

## **MEMORANDUM**

**TO:** Vice Presidents, Deans, Chairs, Graduate Advisors

**FROM:** Philip Cohen, Dean, Graduate School and Vice Provost, Academic Affairs

**RE:** GTA GRA Policies, AY 09-10

**DATE:** 29 June 2009

**cc:** Donald Bobbitt, Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs; Ron Eisenbaumer, Vice President for Research and Federal Relations; Office of Graduate Studies Staff; Academic and Non Academic Accountants and Executive and Administrative Assistants

Recent discussions about increasing Graduate Teaching Assistant compensation as part of the university's push towards Tier I status have revealed several difficulties with our policies for Graduate Teaching Assistants and Graduate Research Assistants: their duties are not always consistent with their degree program, and teaching and research responsibilities are not always carefully differentiated by job title. This memo outlines our policies in these areas for GTAs and GRAs employed by academic and non-academic units, effective for AY 09-10. In order to assist units in complying with these policies, the Office of the Provost will allow transfers between GTA and GRA budgets this summer.

Employment of graduate students in teaching and research positions enables them to pursue their graduate education, strengthens the quality of their educational experience, and helps the university develop the quality of its graduate programs. GTAs and GRAs also provide valuable and necessary services to the university. Because GTAs and GRAs are first and foremost students, their duties should have a direct relationship to their academic program of work. The Texas Education Code (Sec.54.063) requires that the non-resident tuition waiver for GTAs and GRAs be dependent on this direct relationship. The determination of whether the duties of a particular graduate assistantship are related to the student's degree program resides with the academic program in which the student is enrolled and with the Office of Graduate Studies. In situations where the employment is inconsistent with their program of work, graduate students may be hired as university employees. As such, they would lose the non-resident tuition waiver unless they receive it for another reason such as holding a competitively awarded fellowship of \$1000 or more.

Duties performed by GTAs and GRAs should also be clearly distinct from each other. In the past, we have allowed graduate students who did not meet the higher standard of English proficiency required of GTAs to serve as GRAs and perform duties related to teaching that did not place them in front of students. In

future, all GTA-related duties must be performed by GTAs and only duties related to teaching may be performed by GTAs. Students paid to conduct research or perform research-related activities should be appointed as GRAs. Thus GTAs may not be used to assist faculty in their research. If students cannot meet the English proficiency standard required for a GTA appointment, they are eligible for a one-semester exemption in order to improve their language skills and may hold a GTA appointment during that semester. Alternatively, an employing unit may appoint such a person as a GTA if the chair certifies in writing to the Office of Graduate Studies that the GTA's duties, such as serving as a faculty member's grader, will not place him or her in front of students in a teaching capacity.