

# Graduate Assistantship Compensation Proposal

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2020-2021



GRADUATE SCHOOL  
COLORADO STATE UNIVERSITY

## **Graduate Assistantship Compensation Proposal**

### **I. Executive Summary**

Colorado State University's (CSU) competitive ability as a Carnegie Tier 1 Research University (R1) depends upon doctoral conferrals and research expenditures; both of which are driven by graduate student effort. The net, or effective, income of graduate student assistants at CSU is at the low end of peer institutions due to high fees and a low minimum stipend. Recruiting and retaining superior PhD and MFA applicants and incentivizing faculty research expenditures on graduate students are essential to enhance CSU's R1 status. Furthermore, minimum graduate assistant stipends do not support financial self-sufficiency for a single adult in our area. Mechanisms to support these goals include supplementing prestigious, yet insufficient fellowship awards; addressing high student fees; supporting security for PhD's and MFA's; increasing minimum stipends; providing tuition return on grants; and summer support. We present four distinct levels of commitment to address insufficient support and advance graduate student success at CSU. These range from Stopgap, through Remedial and Competitive, to Aspirational. We recommend that CSU commit to a multi-year, phased approach to incrementally employ Stopgap measures (FY22-23), followed by Remedial (FY24-25) and Competitive (FY26) measures, and ultimately Aspirational support (FY27-29).

### **II. Rationale**

The mission statement for the university states in part, "Colorado State University is committed to excellence, setting the standard for public research universities . . ." Colorado State University (CSU) is a Carnegie Tier 1 Research University (R1), which implies commitments and expectations that extend to our faculty and students, stakeholders, and the state. Carnegie considers that investments to secure our status relative to other R1 universities include awarding of a significant number of research/scholarship doctorates in a given academic year and considerable annual research expenditures. The research activity index used by Carnegie includes doctoral conferrals in humanities, social science, STEM (science, technology, engineering, and mathematics), and in other fields (e.g., business, education, public policy, social work). This report is motivated by concerns for future investments that are needed to ensure CSU's competitive ability commensurate with our R1 status, as well as an ethical consideration surrounding the financial self-sufficiency of graduate assistants.

Investments in graduate students directly influence CSU's R1 status, through the number of doctorates awarded, but graduate students also impact research productivity, and hence directly and indirectly, affect research expenditures (Appendix A). Strong graduate programs are critical to the advancement of CSU's mission, stature, and success. They foster innovation and creativity in research enterprises and energize our strong teaching initiatives. A recently





commissioned study<sup>1</sup> further emphasizes that CSU's status as an economic growth engine for the state lies, in part, on the ecosystems created by its vibrant graduate programs. Investments in graduate student programs need to be understood through the lens of return to both the university and the state. Challenges faced by graduate programs can be placed into two broad categories that relate to students on one hand and to faculty on the other.

Graduate students should perceive and experience CSU to be the best destination for their success. Multiple factors, both within and outside of the university's control, play roles in generating student perceptions that shape recruitment and retention patterns. Factors outside of the university's control include CSU's non-urban location, the demographic make-up of the Front Range, cost of living, and geopolitical realities that shape the flow of international students. However, there are factors the university can control that negatively impact recruitment and retention including student fees, tuition charges to grants, non-competitive stipend levels, lack of summer funding, and the lack of funding guarantees. Feedback from CSU's Graduate Student Council (Appendix B) and the Office of Diversity further support that current graduate assistant compensation packages are a barrier to recruitment, especially for minoritized applicants. Appendix C compares CSU's graduate assistantship compensation packages and cost of living to peers and aspirational peers. Figure 1 illustrates that the effective income of CSU graduate students lags significantly behind both peer and aspirational peer institutions. Additionally, the current minimum stipend (\$1640/month) is significantly below the financial standard for self-sufficiency of one adult in Larimer County (\$2094/month as of 2018).<sup>2</sup>

Strengthening our graduate enterprise includes **challenges for faculty** separate from making CSU an attractive destination for graduate students. There is inherent risk for faculty in taking on students (Graduate Research Assistants, GRAs) for research projects. Funded research projects are usually 3-5 years, yet the average time to a doctoral degree at CSU is currently five years (62% completion) and 82% of students complete the PhD in six years. As funding renewals are not guaranteed, faculty risk being unable to support students throughout their degree. A common alternative is to choose postdoctoral or other researchers who require a shorter funding commitment. Postdoctoral researchers also do not enroll in courses and are already trained in relevant research tasks. There are often timing mismatches between the annual early spring recruiting of new graduate students, and availability of funds to guarantee support via a GRA. Finally, the combined cost of tuition and stipend for a graduate student is close to the cost of hiring a postdoctoral researcher. Altogether, this creates a disincentive for faculty to invest in funding GRAs.

Another option for faculty is to advise graduate students who are financially supported through Graduate Teaching Assistants (GTAs). However, this comes with its own challenges for the adviser, since GTAs have a 20-hour per week teaching commitment. Furthermore, GTAs are

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<sup>1</sup> Hill, R., Cutler, H., and Shields, M. 2017. Economic and Fiscal Impact Study: Colorado State University [White paper]. Colorado State University. [Economic and Fiscal Impact Study](#)

<sup>2</sup> Pearce, D.M. and the Colorado Center on Law and Policy. 2018. The Self-Sufficiency Standard for Colorado 2018. [White paper]. Colorado Center on Law and Policy. [The Self-Sufficiency Standard for Colorado 2018](#)



not sufficiently available in many departments, including those where faculty conduct significant levels of externally funded research. GTAs are incredibly valuable to the university for their teaching, scholarship, and research contributions, but they are only one part of a solution. It is important to incentivize risk-averse faculty to support graduate students as GRAs and to recognize that different strategies are needed in colleges that rely heavily on GRAs to advance their research mission versus those that rely heavily on GTAs.

Our goal in this report is to suggest options that provide competitive graduate assistant compensation, maximize return on overall investment in graduate assistants, and enhance incentives for faculty support of GRAs and proposal submissions (Appendix D).

### III. Analysis of Graduate Assistant Compensation Options

For CSU to compete effectively with our peers (Appendix C), we have identified multiple aspects of graduate assistantship compensation packages that should be addressed for GRAs, GTAs, and Graduate Support Assistants (GSAs). These include: (1) supplemental funding for foundation awards and fellowships; (2) student fee reduction; (3) multiyear funding assurance for PhDs and MFAs; (4) increased minimum stipend; (5) return of tuition paid on external grants; and (6) summer funding supplements for 9-month academic appointments.

Below, we provide background on each of these components, options for how they might be addressed, and implications. In offering options, we recognize that departments, colleges and the university are resource constrained, and therefore we prioritize options that incentivize external support rather than relying solely on limited internal dollars. We also prioritize options that encourage students and their mentors to progress toward degree completion in a timely manner.

**Supplemental support for fellowships and other awards.** Some prestigious awards do not allow tuition costs (e.g. Keck Foundation) or are insufficient to cover all costs of attendance without supplementation (e.g., Fulbright fellowships). We seek to encourage applications for such awards.

*Options:*

1. Tuition is automatically covered for external awards that explicitly disallow this expense.

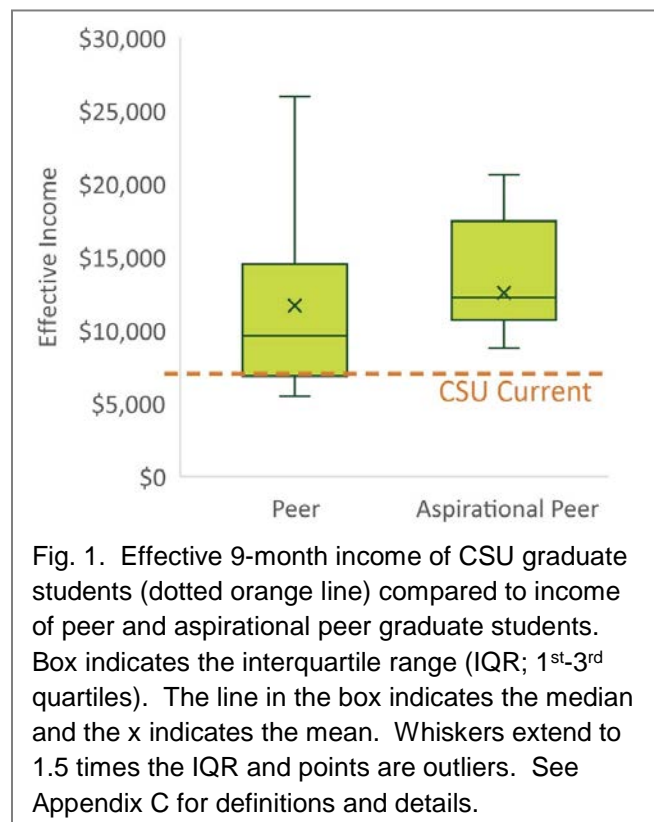


Fig. 1. Effective 9-month income of CSU graduate students (dotted orange line) compared to income of peer and aspirational peer graduate students. Box indicates the interquartile range (IQR; 1<sup>st</sup>-3<sup>rd</sup> quartiles). The line in the box indicates the median and the x indicates the mean. Whiskers extend to 1.5 times the IQR and points are outliers. See Appendix C for definitions and details.



2. CSU selects opportunities for investment that will advance our goals in growing and diversifying the population of graduate students and provide supplemental funding to bring awards supporting growth and diversification into parity with standard GA appointments. Examples include supplemental stipend support for training grants with capped stipends below our minimum and automatic full tuition reimbursement for international applicants.

*Implications:*

1. If certain fellowship or grant opportunities are made more financially attractive to both students and faculty, we anticipate that applications and awards will increase, diversifying our graduate student population and bringing in additional external support to CSU for a relatively modest investment.
2. Some Fulbright students who apply to CSU cannot find a faculty advisor due to the risk faculty acquire to supplement Fulbright funding. The means to supplement Fulbright awards when needed would incentivize faculty to advise these high achieving students.
3. Philanthropy may be a compelling route for securing supplemental funding for prestigious awards that recognize excellence, including those that enhance diversity, equity, and inclusion.

**Student Fees.** CSU has significantly higher student fees compared to peer institutions, which impacts students' effective income (Appendix C). Feedback from Graduate Student Council prioritizes addressing these high fees (Appendix B).

*Options:*

1. Revisit the fee structure for graduate students to determine whether any current fees could be eliminated. A full evaluation is beyond the capabilities of this committee.
2. Consider rolling fees into tuition so that they are no longer the responsibility of the student. It is important to note that tuition paid for all GAs would need to include the fees to maintain equity across all GA types.
3. Consider paying fees for all GAs out of a centralized fund.

*Implications:*

1. A reduction in fees or elimination of the need for students to pay these would boost GA morale significantly.
2. A reduction or elimination of fees would increase GA effective take-home pay.
3. Actions to reduce fees or to change how they are collected must be thoroughly evaluated for tax implications as well as ensuring that the funding streams that GA benefits rely on are unharmed.

**Support security for PhDs and MFAs.** The mismatch between the length of support needed to fund a PhD student to graduation and the three-year length of most funded projects dictates a need for more than one grant. Recruiting GRA-supported graduate students is further complicated since grants are received throughout the year and almost always at times that are out of cycle with the student recruitment timetable. Therefore, offering a GRA to a new student can be risky for faculty who have no financial backstop in the event that a new grant is not secured. GTAs and GSAs provide some buffering, however, the number of GTAs or GSAs and the ratio of GTAs and GSAs to GRAs vary considerably across the university.

*Options:*



1. Implement 5-year compensation packages to PhD/MFA students that may consist of a mix of fellowships, GRA, GTA, GSA, or other appointment types.
2. Establish sources of bridging support for students whose advisers have been unable to secure an additional grant to allow the student to complete their PhD / MFA.
3. Prioritize assured support for the first year of graduate study (subject to satisfactory progress) to recruit via timely admission and assistantship offers, provide time to align or secure funding, and support the student while they gain the training needed to contribute significantly to the goals of research projects.

*Implications:*

1. GTAs are important for our educational mission, but also provide important support security for graduate students.
2. Risk-averse faculty could be more emphatic that a 5-year compensation package with appropriate student progress is available to the applicant, which would increase applicant confidence in the offer and recruitment.
3. Backstops for GRA funding would reduce risk for faculty and encourage faculty to grow the doctorate and MFA population.
4. Actions recommended here to create more attractive recruiting packages may also encourage philanthropic efforts that focus on providing Year 1 fellowships or dissertation completion fellowships that would have positive impacts on our graduate programs. CSU could also elect to direct internal and philanthropic support toward diversity, equity, and inclusion recruiting and retention goals, furthering campus-wide initiatives in these areas.

**Minimum stipends.** CSU minimum stipends are within the average range of peers but result in an effective income below the level of reasonable compensation due to high fees and cost of living (Appendix C). The minimum stipend is also below the financial standard for adult self-sufficiency in our area. However, many units have adjusted their stipend offers to remain competitive and in consideration of student needs.

*Options:*

1. The minimum stipend for all graduate assistants (currently \$1690/month) is adjusted to \$2035/month to match the effective income of peers or \$2138/month to match the effective income of aspirational peers. This adjustment also brings the minimum stipend up to the \$2094/month financial standard for self-sufficiency in our area.
2. The minimum stipend continues to be adjusted annually to reflect cost of living increases.
3. Encourage departments and programs to offer funding to students at levels that are above minimums and competitive with peer institutions.

*Implications:*

1. The financial implications of an adjustment of minimum stipends across campus for all GA types suggest that a phase-in may be required.
2. Depending on how the adjustments are implemented, disparities in resource distribution across campus may occur for units who have already internally adjusted stipends to remain competitive.
3. GRAs may require stipend enhancement support until new projects are funded at the new levels.





4. Higher minimum stipends will require proportionally higher cost of living increases that may erode the numbers of department-funded assistantships over time if additional resources are not provided to accommodate the adjustments.
5. Higher minimum stipends will increase the financial burden on faculty who fund GRAs. Some form of amelioration is needed or higher minimum stipends will push faculty even further toward choosing to fund post-doctorates over GRAs.
6. Higher minimum stipends may reduce significant disparities in GA stipends (Appendix E) that are perceived as unequitable by graduate students.

**Return of Tuition Funds to Faculty.** CSU should implement incentives to prioritize GRA appointments over postdoctoral and other researcher appointments. These same options should also incentivize securing external funding for GRAs.

*Options:*

1. Return of tuition dollars paid for GRAs on external grants to a centralized department or college account, from which funds would be distributed to PIs as GRA stipend funds to support PhD students whose grant funding has ended.

*Implications:*

1. Tuition return would financially favor GRAs over postdoctoral researchers.
2. Tuition return would provide needed bridge funding for GRAs and reduce risk to faculty.
3. Students on GTA assignments who have completed the total required credits for their degrees do not need the full 9-credits of tuition benefit. Assuming these GTAs enroll in 5 credits to receive the healthcare contribution, the tuition benefit differential (9 credits vs 5 credits) would result in cost-savings to Central.

**Summer support.** Summer funding for 9-month GAs is a special category of continuous support that has a high return on investment and is a high priority from the Graduate Student Council (Appendix B). Since students are neither taking nor teaching classes during the summer, if they receive adequate support, they are able to commit full time to their research rather than seeking full time or part time summer employment, reducing overall time to degree. Summer research is also a key component of community building among graduate students who are able to remain fully engaged in their research groups and with the larger research community at CSU. The bulk of GA's on 9-month appointments are GTA's and GSA's, whereas the majority of GRA's are on 12-month appointments.

*Options:*

1. Consider summer support programs of all types, including those that might be offered as incentives (matching support) for partial support from other sources.

*Implications:*

1. Summer support is generally less costly than academic year support (3 months of stipend, with no tuition or fees), making the amount easier to raise via internal mechanisms, applications for small grants, or philanthropy.
2. By encouraging applications for external summer support, or by matching funding provided by external grants or internal programs, CSU can incentivize grantsmanship and also reduce time to degree completion.
3. Providing summer support to GRAs is financially favorable to GRAs compared to post-doctorates.



#### IV. Recommended Scenarios

##### Stopgap

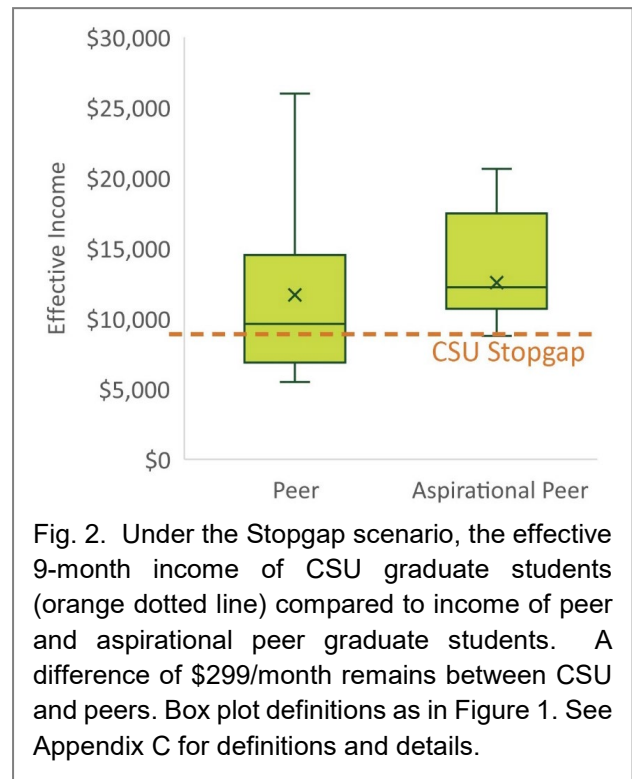
*Reasoning:* This scenario partially addresses pressing needs of graduate students. It provides supplemental funding to Fulbright and Foundation awards in support of the highest achieving students. It provides fee relief for graduate students to improve their effective income, but will not raise the minimum *effective* income to the level of peer institutions or financial self-sufficiency – a gap of \$299/month remains (Fig. 2). This scenario includes up to five credits of GRA tuition return to departments or colleges to make supporting a GRA more financially favorable relative to the cost of supporting a post-doctorate, and simultaneously to reduce the financial *risk* differential by providing a financial backstop for faculty funding GRAs. The cost of GRA tuition return can be partially offset by GTA tuition benefit savings. Five credits is a common load for advanced graduate students as it allows them to keep their healthcare contribution.

This scenario also invests in philanthropy to provide future support for fellowships and to leverage Graduate School efforts with the university and colleges. A recent Council of Graduate Schools workshop on philanthropy<sup>3</sup> suggested that graduate schools with successful philanthropy programs, including raising of fellowship funds, use a 50% position to work with development. Return on investment in the position was 5-10 years with continued growth afterwards, and programs that were able to invest in a philanthropy position all were successful.

- Fulbright and Foundation supplemental funding: \$0.6M
- Full fees covered: \$4.0M
- Up to 5 credits of GRA tuition return: \$1.4M
- GTA/GSA tuition benefit savings to Central: (\$1.1M)
- Philanthropy efforts for University fellowships: \$40K
- TOTAL ANNUALLY: \$5M

##### Remedial (parity with peers)

*Reasoning:* This scenario builds on the Stopgap scenario and brings graduate student effective income to the level of peer institutions and



<sup>3</sup> Marshall, J.E. (CalState-Fresno), Murthy, P. (Mich Tech), and Tedesco, L. (Emory). (2021, July). Fundraising in a Time of Pandemic. Hot Topic Session at the Council of Graduate Schools Virtual Summer Workshop.





financial self-sufficiency through fee relief and increases to the minimum stipend. Increases to the minimum stipends for GRAs will need to be supplemented in the first three years until new grants can include the increased stipend rate. This scenario includes raising the minimum stipend, so it also increases GRA tuition return to maintain financially favoring GRAs compared to post-doctorates. This scenario also helps create parity between colleges with more GTAs and those with more GRAs by providing mechanisms to both increase GTA stipends and offset higher GRA expenses.

- Fulbright and Foundation supplemental funding: \$0.6M
- Full fees covered: \$4.0M
- Up to 9 credits of GRA tuition return \$5.9M
- GTA/GSA tuition benefit savings to Central: (\$1.1M)
- Philanthropy efforts for University fellowships \$40K
- Increase in minimum stipend that brings CSU 9-month effective income to the average effective income of **peer** institutions and provides financial self-sufficiency: \$4.8M plus \$1.4M one-time costs spread across 3 years for stipend supplement to new minimum for GRAs, which reduces as new grants come on line. These amounts include the increase in cost of living raises due to higher minimum stipends.
- TOTAL ANNUALLY: \$14.3M plus \$1.4M one-time costs spread across 3 years

#### Competitive (parity with aspirational peers)

*Reasoning:* This scenario builds on the Remedial scenario to create competitive GA compensation packages to improve recruitment of high quality applicants.

- Fulbright and Foundation supplemental funding: \$0.6M
- Full fees covered: \$4.0M
- Up to 9 credits of GRA tuition return: \$5.9M
- GTA/GSA tuition benefit savings to Central: (\$1.1M)
- Philanthropy efforts for University fellowships: \$40K
- Increase in minimum stipend that brings CSU 9-month effective income to the average effective income of **aspirational peer** institutions: \$5.7M plus \$2M one-time costs spread across 3 years for stipend supplements to new minimum for GRAs, which reduces as new grants come on line. These amounts include the increase in cost of living raises due to higher minimum stipends.
- TOTAL ANNUALLY: \$15.2M plus \$2M one-time costs spread across 3 years

#### Aspirational

*Reasoning:* This scenario builds on the Competitive scenario to create even more attractive GA compensation packages to improve recruitment. It is also likely to decrease time to completion by providing support for the highly productive summer period.

- Fulbright and Foundation supplemental funding: \$0.6M
- Full fees covered: \$4.0M
- Up to 9 credits of GRA tuition return: \$5.9M
- GTA/GSA tuition benefit savings to Central: (\$1.1M)
- Philanthropy efforts for University fellowships: \$40K



- Increase in minimum stipend that brings CSU 9-month effective income to the average effective income of **aspirational peer** institutions: \$5.7M plus \$2M one-time costs spread across 3 years for stipend supplements to new minimum for GRAs, which reduces as new grants come on line. These amounts include the increase in cost of living raises due to higher minimum stipends.
- Summer salary to provide 12-month incomes to 9-month GA's: \$9.9M
- TOTAL ANNUALLY: \$25M plus \$2M one-time costs spread across 3 years

## V. Budget Planning

Employment of the recommended strategies will require significant infusion of new base funding, achievable with a multi-year, phased approach. For example, over an 8-year period, the investments in Table 1 would reach strategic graduate student support levels. The phased approach adds an additional cost of \$5.2M to the estimates presented in Section IV due to cost-of-living increases during the period before the scenario is implemented.

Table 1. Multi-year, phased budget model\*

	FY22	FY23	FY24	FY25	FY26	FY27	FY28	FY29
Stopgap	3M	2M						
Remedial			3.9M	4M	4.1M			
Competitive					2.1M			
Aspirational						4.3M	4.5M	4.7M
One-time Cost	0	0	0.6M	0.6M	1.4M	0	0	0
Incremental Base	3M	2M	3.4M	3.4M	4.9M	4.3M	4.5M	4.7M
Cumulative Base	3M	5M	8.4M	11.8M	16.7M	21M	25.5M	30.2M

\*The financial model used in Table 1 assumes a flat graduate student population as enrollment has varied by less than 8% over the last five years and is highly impacted by difficult to predict national economic factors. The financial model also assumes no changes to current tuition and fee costs as these costs do not change in a regular way. The financial model does include a 4% cost-of-living increase to stipends each year since 2020 when data for the model were collected as this is the current rate of increase to stipends and is unlikely to change.



## **Appendix A: OVPR Support Letter**

February 24, 2021

Office of the Vice President for Research  
203 Administration Building  
Fort Collins, Colorado 80523-2001  
Phone: (970) 491-7194  
FAX: (970) 491-5541  
[research.colostate.edu](http://research.colostate.edu)

Office of the President  
102 Administration Building  
0100 Campus Delivery  
Fort Collins, CO 80523-0100

Dear President McConnell:

Graduate students play a fundamental role in the success of the research and scholarly enterprise at Colorado State University. We recognize that graduate students are an important force propelling the research engine of CSU, and hence directly impact research productivity and expenditures in a significant way. Hence, strong graduate programs are critical to the advancement of CSU's mission, stature, and success as a Carnegie Tier 1 Research University.

My office has serious interest in growing our already excellent research and scholarly enterprise to the benefit of the university. Such growth requires increased recruitment of highly qualified Ph.D. and M.F.A. students and their retention. Timely completion of research and artistic deliverables coincides with decreased time to degree for Ph.D. and M.F.A. students. Hence, efforts to increase recruitment and retention and to decrease time to degree naturally align with the mission of the Vice-president for Research Office.

For these reasons, I strongly support the recommendations found in the Graduate Assistantship Compensation Proposal contributed by the Graduate School. Improved graduate assistantship compensation will reduce barriers to application, allowing for growth of the graduate student population. It will also make CSU more competitive for the best applicants. Finally, it will reduce financial stress for graduate students and support focused time for research, will improve research productivity while reducing time to degree completion.

Sincerely,

Dr. Alan S. Rudolph  
Vice President for Research



## **Appendix B: Graduate Student Council Support Letter**

Graduate student stipends are a core component of one's experience during graduate school. The compensation that a student receives for their work dictates where they can live, their mode of transportation, how quickly they pay off student loans, whether they can avoid debt, and their ability to take a vacation or visit loved ones. Stipends directly reflect and impact their quality of life.

Concurrently, graduate students are themselves a core component of Colorado State University. Their work brings in hundreds of millions in research expenditures. They assist with teaching and often directly teach the undergraduates that the university serves to instruct. CSU has a fantastic body of teaching assistants and research assistants who are engaged and productive. They travel, present research, and directly represent the Colorado State University name to the world. Graduate students manage these achievements despite financial struggle. Many cannot make ends meet and fall short of satisfying their basic needs. Ultimately and unfortunately, the level of compensation that CSU graduate students receive falls short of accurately reflecting their contribution to CSU's commitment to excellence.

For these reasons, the Graduate Student Council is stating emphatic and overwhelming support for the Graduate Assistant Stipend Report from the Graduate School. The Council feels that the report outlines a number of measures addressing graduate student's priorities. In particular, student fees are a common touch point of stress. Fees at CSU are high compared to our peer and aspirational institutes, and the frontloaded cost is often prohibitive for the many graduate students who live from paycheck to paycheck. Covering these fees as an additional compensation would solve this issue. Students who do not receive summer pay are also a high priority for the council, as these students often must find secondary jobs unrelated to their program, disrupting their ability to effectively complete their degree. The Council wishes to make clear their support for the "Aspirational" plan. The aspirational level scenario emphasizes what most within the university system feel and know – if CSU wishes to remain competitive as an R1 research institution, then graduate student stipends need to increase.

Improvements to graduate student compensation will directly benefit the University in many ways. Alleviation of financial stress will undoubtedly boost productivity, improve mental health, and lead to fewer program incompletions and reduce overall time-to-graduation. However, all of this is secondary to a broader truth. Graduate students embarked on a journey of self-betterment. They are future and current leaders who will use their education to improve our society. Ensuring they receive adequate compensation for their efforts is simply the right thing to do.

Sincerely,

Co-Presidents Matthew Saxton and Lindsay Winkenbach  
Graduate Student Council



## Appendix C: Compensation Package and Cost of Living Comparison to Peers and Aspirational Peers

Table C1. Compensation Package and Cost of Living Determinants for CSU, Peers, and Aspirational Peers. Methodology for income calculations from Card et al. 2020<sup>4</sup>.

Institution	Minimum stipend per month	General fees per semester	Housing per month <sup>C</sup>	State Income Tax	Standardized Cost of Living <sup>D</sup>	Raw Income 9-month <sup>E</sup>	Effective Income 9-month <sup>F</sup>
<b>CSU</b>	\$1690	\$880	\$625	4.6%	1.01	\$7,122	\$7,032
<b>Peer Institutions<sup>A</sup></b>							
Iowa State University	\$2092	\$220	\$450	5.6%	0.91	\$13,278	\$14,540
Kansas State University	\$2889	\$236	\$485	5.3%	0.91	\$19,798	\$21,680
Michigan State University	\$1520	\$22	\$455	4.3%	0.93	\$8,961	\$9,637
North Carolina State University	\$2050	\$430	\$600	4.8%	0.93	\$11,314	\$12,168
Oregon State University	\$1980	\$629	\$608	9.0%	0.92	\$9,487	\$10,389
Purdue University	\$1287	\$392	\$436	4.3%	0.93	\$6,376	\$6,857
University of California, Davis	\$4596	\$718	\$755	6.0%	1.18	\$30,651	\$26,001
University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign	\$1111	\$298	\$431	4.9%	0.91	\$5,029	\$5,507
University of Tennessee	\$1333	\$639	\$458	0.0%	0.92	\$6,597	\$7,095
Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University	\$1523	\$539	\$497	5.8%	0.92	\$7,369	\$7,925
Washington State University	\$1253	\$513	\$440	0.0%	0.91	\$6,291	\$6,889

<sup>4</sup> Card, D.R., Sussman, H.S., and Raghavendra, A. 2020. The financial dilemma of students pursuing an atmospheric science graduate degree in the United States. Bulletin of the American Meteorological Society 101: E1524-E1536.



Aspirational Peers <sup>B</sup>							
University of Colorado	\$2531	\$764	\$858	4.6%	1.10	\$12,474	\$11,383
Cornell University	\$3115	\$43	\$586	6.2%	1.10	\$20,934	\$19,103
Ohio State University	\$1920	\$174	\$496	3.3%	1.01	\$11,898	\$11,747
Pennsylvania State University	\$2079	\$265	\$477	3.1%	1.01	\$13,314	\$13,145
Rutgers University	\$2943	\$217	\$885	3.5%	1.01	\$17,161	\$16,944
University of Arizona	\$3000	\$457	\$475	3.34%	1.01	\$20,909	\$20,644
University of Florida	\$1777	\$0	\$485	0.0%	0.91	\$11,628	\$12,733
University of Maryland	\$989	\$418	\$875	4.8%	1.26	(\$232)	(\$184)
University of Minnesota	\$2177	\$454	\$697	6.8%	1.26	\$11,080	\$8780
University of Missouri	\$1821	\$551	\$447	5.4%	0.91	\$10,379	\$11,365

<sup>A</sup>Institutions from CSU Board of Governor's peer list with all required data available

<sup>B</sup>Public, land grant institutions; member of the Association of American Universities, all required data available

<sup>C</sup>Half of a two-bedroom rental in the same county as the institution from the Fair Market Rent data by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development

<sup>D</sup>M&IE rate standardized by average M&IE rate. M&IE Rates for the same city as the institution from the U.S. General Services Administration. (M&IE = Meals and Incidental Expenses)

<sup>E</sup>Stipend\*9-(Fees\*2+Housing\*9+Stipend\*Tax\*9)

<sup>F</sup>Raw income/Standardized cost of living

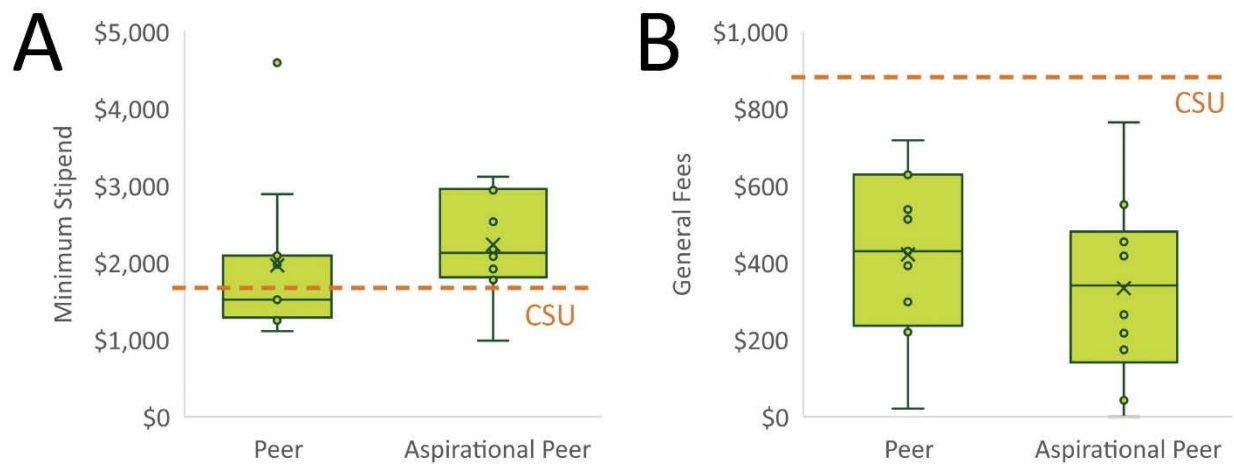


Figure C1. Comparison of current (A) Minimum stipend and (B) General Fees among CSU, peer institutions, and aspirational peer institutions. Box plot definitions as in Figure 1. Definitions of peer and aspirational peer institutions in Table C1 footnotes.





## **Appendix D: Description of committee formation and process**

This report was prepared by a committee with representation from the Graduate School: Mary Stromberger, Dean; Colleen Webb, Associate Dean; Dustin Grantham, Financial Operations Coordinator and representative associate deans/directors from potentially highly-impacted units: Michael Carolan, Associate Dean for Research and Faculty Affairs, College of Liberal Arts; Sonia Kreidenweis, Research Associate Dean, Walter Scott, Jr. College of Engineering; Simon Tavener, Executive Associate Dean for Academics, College of Natural Sciences; Stu Tobet, Director, School of Biomedical Engineering.

Once a full draft report was prepared, the committee sought and incorporated feedback from impacted stakeholders including: Graduate Student Council; Graduate Education Council; Council of Research Associate Deans, including Vice President for Research Alan Rudolph; Provost and Council of Deans; Committee on Scholarship, Research, and Graduate Education (CoSRGE, a subcommittee of Faculty Council); and the Office of Diversity.

The committee was formed in September 2020 and a report outline was completed. The committee completed the full draft report in October 2020. During November and December 2020 and January 2021, the report was shared with stakeholders and input was gathered. Input was incorporated, and the report was finalized in February 2021.



## **Appendix E: 2020 Council of Research Associate Deans Stipend Report**

### **Analysis of Graduate Assistant Stipends Colleen T. Webb, Associate Dean, Graduate School October 18, 2019**

#### **Purpose**

The intent of this analysis is to better understand the level of support to Graduate Assistants (GAs) via stipends at Colorado State University. Appropriate benchmarks for stipends may include the University of Colorado, Boulder due to close proximity and similar cost of living and the “gold-standard” National Science Foundation Graduate Research Fellowship Program award. The average stipend at CU-Boulder is ~\$2500/month or \$30,000 annually (CUGS and UGGS 2019). The NSF GRFP stipend is \$2833/month or \$34,000 annually. Note that the Federal Poverty Level for a family of three in Colorado is \$1777/month or \$21,324 annually. The CSU minimum stipend is above the poverty level for a family of one (\$1,040/month) or two (\$1409/month), but below the poverty level for a family of three and a single person would still qualify for multiple state aid programs.

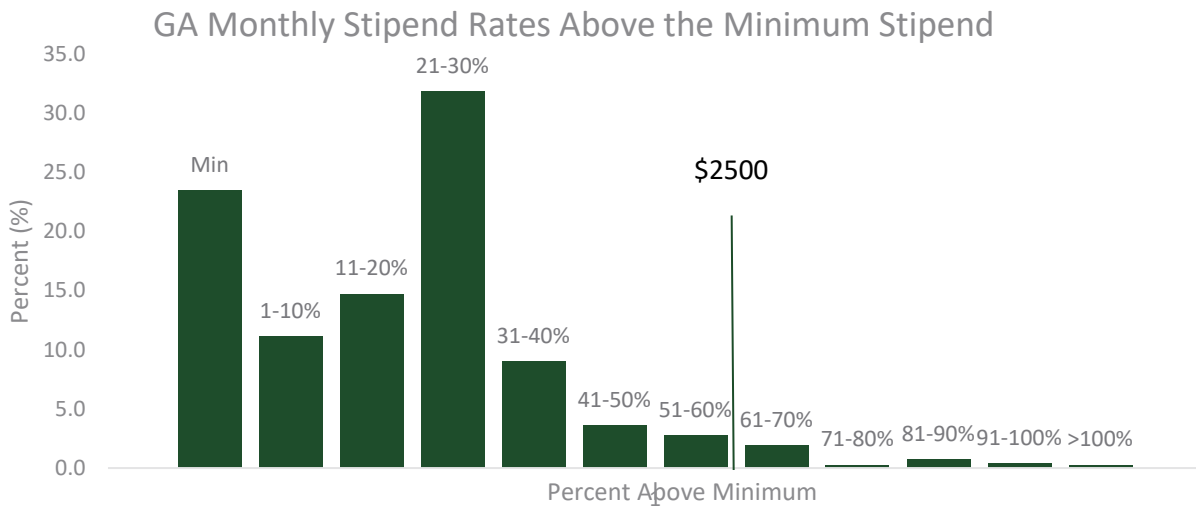
#### **Underlying Data**

Data included in this analysis consist of Fall 2018 GA stipend values across all individuals employed as any type of GA at that time. Graduate Assistants include Graduate Research Assistants (GRA), Graduate Teaching Assistants (GTA), and Graduate Special Assistants (GSA).

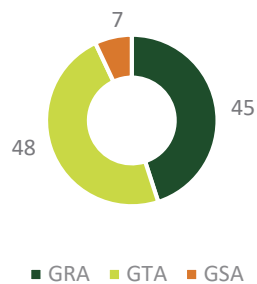


### University Level (1883 GAs)

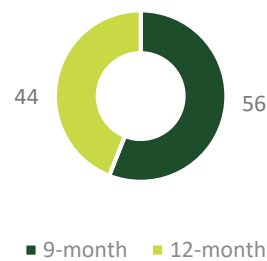
Minimum Stipend	
GRA	\$1624
GTA	\$1624
GSA	\$1624
Median Stipend	
GRA	\$2027
GTA	\$1925
GSA	\$1624
Maximum Stipend	
GRA	\$3828
GTA	\$3746
GSA	\$2125
Amount Needed to Bring Minimum Stipend to \$2500/month	
GRA	\$398,148/month
GTA	\$556,174/month
GSA	\$113,930/month



Percent GA Type



Percent Appointment Length





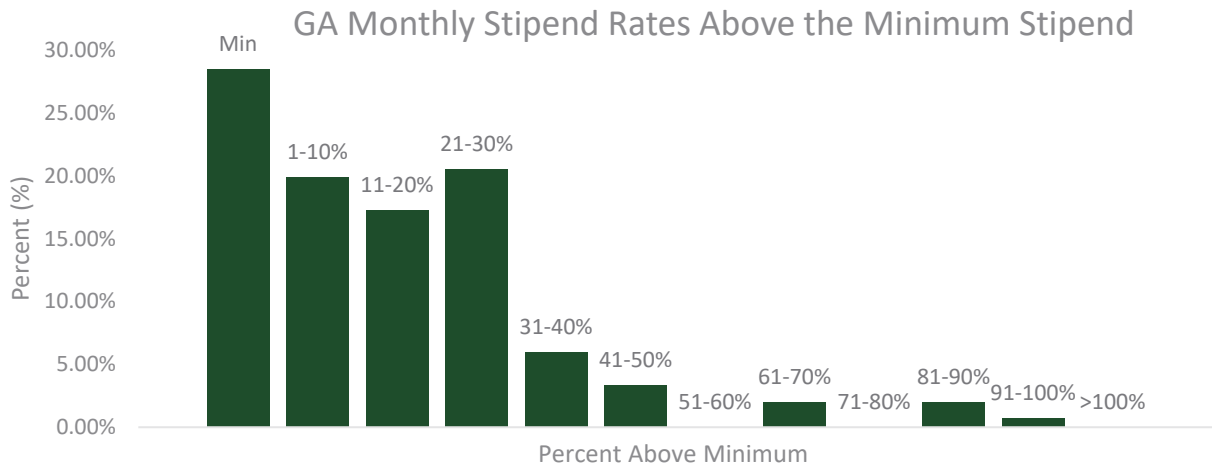
	Overall	CoAg	CoB	CoE	HHS	CLA	CNS	CVMBS	WCNR	Other
<b>Master's Stipends</b>										
Minimum	1624	1624	1624	1624	1624	1624	1742	1624	1624	1624
Median	1725	1624	1624	1800	1624	1624	1959	2027	1784	1624
Maximum	3181	3181	1624	2667	2236	2222	3130	2733	3135	2981
Count	862	72	59	136	76	205	164	14	72	63
<b>Doctorate Stipends</b>										
Minimum	1624	1624	N/A	1624	1624	1926	1624	1624	1624	1624
Median	2030	1900	N/A	2071	1850	2173	2030	2027	2000	2000
Maximum	2828	3000	N/A	3737	2236	2173	3167	3746	3828	2249
Count	994	77	0	212	47	63	438	72	67	18

\*Note that GRAs are the highest paid GA. 55% of PhDs are GRAs; 33% of Master's are GRAs

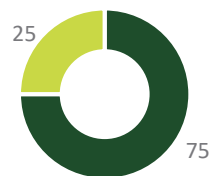


### College of Agricultural Sciences (150 GAs)

Minimum Stipend	
GRA	\$1624
GTA	\$1624
GSA	N/A
Median Stipend	
GRA	\$1800
GTA	\$1724
GSA	N/A
Maximum Stipend	
GRA	\$3181
GTA	\$2153
GSA	N/A
Amount Needed to Bring Minimum Stipend to \$2500/month	
GRA	\$70,029/month
GTA	\$26,008/month
GSA	N/A



Percent GA Type



■ GRA ■ GTA ■ GSA

Percent Appointment Length

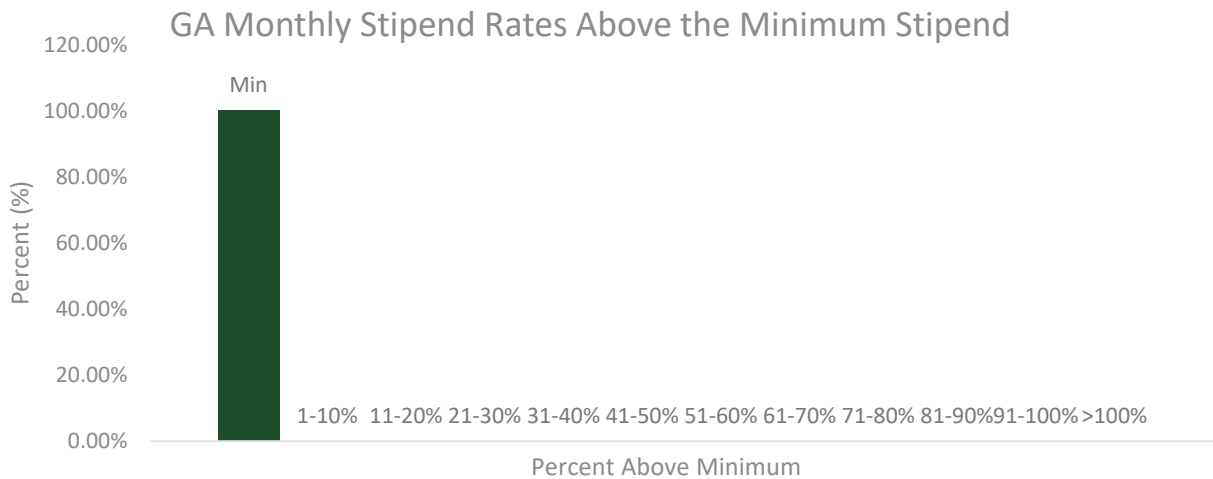


■ 9-month ■ 12-month

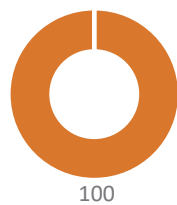


## College of Business (60 GAs)

Minimum Stipend	
GRA	N/A
GTA	N/A
GSA	\$1624
Median Stipend	
GRA	N/A
GTA	N/A
GSA	\$1624
Maximum Stipend	
GRA	N/A
GTA	N/A
GSA	\$1624
Amount Needed to Bring Minimum Stipend to \$2500/month	
GRA	N/A
GTA	N/A
GSA	\$52,560/month



Percent GA Type



■ GRA ■ GTA ■ GSA

Percent Appointment Length



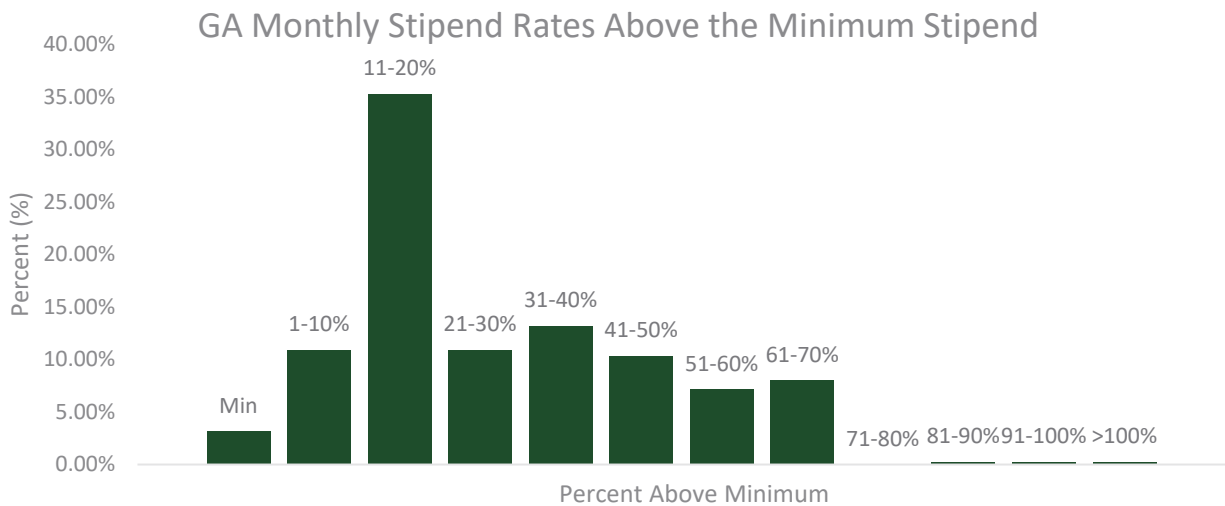
■ 9-month ■ 12-month



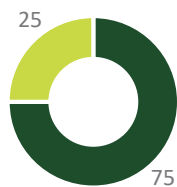


**Walter Scott, Jr. College of Engineering (348 GAs)**

Minimum Stipend	
GRA	\$1624
GTA	\$1625
GSA	N/A
Median Stipend	
GRA	\$2000
GTA	\$1850
GSA	N/A
Maximum Stipend	
GRA	\$3737
GTA	\$2605
GSA	N/A
Amount Needed to Bring Minimum Stipend to \$2500/month	
GRA	\$109,598/month
GTA	\$48,645/month
GSA	N/A

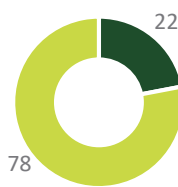


Percent GA Type



■ GRA ■ GTA ■ GSA

Percent Appointment Length

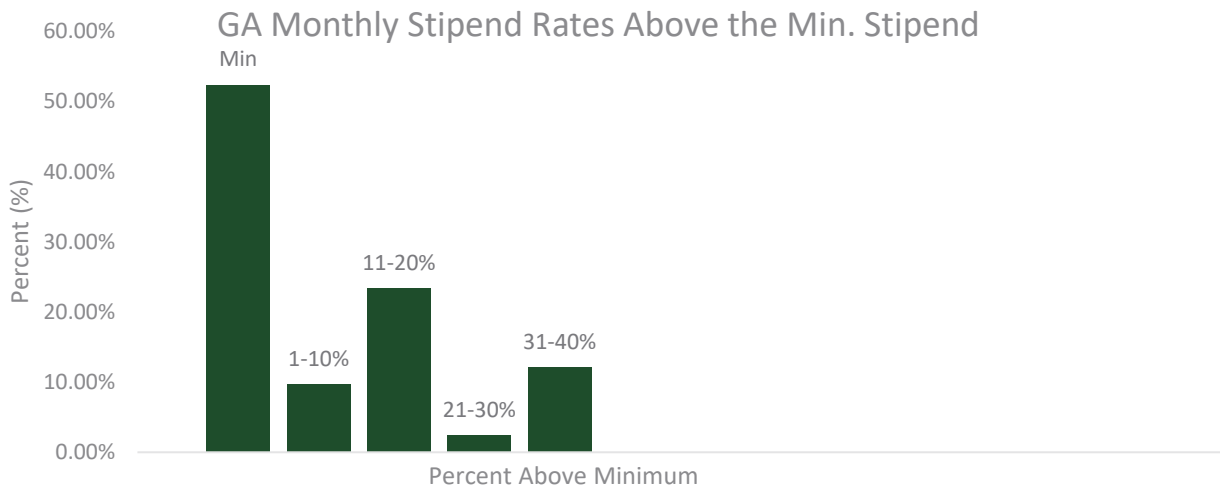


■ 9-month ■ 12-month

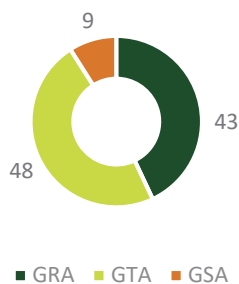


### College of Health and Human Services (124 GAs)

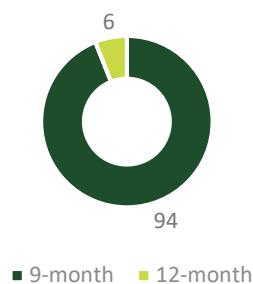
Minimum Stipend	
GRA	\$1624
GTA	\$1624
GSA	\$1624
Median Stipend	
GRA	\$1650
GTA	\$1624
GSA	\$1683
Maximum Stipend	
GRA	\$2236
GTA	\$2236
GSA	\$1683
Amount Needed to Bring Minimum Stipend to \$2500/month	
GRA	\$37,807/month
GTA	\$45,028/month
GSA	\$8,405/month



Percent GA Type



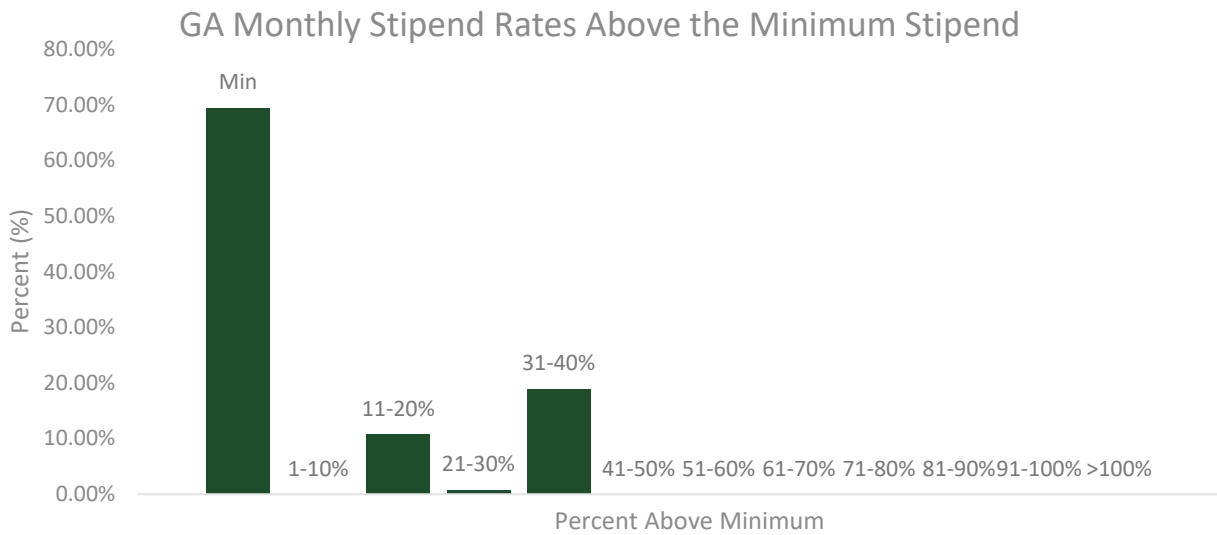
Percent Appointment Length



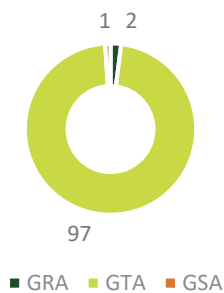


### College of Liberal Arts (269 GAs)

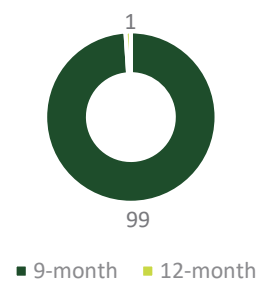
Minimum Stipend	
GRA	\$1926
GTA	\$1624
GSA	\$1624
Median Stipend	
GRA	\$2106
GTA	\$1624
GSA	\$1624
Maximum Stipend	
GRA	\$2173
GTA	\$2222
GSA	\$1624
Amount Needed to Bring Minimum Stipend to \$2500/month	
GRA	\$2,508/month
GTA	\$458,369/month
GSA	\$1,752/month



Percent GA Type



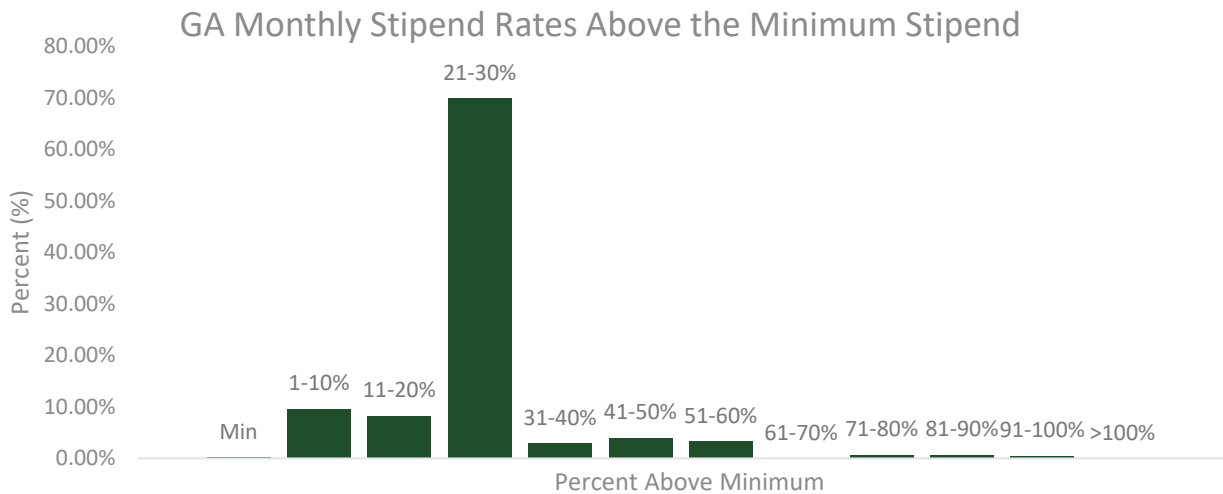
Percent Appointment Length



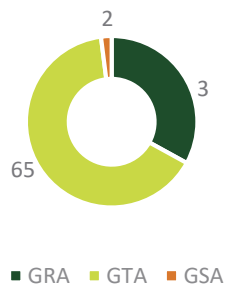


### College of Natural Sciences (605 GAs)

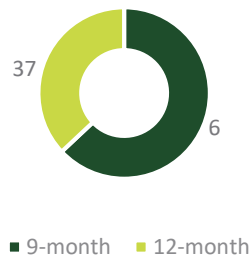
Minimum Stipend	
GRA	\$1624
GTA	\$1742
GSA	\$1742
Median Stipend	
GRA	\$2030
GTA	\$2030
GSA	\$1742
Maximum Stipend	
GRA	\$3130
GTA	\$3167
GSA	\$2025
Amount Needed to Bring Minimum Stipend to \$2500/month	
GRA	\$80,738/month
GTA	\$192,580/month
GSA	\$7,872/month



Percent GA Type



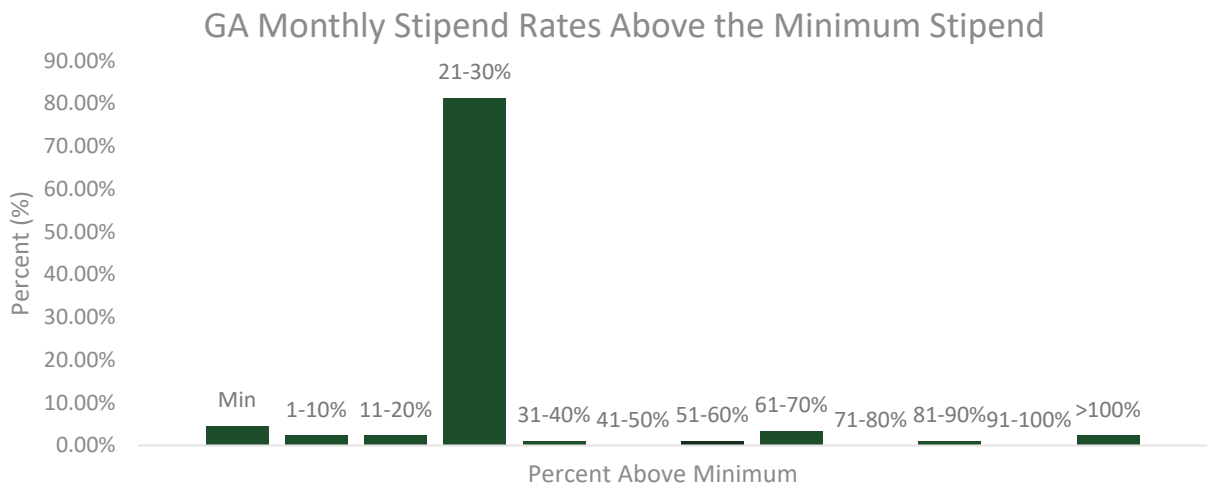
Percent Appointment Length



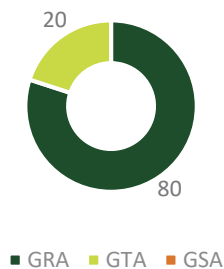


## College of Veterinary Medicine & Biomedical Sciences (86 GAs)

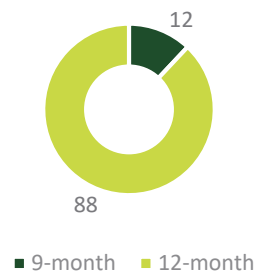
Minimum Stipend	
GRA	\$1624
GTA	\$1624
GSA	N/A
Median Stipend	
GRA	\$2027
GTA	\$2027
GSA	N/A
Maximum Stipend	
GRA	\$3498
GTA	\$3746
GSA	N/A
Amount Needed to Bring Minimum Stipend to \$2500/month	
GRA	\$32,652/month
GTA	\$7,025/month
GSA	N/A



Percent GA Type



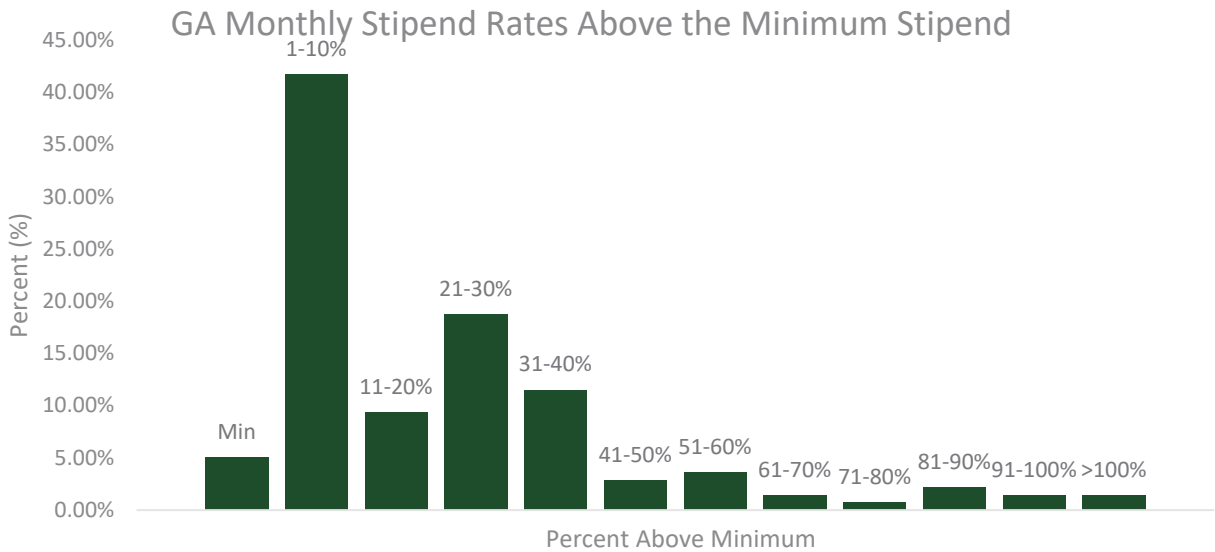
Percent Appointment Length



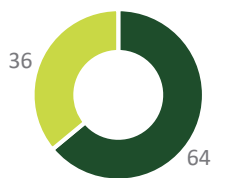


## Warner College of Natural Resources (139 GAs)

Minimum Stipend	
GRA	\$1624
GTA	\$1750
GSA	N/A
Median Stipend	
GRA	\$2000
GTA	\$1750
GSA	N/A
Maximum Stipend	
GRA	\$3828
GTA	\$1750
GSA	N/A
Amount Needed to Bring Minimum Stipend to \$2500/month	
GRA	\$38,541/month
GTA	\$87,500/month
GSA	N/A

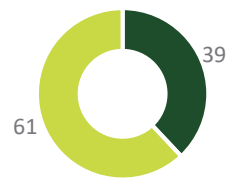


Percent GA Type



■ GRA ■ GTA ■ GSA

Percent Appointment Length



■ 9-month ■ 12-month

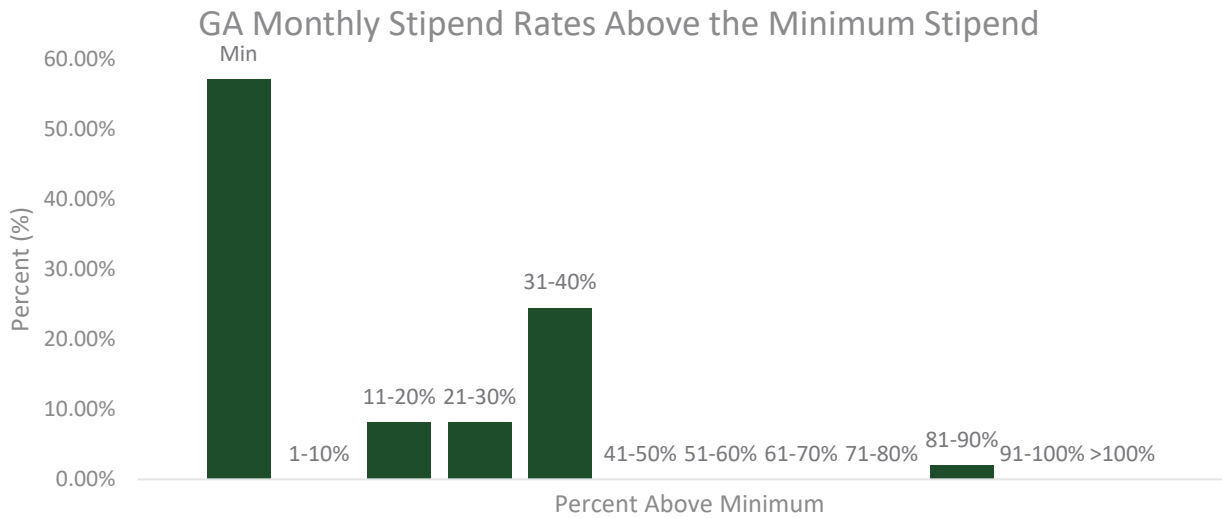




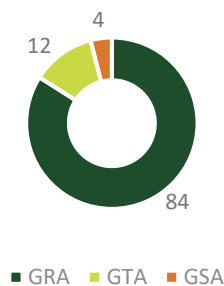
### Other-Academic (49 GAs)

This category includes Natural Resource Ecology Laboratory, Cooperative Fish and Wildlife Research Unit, Colorado Natural Heritage Program, Graduate Program in Public Health, and Center for Environmental Medicine.

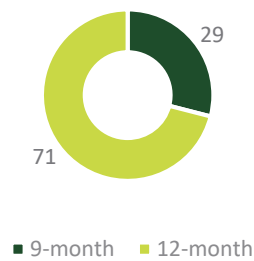
Minimum Stipend	
GRA	\$1624
GTA	\$1624
GSA	\$1624
Median Stipend	
GRA	\$2027
GTA	\$1624
GSA	\$1624
Maximum Stipend	
GRA	\$2981
GTA	\$1624
GSA	\$1624
Amount Needed to Bring Minimum Stipend to \$2500/month	
GRA	\$25,022/month
GTA	\$5,256/month
GSA	\$1752/month



#### Percent GA Type



#### Percent Appointment Length

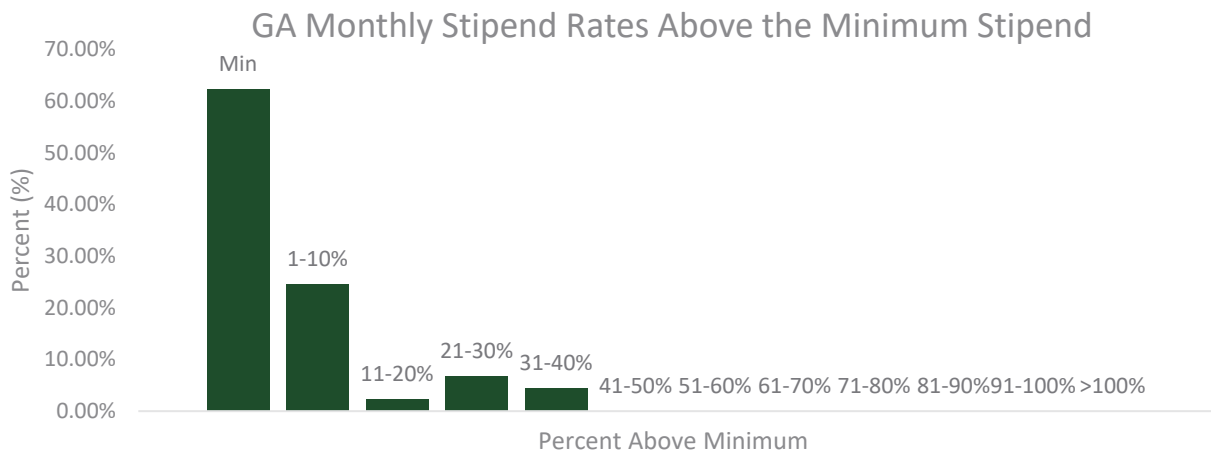




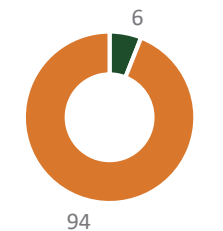
### Other – Service (53 GAs)

This category includes Academic Computing and Networking Service, Continuing Education, Residence Life, Apartment Life, Lory Student Center, Adult Learners and Veterans Services, Off-campus Life, Student Leadership, VP for Student Affairs, International Programs, INTO, Student Resolution Center.

Minimum Stipend	
GRA	\$1900
GTA	N/A
GSA	\$1624
Median Stipend	
GRA	\$2000
GTA	N/A
GSA	\$1624
Maximum Stipend	
GRA	\$2000
GTA	N/A
GSA	\$2125
Amount Needed to Bring Minimum Stipend to \$2500/month	
GRA	\$1,600/month
GTA	N/A
GSA	\$41,589/month

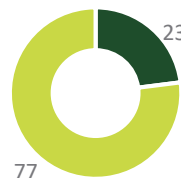


Percent GA Type



■ GRA ■ GTA ■ GSA

Percent Appointment Length



■ 9-month ■ 12-month



## Stipends at Peer Institutions

All data from 2017 or later

Institution	Minimum Stipend	Set Stipend	Example Stipends
Iowa State University	\$2042		
Kansas State University		GTA - \$1735 GRA - \$2032	
Michigan State University		\$1588-\$2006	
North Carolina State University			\$580-\$4800 Min set by min wage
Oklahoma State University	\$1690		
Oregon State University		\$1922	
Purdue University	\$1667		
Texas A&M University			\$2300-\$2500 STEM
University of California, Davis		\$3457	
University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign	\$1817		
University of Tennessee		\$1067-\$1600	
Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University		\$1517-\$4233	
Washington State University			\$1704 Liberal Arts \$2206 STEM

## Process at University of Colorado, Boulder

**Participants:** The Graduate School, the United Government of Graduate Students, and the Office of Budget and Fiscal Planning

**Timeline:** From 2018-2019. Met 2 semesters to develop draft report followed by 60-day community comment period. Final report submitted to administration, and administration provided written response 30 days later.

**Prior Investment:** CU Boulder invested more than \$8 million from 2016-2018 in graduate student funding. Base stipends increased ~6% per year over this 4-year period.



- Increased base stipend rates to \$22,781.44 for 50% 9 month position (\$2531/month)
- Eliminated course and program fees
- Eliminated athletic fee
- Covered summer transit passes
- Increased health insurance subsidy to 91% of total cost
- Adjusted payment schedule for students so that first paycheck received end of August

#### **Identified Priorities for Future:**

- Reduce and/or remit mandatory student fees to alleviate grad students' financial burden
- Expand health care service to increase access and coverage and reduce the cost of health care services with emphasis on mental wellness
- Increase stipends to bridge any existing gap between cost of living and stipends

Additional priorities identified but outside of task force scope

- Parental leave
- Raising health insurance subsidy to 100%
- Affordable housing options
- Establishing/reinforcing workload norms

#### **Responses:**

- Community comments showed enthusiastic support for fee waiver recommendation
- Administration is prioritizing fee waivers and working towards this

#### **Sources:**

Final Report on Graduate Task Force on Stipends and Benefits August 28, 2019

[https://www.colorado.edu/graduateschool/sites/default/files/attached-files/graduate\\_task\\_force\\_report\\_final\\_8.28.2019\\_copy.pdf](https://www.colorado.edu/graduateschool/sites/default/files/attached-files/graduate_task_force_report_final_8.28.2019_copy.pdf)

Written response of Executive Vice Provost for Academic Resource Management

<https://www.colorado.edu/today/2019/09/17/executive-vice-provost-schmiesing-graduate-task-force-stipends-and-benefits-completes-its>