

# FACULTY SENATE RESOLUTION 16–11

## Improving Graduate Student Stipends with the Aim of Reducing Graduate Student Debt and Increasing LSU Competitiveness in Recruiting Graduate Students

*Sponsored by*

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Whereas the administration, faculty, and staff at LSU strongly support a living wage for graduate students;

Whereas the minimum graduate stipend at LSU according to PS-21 is nonetheless \$10,800 for a 9-month appointment<sup>1</sup> which is well below the median graduate stipend of \$20,000<sup>2</sup> offered by universities around the US<sup>3</sup> and thus stipends at LSU are not competitive with graduate stipends offered elsewhere;

Whereas the most promising graduate students often receive offers from multiple universities;

Whereas likely the most promising graduate students tend to choose programs that offer competitive stipends, and LSU's stipend is in the lowest 10<sup>th</sup> percentile<sup>4</sup>, missing the opportunity to recruit the most promising graduate students;

Whereas the average one room apartment in Baton Rouge costs approximately \$800<sup>5</sup> per month and basic utilities cost approximately \$165<sup>5</sup> per month requiring graduate students to supplement their stipends in order to afford to live in Baton Rouge;

Whereas LSU increased required fees for graduate students with approximately 137% since the academic year 2003-2004 when it was \$540<sup>6</sup> for the Fall and Spring semester together to the current 2016-2017 total of \$1279<sup>7</sup>;

Whereas LSU also increased additional mandatory fees with 145% for full time graduate students taking 9 credit hours since the academic year 2003-2004 when it was \$565<sup>6</sup> for the Fall and Spring semester together to the current 2016-2017 total of \$1386<sup>7</sup>;

Whereas financial difficulties may decrease the performance of graduate students and may even necessitate students to leave (temporarily) their program due to financial hardship, thereby negatively affecting graduation rates;

Whereas graduate student enrollment in many academic programs needs to increase in order to maintain prestige in the field and sustain graduate class offerings;

Whereas the budget constraints of departments do not allow them to increase graduate student stipends without simultaneously significantly decreasing the number of stipends awarded; and

Whereas graduate students play an integral part in the ability to meet increasing teaching demands due to increased undergraduate student enrollment in academic programs;

Therefore be it resolved that budgets for graduate student stipends be increased by at least 30 percent, thus enabling LSU to keep number of years graduate students are supported and the number of supported graduate students equal to the current numbers; and

Be it further resolved that the minimum stipend for graduate students be set at 9/12<sup>th</sup> of the annual living wage before taxes for one adult living in Baton Rouge, LA (currently \$21,023<sup>8</sup>), thereby increasing minimum stipends to \$15,800 for 9-month appointments.

<sup>1</sup>LSU. PS-21. Retrieved (9/1/2016) from <http://sites01.lsu.edu/wp/policiesprocedures/policies-procedures/21/>

<sup>2</sup>Note: the average graduate stipend according is \$20,696.

<sup>3</sup>Gradpay. Retrieved (8/30/2016) from <http://gradpay.herokuapp.com/results/table/>

<sup>4</sup>PayScale. Retrieved (8/30/2016) from

[http://www.payscale.com/research/US/Job=Graduate\\_Assistant/Salary](http://www.payscale.com/research/US/Job=Graduate_Assistant/Salary)

<sup>5</sup>NUMBEO Cost of Living. Retrieved (8/30/2016) from [http://www.numbeo.com/cost-of-living/city\\_result.jsp?country=United+States&city=Baton+Rouge%2C+LA](http://www.numbeo.com/cost-of-living/city_result.jsp?country=United+States&city=Baton+Rouge%2C+LA)

<sup>6</sup>Figures provided by the Office of Budget & Planning (9/26/2016 provided by request).

<sup>7</sup>Fee Schedules for Graduate Students 2016-2017; Last Updated on 06/30/2016. Retrieved (9/22/2016) from <http://www.lsu.edu/bgtplan/Tuition-Fees/2016-2017/grad.pdf>

<sup>8</sup>Glasmeier, A. K., & the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (2016). *Living wage calculator*. <http://livingwage.mit.edu/metros/12940>