Graduate School Preeminence Awards (GSPA) & Graduate School Funding Awards (GSFA)

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The basics

- Effective Fall 2017

The Graduate School Preeminence Award (GSPA) structure is a collaboration between academic programs and the Graduate School to help recruit the brightest and best students to UF.

The purpose of GPSAs is to assist academic units in offering highly competitive research/teaching assistantship stipends to their strongest PhD applicants, based on criteria the unit selects.
Students receiving GSPA awards must be newly enrolled PhD students.

The base for each GSPA is $25,000 annually for 4 years.

The Graduate School will provide an additional $4,000 to each GSPA for a full amount of $29,000.

For each GSPA, academic programs must provide additional supplement amounts determined by their general academic discipline—STEM/non-STEM.

The minimum supplements are $7,000 for STEM programs and $4,000 for non-STEM programs, creating minimum full GSPA stipends of $36,000 and $33,000, respectively.
Though the preference is a 4-year award, GSPAs can be offered for 5-years.

The base for each 5-year GSPA will be $20,000 per year.

- The Graduate School will provide an additional $3,200 for the full amount of $23,200 annually.
- For each 5-year GSPA, academic programs must provide additional supplement amounts determined by their general academic discipline—STEM/non-STEM, with minimum supplements for STEM and non-STEM at $7,000 and $4,000, respectively.

In keeping with the spirit of providing competitive stipends for GSPA awardees, full 5-year stipends will be at least $30,200 and $27,200 for STEM and non-STEM, respectively.
Guidelines for Division of GSPA Awards

- Division of GSPA awards is not necessarily recommended because of the per student cost for the academic unit. If GSPAs are divided, designated students should receive full GSPA stipend amounts for individual awardees based on STEM/non-STEM allocation amounts above.

- Colleges should submit their proposed guidelines on how GSPAs will be administered for approval by the Graduate School Dean.

- Once approved these guidelines should be distributed to the departments within the colleges.
Importantly, instead of GSPAs, academic units have the option of offering the $25,000 base amount under the same format as the previous Graduate School Fellowship Program.

This component will now be titled Graduate School Funding Award (GSFA) and is described more fully below.
As each award has a $25,000 base, academic programs or colleges have the option of choosing to award $25,000 4-year assistantship stipends to entering PhD students instead of full GSPAs.

Those awards will be termed Graduate School Funding Awards (GSFAs).

GSFAs can be offered as 5-year $20,000 assistantship stipends when preferred.

Additionally, full GSFAs can be divided into quarters or fifths as assistantship top-ups for entering PhD students.

Note: Full GSFAs can be no less than $25,000 for 4 years or $20,000 for 5 years. Academic units can supplement GSFAs with additional funds if desired.
GSPA and GSFA Guidelines

- Students with full GSPA/GSFA funding from the Graduate School who win large external fellowships such as the NSF-GRFP, will receive up to $5,000 top-up funding to augment their external stipends during their external fellowship term.

- They can defer their GSPA/GSFA award during the external funding period and then receive up to two years of GSPA/GSFA funding.

- Those winning smaller external fellowships may defer GSPA/GSFAs and receive top-ups to maintain their stipends at their GSPA/GSFA level. Awardees on training grants will receive top-ups to maintain their GSPA/GSFA stipend levels.
GSPA/GSFA – Outside Employment

- Students with full GSPA/GSFA funding **should not** be engaged in outside paid employment or activities during the time-period they are supposed to be carrying out responsibilities related to their research/teaching assistantships.

- Doing so will subject individuals to the loss of the GSPA/GSFA funding
Calculation Criteria: Number of Awards Given to Colleges

- As mentioned, though the Graduate School provides $29,000 toward each GSPA, the actual number of awards are based on $25,000 annual 4-year increments.

- The Graduate School provides the additional $4,000 for each award designated as GSPA.

- The number of awards per college will be calculated on the last 5-year numerical average of graduates from PhD programs with enrollments of at least 30.

- The base number of awards generated will range from 1 to 9; as will be seen in the following table.

- For example, an academic unit that graduated an average of 9 PhD recipients in the last 5-year period will generate 2 awards for its respective college.
Table 1. Allocation Structure

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>5 Yr Average Graduation Rate</th>
<th>No. of Full Awards @ $25K</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
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<tr>
<td>2</td>
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<td>8</td>
<td>35 to 40</td>
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<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>&gt;40</td>
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Generating Additional Awards for GSPA and GSFA

- Additional awards can be generated based upon two primary outcomes:
  1) A graduation rate of 71% or more and/or
  2) An overall graduation rate of at least 66% with the percentage of underrepresented minority students enrolled in the scale stated below based on academic disciplines.
    - Math and Physical Science: At least 9%
    - Life Sciences and Engineering: At least 12%
    - Social Sciences and Humanities: At least 18%
    - Masters of Fine Arts: At least 24%
Academic units can meet the above two criteria to generate the additional GSPA/GSFA allocations based on the following enrollment scale:

- Enrollment between 30 and 99 = 1
- Enrollment between 100 and 199 = 2
- Enrollment of 200 or greater = 3.

For example, an academic unit with 40 enrolled PhD students and a 5-year graduation average of 8, plus a graduate rate of 75%, as well as an underrepresented minority enrollment percentage that meets the threshold, can generate a total of 4 GSPA/GSFAs, twice the number generated solely on the average number of graduates.
Allocation of Awards to Academic Units

- Colleges must notify the Graduate School no later than April 15 of the number of GSPAs they plan to award for the coming Academic Year.

- Distribution of awards to departments or programs is at the discretion of the college deans.

- Allocations are based on fixed dollar amounts and not cumulative pay periods.

- Colleges and academic programs will determine how awards are assigned.
Eligibility and Requirements

- Awards can be offered only to new, incoming PhD and MFA (GSFAs only) students.

- Continued funding for all awards will be contingent upon recipients maintaining good academic standing.

- Colleges can offer awards to students who have graduated with a master’s degree from one of their departments and are newly admitted to the PhD program.
  - Importantly, those students must officially apply and must be admitted to the PhD program as opposed to merely transitioning from master’s into PhD programs.

- Colleges or departments will provide tuition waivers and GatorGradCare for students receiving the awards.
The list of new awardees must be entered into the Graduate School Tracking Program (GSTP) no later than the first day of class.

Funds will not be released if recipients are not entered in the GSTP. Once classes have begun, students cannot be added to the list of GSPA/GSFA recipients.

Funds will be distributed based upon the amount of annual used stipends for each cohort.

Funds not used due to withdrawal, absence or graduation will be returned to the Graduate School account.
Deferments

- Deferments may be granted for internships, other awards, or medical withdrawals.
- Awards will be extended by one term for each term deferred.
- Summer deferments must be for Summer C only to extend funding.
- A maximum deferment period is one year in total.
- Carry Forward funding will be given to cover awards for students on deferment once they reach their extended funding year.
All GSPA and GSFA awardees should be appointed to a 12-month 0.5 FTE graduate research or teaching assistantship.

The purpose is to ensure awardees are fully engaged in their academic programs.

Deviations from the above must be submitted for approval by the Graduate School Dean.
The Letter of Offer of Admission to academic programs must follow the template located at the following website:

http://hr.ufl.edu/manager-resources/recruitment-staffing/academic-personnel/graduate-assistants/

Letters should include the name of the award (GSPA or GSFA), the amount of the annual stipend, the duration of the award, the specific assignment sequence (which years will be teaching and/or research) if any, and other pertinent information regarding the degree program.

For students receiving GSFA top-ups to initial stipends, those awards should also be specified in the offer letters.
Letter of Appointment for Employment as a Graduate Assistant in the Payroll System

- Awardees should be appointed as graduate research or teaching assistants.
- For appointments, please use the template at http://hr.ufl.edu/wp-content/uploads/forms/academic/gaappointment_GS_3_14_2016_Revised.doc.
- **Please clearly specify** the nature of the research or teaching assignments, and any fees the students are expected to pay.
- Awardees appointed on assistantships should be paid on a biweekly cycle and appointed at 0.5 FTE.
Enrollment Regulations

- Self-funded (off book) courses are not eligible for tuition waivers and must be paid by the student or department.

- Students receiving GSPAs/GSFAs must maintain full-time registration as required by the appointment.

- Please see details on the Academic and Student Personnel website: http://hr.ufl.edu/manager-resources/recruitment-staffing/academic-personnel/pre-and-postdoctoral-fellows/graduate-assistants-and-fellows-hiring-process/registration-requirements-for-graduate-assistants-and-fellows/
Managing Top-ups for GSFA Awards

- Two alternative approaches are available if the GSFA funding is divided into top-ups.

- Appointing GSFA in the Payroll System
  - The preferred approach is to augment the graduate assistant appointment stipend using the payroll distribution system.
  - A second choice may be more suitable in particular circumstances, e.g., using the MOU form. Contact the Graduate School for questions. If this option is chosen, graduate students must be appointed as a research, graduate, or teaching assistant in addition to the top-up awards.
  - For awardees appointed using the MOU form, no additional work requirement can be assigned for the top-up. Please be aware this option has tax as well as federal financial aid implications for the student.

- The MOU form can be found at the following website: http://hr.ufl.edu/wp-content/uploads/forms/academic/fellowshipmemo.pdf
Fellowship Appointments

- Extenuating circumstances where full awards are paid as fellowships can be accomplished by an approved petition to the Graduate School.
  - [http://graduateschool.ufl.edu/faculty--staff/resources/petition-guidelines/](http://graduateschool.ufl.edu/faculty--staff/resources/petition-guidelines/)
- Departments are reminded that students appointed as fellows are not eligible for GatorGradCare.
- Their health care would be obtained through the United Health Care student health insurance plan.
- These appointments must be accomplished by use of the MOU form.
- The college or department is still responsible to cover the health insurance and tuition for these students.
MFA Awards

- MFA programs will receive Graduate School Funding Awards (GSFA) for their selected students.
- Selected students will receive $20,000 annually for 3 years.
- MFA programs will follow the same allocation structure described in Table 1 above with the opportunity to generate additional awards if 5-year graduation rates are at least 85% and URM enrollment percentages are no less than 24%.
Contact Information

- [http://www.graduateschool.ufl.edu/prospective-students/funding/fellowships/graduate-school-fellowship/](http://www.graduateschool.ufl.edu/prospective-students/funding/fellowships/graduate-school-fellowship/)

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