

Date: January 17, 2020

POLICY ON GRADUATE STUDENT STIPENDS

Our current Departmental base stipends are \$18,000/yr for MS and \$21,000/yr for PhD students. This is what the Department pays for fully Department-funded students, and it is the minimum that we recommend faculty write into grants for student stipend support. It is recommended that stipend levels are considered for adjustment by a Department-level committee on at least a five-year time-step. The last one was conducted in January 2017.

When a faculty member has additional funds available to supplement graduate student stipends, it is recommended that this level be limited to +\$5,000 over the base level. The justification for this is that \$26,000 is at the upper end of stipends offered throughout campus, and because we would rather not create a significant level of disparity in pay across our graduate student population.

This being said, if a student received a grant/fellowship for >\$26,000/yr, then they should certainly be able to receive whatever the fellowship amount may be.

This policy was discussed and approved by PSS faculty at the January 17, 2020 faculty meeting.



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Date: May 24, 2022

UPDATE TO GRADUATE STUDENT STIPEND POLICY

On May 13, 2022, during a PSS Faculty Meeting, we discussed whether to raise our Departmental base stipends, given that we said above we would revisit the topic every five years. The Chair polled the Southern Agronomy Chairs multistate group to get data on stipend levels from comparable institutions. The Chair collected some stipend level information from other Departments in the College, and Dr. Unrine looked up the consumer price index for the time frame. We had a discussion of various options and decided to increase Departmental base stipends to \$21,000/yr for MS and \$23,000/yr for PhD (with a \$1,000 increase upon passing of qualifying exam). This level will put us at the high end of our comparables, which seemed reasonable since we only adjust every five years.

As before, the Department agreed to limit additional pay to +\$5,000 over the base level (ie, \$26,000/yr for MS and \$28,000-\$29,000/yr for PhD (depending on qualifying status). Also, we agreed that if a student receives a fellowship that is above this level of funding, they are allowed to accept it.

We will implement the new base levels starting July 1, 2022, with a grandfather clause for existing students and students that may be supported on grants that are pending at present. PI's will be able to opt-in July 1, 2022 for students supported on grant money, if there are funds to do so. If adequate funds do not exist, then students will

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remain at existing levels. Faculty agreed to use these base levels in grant budgets moving forward. For all Department supported students, the raise will go into effect July 1, 2022.

This policy was approved by all faculty in attendance May 13, 2022.

Date: September 2023

UPDATE TO GRADUATE STUDENT STIPEND POLICY

The Department learned in FY24 that the University would be setting minimum stipend levels for graduate students based on CIP codes and data collected by Oklahoma State University. For some units, the difference between their current stipend levels and the new minima was significant. Thus, the University allowed a partial stipend minimum raise to be effective January 1, 2024, with the full new minima requirement taking effect July 1, 2024. During this preliminary timeframe, the new minimum stipend for our Department was determined to be \$25,246 per 12-month contract (Jan. 1, 2024) and \$26,575 (July 1, 2024). However, the CIP code used was linked to the Department – an approach which meant IPSS students in Horticulture would have a different stipend level than Plant & Soil Science students. We successfully lobbied for all IPSS students (regardless of home Department) to have the same CIP code and minimum stipend level. This resulted in the new all-IPSS student minimum being \$25,716 per 12-month contract as of July 1, 2024.

Consistent with our Department's prior approach, we voted to approve this new minimum as the MS stipend, with pre-qualifying PhD students receiving the minimum +\$2K and post-qualifying exam PhD students receiving minimum +\$3K. We also voted to keep the +\$5K over the base level (for each category – MS, pre-qual PhD, post-qual PhD) to try to keep some equity across the students. If a student received a fellowship that has higher stipend levels, we voted that they should be allowed to receive whatever the fellowship amount might be.

Moving forward, we will not reduce our minimum stipend amounts and adjust upwards as the University dictates annually based on the OSU data, keeping the same MS, pre-qual PhD, post-qual PhD tiered approach as indicated above.

This policy was approved by all faculty in attendance at the September 8, 2023 PSS faculty retreat.

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