priorities, and reconsider what fair compensation for its graduate employees looks like. Addressing this need of graduate employees will improve the overall university in attracting strong prospective students and in alleviating many financial burdens of existing students so that they can focus on their academic work and teaching responsibilities.

## **Appendix A: Data on minimum assistantship stipends at our peer universities**

**Colorado State University** pays graduate assistants with full appointments a minimum of \$1,548 per month for nine months, or a total of \$13,932 annually.<sup>46</sup>

**Iowa State University** pays graduate assistants working 20 hours per week a minimum of \$2,000 per month for a nine months, which is \$18,000 annually. If a student has a ¾-time appointment (30 hours per week), the minimum stipend is \$3,000 per month, or \$27,000 annually. For the 2017-2018 academic year, the minimum stipend for a twenty-hour-per-week commitment will be increasing to \$2,100 per month, or \$18,900 annually.<sup>47</sup>

**Oklahoma State University** pays graduate assistants a minimum of \$1,040 per month for a nine-month contract, or \$9,360 annually.<sup>48</sup>

**Oregon State University** pays graduate assistants a minimum of \$3,771 Full-Time Equivalent pay per month for nine months. For a twenty-hour-per-week commitment (.49 FTE), this equals \$16,630 annually.<sup>49</sup> This amount is also stipulated in their most recent contract with their graduate student union.<sup>50</sup>

The **University of Missouri** pays graduate assistants who are masters students a minimum of \$16,389 annually for a twenty-hour-per-week commitment. They pay doctoral students a minimum of \$18,026 annually for a twenty-hour-per-week commitment.<sup>51</sup>

The **University of New Hampshire** pays graduate assistants different annual minimums depending upon a person's experience and education. Level 1 (masters students and Ph.D. students without masters degrees and with less than two years of experience as GAs or RAs) minimum pay is \$17,640. Level 2 (Ph.D. students with masters degrees or at least two years of

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<sup>46</sup> "Graduate Assistant Compensation," Colorado State University, accessed August 29, 2017, <http://www.hrs.colostate.edu/compensation/classification-grad.html>.

<sup>47</sup> "Stipend Ranges," Iowa State University, accessed August 29, 2017, <https://www.grad-college.iastate.edu/documents/finance/stipend-ranges.pdf>.

<sup>48</sup> Elliot Long, phone interview with Clara Orr, Financial Assistant, Graduate College, Oklahoma State University, August 21, 2017.

<sup>49</sup> Jennifer Dennis-Brown, "2017-18 Graduate Assistantship Appointment & Salary Guidelines," Oregon State University, March 2, 2017, accessed August 29, 2017, [http://gradschool.oregonstate.edu/sites/gradschool.oregonstate.edu/files/imce/finances/2017-2018\\_graduate\\_assistant\\_appointment\\_salary\\_guidelines.pdf](http://gradschool.oregonstate.edu/sites/gradschool.oregonstate.edu/files/imce/finances/2017-2018_graduate_assistant_appointment_salary_guidelines.pdf).

<sup>50</sup> "Collective Bargaining Agreement," Coalition of Graduate Employees, accessed August 29, 2017, <http://cge6069.org/about/cba/>.

<sup>51</sup> Elliot Long, phone interview with Karen Gruen, Coordinator, Graduate Medical Insurance Subsidy Program, Graduate School, University of Missouri, August 23, 2017.

experience as GAs or RAs) minimum pay is \$18,760. Level 3 (Ph.D. students at candidacy) minimum pay is \$20,060.<sup>52</sup>

The **University of Rhode Island** pays graduate assistants different annual minimums depending upon a person's experience and education. Level 1 minimum is \$17,724, Level 2 minimum is \$18,080, and Level 3 minimum is \$18,852 for twenty-hour-per-week commitments.<sup>53</sup>

The **University of South Carolina** pays graduate assistants a minimum of \$2,400 per semester or \$4,800 annually, for a twenty-hour-per-week commitment.<sup>54</sup>

The **University of Utah** pays graduate assistants a minimum of \$18,000 annually for University Teaching Assistantships.<sup>55</sup>

**West Virginia University** pays graduate assistants a minimum of \$6,200 per semester for twenty-hour-per-week commitments, which is \$12,400 annually.<sup>56</sup>

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<sup>52</sup> "Graduate Appointments 2017-2018," University of New Hampshire, accessed August 29, 2017, [http://gradschool.unh.edu/pdf/grad\\_appt\\_1718.pdf](http://gradschool.unh.edu/pdf/grad_appt_1718.pdf).

<sup>53</sup> "Assistantship Stipends," University of Rhode Island, accessed August 29, 2017, <http://web.uri.edu/graduate-school/assistantship-stipends/>.

<sup>54</sup> Elliot Long, phone interview with Wanda Barr, Executive Administrative Coordinator, Graduate School, University of South Carolina, August 22, 2017.

<sup>55</sup> "Graduate Fellowship Opportunities," University of Utah, accessed August 29, 2017, <http://gradschool.utah.edu/tbp/graduate-fellowship-opportunities/>.

<sup>56</sup> "Benefits," West Virginia University, accessed August 29, 2017, <http://graduateeducation.wvu.edu/funding-and-cost/graduate-assistantships/policies/benefits>.