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THE GRADUATE SCHOOL

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*Office of the Dean*

**GRADUATE ASSISTANT ADVISORY COMMITTEE**

**Thursday, December 14th**

**12:00-1:00pm**

**0118 Main Administration**

New Business

1. US House Tax bill HR 1
   1. In the current US House Tax bill HR 1, graduate tuition remission is counted as taxable income. Talking to our colleagues, many graduate students feel anxious about the possible financial burden, and are looking for University support. If this section of the bill passes reconciliation with the Senate bill, some students will not be able to afford to continue their studies at UMD. On November 30, President Loh voiced the University’s opposition to HR 1, and encouraged students to connect ​with elected representatives to express their views. In light of possible reconciliation, we ask the following questions:
   2. Apart from condemnation of the bill, how does UMD plan to assist graduate students to minimize financial burden of the proposed tax hike? Are there any plans to alter the charge of tuition remission in an effort to lower graduate student’s taxable income?
      1. Is UMD considering making PhD students "workers" to remedy the “fee charge then waive” procedure of tuition remission?
   3. In what ways will international and out-of-state students be supported if it is financially imperative for them to take on full-time jobs in lieu of graduate assistantships given tuition remission would be considered taxable income?
   4. If this law were to pass, could UMD cover the difference in some way for impacted graduate students?
      1. Perhaps in the form of scholarships or fellowships?

Follow up from Spring 2017 meeting

1. Tuition remission language on GA offer letters
   1. Currently the University does not require departments to cover differential tuition, grads pay out of pocket in some departments but this responsibility is not explicitly stated in many offer letters.
   2. **Follow up:** As per Spring discussion, was a repository of offer letters collected? On the graduate school forms website, a GA offer letter template is available <https://gradschool.umd.edu/forms> , does this accomplish the aforementioned goal?
2. Gallup Survey for UMD Graduate Assistants
   1. Anecdotal feedback on the survey from graduate perspective centers around the issue that the format and questions were not actually geared towards GA’s or missed an opportunity to address relevant concerns. Furthermore, financial incentives were offered for reporting positive experiences and we feel that might introduce unhelpful biases.
   2. **Follow up:** what were your main findings with this survey **?** What are any downstream plans from survey results, can GAAC be involved in any way? Are there plans for dissemination for a GA (TA, RA) focused survey ? Can GAAC be involved with this effort in any way ?
3. Statements of Mutual Expectation forms available here: <https://gradschool.umd.edu/forms>
   1. TA SME: How has dissemination of this tool been throughout the departments? Per Spring 2017 conversation the TA SME would be introduced at grad, TA orientation. Have you been tracking adoption or success stories? Are there plans to re-visit the template?
      1. **Specific follow ups discussed Spring 2017**: was the TA SME incorporated to teaching assistant training? Was a newsletter sent to graduate studies directors/ department chairs encouraging them to use this tool with details on how to best use the TA SME? Was there a discussion of TA SME adoption at the spring senate hearing?
   2. RA SME: The form available on the website seems a little vague, are there plans to make this more flexible for the variety of RA work we have at UMD? Are there plans to collect a repository of existing RA SME documents? Has Graduate input been included in the construction of this template? How do you plan on tracking adoption and success of the RA SME?
4. Salary
   1. Per our conversation Spring 2017 we talked about exploring additional Non-stipend based support for graduate students. Possible avenues of interest included 1) increasing the number of fellowships for incoming grads, 2) adding to resource levels currently available. Are there any updates from these efforts?
   2. Have you explored housing vouchers, graduate student metro cards, or other initiatives to relieve in part financial burden on graduate students?
5. Grievance procedure follow up (current policy found here <http://apps.gradschool.umd.edu/Catalog/policy.php?assistantship-policies#vii-grievance-procedure>)
   1. Is there a template available for grads to use? If not can we make one and have it available on the graduate forms page?
6. Miscellaneous Policy Improvements for Graduates
   1. Workers compensation policy
   2. Earned sick leave policy
   3. Intellectual Property Policy
      1. Per our conversation last spring, an improved policy was to be presented to the graduate council - what are the outcomes from this meeting?