University of South Dakota
FY2015 Graduate Assistant Hiring Process

**GENERAL PRINCIPLES**

1. The University of South Dakota Graduate School is the largest in the state. Our graduate and professional programs are committed to attracting and retaining high quality graduate students from the state, nation, and world. To be competitive with our regional peers, the University needs to continue to offer competitive graduate assistantships. University-funded graduate assistantships should be awarded based solely on student qualifications and the needs of academic and research programs.

2. It is the responsibility of graduate programs to recruit students and identify those who should receive graduate assistantships. This process should occur without consideration for a student’s residential status and/or the tuition revenue otherwise anticipated from a particular candidate.

3. The Graduate School receives applications, sends the Graduate School applications to academic departments for review, and receives recommendations from academic departments. Following review, the Graduate Dean makes all offers of admission to graduate programs and all graduate appointments for teaching, research, and administrative assistants. The Graduate School enforces policies on all assistantships, including the minimum (base) stipend rates, work load expectations, and beginning and ending dates during the academic year.

4. Academic core centers (schools, colleges) will strive to maintain where possible base year (FY11) levels of tuition discount hours available to graduate students, and will actively seek ways to support expansion in the number of students who receive tuition discounts as well as the per capita level of aid. Both academic and research core centers will encourage support of graduate students through graduate assistantships on externally funded grants.

**MODEL**

Key Elements:

- **Allocation Aligned with Base Year.** Tuition waivers (~10,000 credit hours) will be allocated to academic core centers and support centers in correspondence to the distribution in base year FY11, i.e., to approximate the revenue allocated to core centers’ base budget for assistantship tuition remission

- **Non-core Use Reviewed.** Academic core centers hiring students outside their own unit, and support centers, will be required to submit information on the need for and nature of work done by graduate assistants as described below under Review of Use of Graduate Assistantships.

- **Core Freedom to Allocate in Alignment with Mission.** Academic core center deans will allocate their unit-based graduate assistantships as they determine appropriate. They will report updates to their allocation decisions annually to the Graduate School. Academic core centers may allocate additional hours for special needs, such as enrollment pressures in undergraduate course sections, addressing strategic goals of the University, recruitment and appointment of minority or international students, increasing research, and program start-up or expansion.

- **Review of Use of Graduate Assistantships:** The support centers and other departments that would like to hire students from outside their own academic core center will need to submit a request for position to a Graduate Council GA review committee by February 28 to grad@usd.edu. The request for position should address the following criteria:
  1. Describe what the position entails in terms of essential job duties.
  2. Describe how this position will be mutually beneficial to the hiring unit and the educational program of the graduate student.
3. How much time will the student worker be working? This must be ≤19.76 hours/week on average (0.494 FTE).
4. What expertise in the form of skills, knowledge, or ability is required by the student to be successful in this position?
5. Which classification of graduate assistants does this student fall under? Please explain your justification? (Refer to the Graduate Catalog for definitions)
   a. Graduate Teaching Assistantship (GTA)
   b. Graduate Research Assistantship (GRA)
   c. Graduate Administrative Assistantship (GAA)

The Graduate School will gather together all of the requests, which will be reviewed by the members of the Graduate Council GA review committee during the first week of March. The voting members of the Graduate Council GA review committee will be made up of a representative from each college and school (Arts & Sciences, Business, Education, Fine Arts, Health Sciences, Law, and Medicine), the Graduate Dean, the Director of Graduate Education, and a graduate student from GPSA. HR representation will be an ex officio position.

• **Allocation Managed by Graduate School.** By March 15, the approved allocations will be distributed to the support centers/other departments requesting a graduate assistant from outside their unit. Allocation of awards for the tuition discounting will be made by the Graduate Dean, based on recommendations from the review committee and following these basic principles:
  ▪ Approval for graduate assistantships less than or equal to the base year (FY11) allocation will not be unreasonably withheld as long as the need and nature of work are justified.
  ▪ If additional graduate assistantship hours (beyond the FY11 base allocation) are requested by support centers and academic core centers wishing to hire students outside their own units, written permission of the dean from the unit foregoing tuition revenue will be required as part of the position request/review process.
  ▪ Approval will not be unreasonably withheld for graduate assistantships in which the requestor pays both the minimum stipend and the 2/3 tuition remission to student’s home academic core center.

• **Appointments Managed by Graduate School.** All graduate assistant appointments will continue to be reviewed and approved by the Graduate School. The Graduate School will manage the application process, contracts, and background checks with the current system.

**PHASE-IN PROCESS**

To phase in this model, an expedited review process was used in February and March 2014. Core and support centers will submit a request for number of assistantship hours and academic unit(s) from which the students are sought for FY15 (summer, fall and spring). If the request does not exceed the requestor's FY11 base year allocation and the total number of assistantship hours within an academic core center does not exceed the FY11 base year revenue allocation, then the assignments will proceed without Graduate Council GA review committee deliberation. If there is not agreement, the review will occur as described. Graduate assistants from the School of Law will be an exception; all non-core requests will be reviewed in consultation with the dean of Law. Starting in FY15 (February/March 2015), the review described earlier will be implemented fully.

**RESPONSIBILITIES**

**Graduate School**
The Graduate School is responsible for receiving applications for assistantship, affirming student eligibility, monitoring student eligibility through appointment, ensuring that tuition discounts are entered for students who are hired as a GRA,
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GAA or GTA. The Graduate School is responsible for posting standard pay rates for assistantships in a place that is accessible to students and to Core and Support Centers. The Graduate School monitors that current practices and policies governing graduate assistants will be maintained (see Graduate Student Assistant Policies).

Hiring Unit
The Hiring Unit must coordinate with the student’s home school (college or school which houses the Graduate program to which the student has been admitted) to ensure that the student’s tuition waiver will be paid. If using university funds to pay the student, the hiring unit should provide the Graduate School with the index numbers to cover the tuition cost of the non-sponsored tuition waiver or have a written commitment from the student’s home school to provide it. If the hiring unit assigns more than 19.76 hours of work per week on average (i.e., greater than 0.494 FTE), then the hiring unit is responsible for paying the benefit costs for healthcare insurance, if the student is determined to be benefit eligible by the SD BHR. Note that benefit eligibility under the Affordable Care Act will include all work as a SDBOR employee, not simply USD work. Hiring units will nominate graduate assistants from the pool of eligible students and recommend their appointment to the Graduate School.

Faculty or Administrative Supervisor
The supervisor is responsible for assigning a work load to the student assistant that falls within the number of hours of the position (≤19.76 hours/week on average) while not interfering with the student’s academic progress; for mentoring the student in his or her work role; and for evaluating the student’s performance in writing at least once every semester. The supervisor is responsible for communicating how long the assistantship position is likely to last and giving as much advance notice as possible if the student’s assistantship position is going to be discontinued.

Student
The student is responsible for working the expected number of hours (≤19.76 hours/week on average) with the expected level of productivity, asking for help from the supervisor as needed. The student is responsible for knowing and following all relevant safety regulations and participating in all appropriate training sessions. GTAs are responsible for completing grading assignments in a timely manner, including turning in grades by any deadlines set by their supervisors at the end of the semester.

Other graduate assistant policies apply as well, they can be found at http://www.usd.edu/grad/graduate-assistantship-rules-and-regulations.cfm.

**HIRING PROCESS FOR FIRST TIME AND RETURNING GRADUATE ASSISTANTS**

1. By March 15, the Graduate School notifies each Hiring Unit of the number of university and externally funded GA credit hours allocated for new and returning students for the upcoming fiscal year (summer, fall, and spring). Tuition, fees, and minimum graduate assistantship stipend amount are determined by the BOR in April for the upcoming year. Hiring units are encouraged to pay stipends above the minimum stipend level if they are able.

2. First time graduate assistants, or graduate assistants who will be changing hiring units, must complete an Application for Graduate Assistantship and submit it to the Graduate School.

3. The Graduate School forwards the applications received to the highest ranked interest areas indicated on the application.

4. The hiring unit reviews and interviews applicants for available positions.
5. Hiring units electronically submit the Graduate Assistantship Hiring Notification form with a list of students who will be graduate assistants. This form is available as an Excel spreadsheet. Graduate Assistants may be hired for multiple semesters using one hiring notification. For Example: a student may be hired for summer, fall and spring using the same hiring notification. A contract will be extended for the date range provided. The Graduate School will apply tuition coding each semester contingent upon satisfaction of eligibility requirements.

6. The Graduate School reviews the list of students and confirms eligibility for the coming term.
   a. Full admission (not provisional)
   b. Good academic standing (not on academic probation)
   c. 3.0 or higher cumulative graduate GPA (all graduate classes)
   d. Enrolled in at least 9 credit hours (fall and spring terms; and at least 1 cr hr during the summer term if a summer GA hire) unless an exception has been granted by the Graduate Dean; and
   e. Does not exceed the thesis/dissertation credit hour maximum.

7. Once confirmed, the Graduate School will electronically send a contract based upon the hiring notification and intellectual property/confidentiality agreement (IP) to the student to sign; the hiring unit will be copied.

8. The student must return a signed contract and IP form to the Graduate School before tuition discount coding will be completed by the Graduate School. Once received, the Graduate School applies the necessary Datatel code to assure accurate student billing (two-thirds tuition discount) and notifies the Financial Aid and Business offices.

9. First time graduate assistants are required to complete a criminal background check. The Human Resources Office conducts the background check and notifies the Graduate School of completions and of any issues. If the background check is found to be unsatisfactory, the contract will be nullified.

10. The hiring unit follows through with the appropriate payroll paperwork (with the Graduate School designee as an FYI on the payroll EPAF, ensuring payroll and contract dates, FTE, and stipend all coincide with the hiring notification and contract).

11. After the 100% refund date, the Graduate School will review GA files for completed background checks, cumulative GPA and number of enrolled credit hours. Contracts are cancelled for students who fail to complete the background check, have substandard cumulative GPAs and/or are registered for fewer than 9 credit hours (unless an exception has been granted by the Dean of the Graduate School).

**Deadlines**

- **April 11th** - Graduate Assistant Hiring Notification form is due for first time and continuing Graduate Assistant hires for the summer 2014 term and beyond. Full year contracts (SU14/FA14/SP15) are acceptable.
- **July 11th** - Graduate Assistant Hiring Notification form is due for Graduate Assistants starting their assistantship in the fall 2014 term. Multiple term contracts (FA14/SP15) are acceptable.
- **November 7th** - Graduate Assistant Hiring Notification form is due for Graduate Assistants starting their assistantship in the spring 2015 term.
- **100% Refund Date** – last day for each term that a GA position will be eligible for tuition remission.