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Graduate Assistant Stipend Changes

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Senate Executive Committee Request Form

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SHORT TITLE

(Please provide a short descriptive title that would be suitable for inclusion in the Senate Agenda.)

Graduate Assistant Stipend Changes

SUBJECT OF DISCUSSION:

(Please state the nature of your request as concisely as possible.)

What is the rationale for moving Graduate Assistant stipend money to Graduate Studies from the departments responsible for the positions? Given the current university administration's claims that Georgia Southern is becoming more transparent, why were graduate assistant supervisors not notified prior to hiring GAs for fall of the impending change? Why has no one communicated these changes to anyone responsible for overseeing these GA positions, even now? What is the rationale for doing this while faculty were largely away from the institution and unable to respond to the change in a timely fashion prior to fall semester? This should have been announced/discussed in the spring in order for colleges and the library to make decisions about whether to continue employing GAs if it meant giving up \$7550 from their budgets, permanently. If intentions are good to simply centralize the funding disbursement, why is nothing in writing assuring GA supervisors that they are not going to permanently lose this sometimes significant portion of their labor force?

RATIONALE(s):

(Please explain why this issue is one of general concern for the Faculty Senate or for the University and not a matter concerning only an individual college or administrative area.)

The faculty are concerned about the lack of communication regarding significant changes to how Graduate Assistants are paid (where the money resides before payment). This was not explained to budget managers sufficiently that they knew what to tell GA supervisors. Some departments were previously able to decide on an annual basis whether to employ a graduate assistant with the budget line for GAs/SAs, or whether to divide the money up between more student assistants who typically work less hours and have less responsibility. This take over of significant portions of student labor funding makes it more difficult for faculty to manage their student labor, and there is great concern that Graduate Studies, now that they have everyone's GA money, will decide who gets to use the funds that were taken. Nothing has been provided to assure current supervisors that they will always have a Graduate Assistant, even though their funding seems to have been permanently taken over. In at least one instance, the department, which impacts all colleges, was double billed, when they paid the monthly stipend for the GA, then Graduate Studies took the whole semester's stipend from the account, without giving back the original amount paid to the student, even when this apparent error was pointed out. No justification for why Graduate Studies needed more than the money to cover the stipend for the student was provided.

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Note to faculty users: Double-check your data before submitting, because the data cannot be edited afterward

Approval

Response:

Approved

1/24/2020



SEC Response:

SEC approved this discussion item to be added to the Faculty Senate agenda on 02/05/2020.

2/5/2020



Senate Response:

Discussion: Lori Gwinett (LIB) explained that faculty are concerned about the ramifications of the lack of communication regarding the change in graduate funding. She noted that this summer, faculty noticed that graduate assistantships were being handled differently but were not informed why. Rather than relying on rumor, she sought clarity. The flexibility of what we can do with assistantship money is now limited, she explained. Carl Reiber (Provost) responded that GSU was one of the few institutions that allocated GA funding the way we did. The colleges divided up allotted money internally. End of year money varied from year to year and served as a second bucket of funding. This type of GA budgeting led to silo-ism; some departments were competing against others for the funding. Thus, all of the money was pulled to the graduate college to coordinate the assigning of GAs. This method also ensured that leftover money was used for GA funding. The change helped to support more graduate students. The end of the year money has diminished, and as much as possible, has been protected to prevent loss of graduate funding. Dr. Ashley Walker Colquitt (Dean, Graduate Studies) explained that with the new method of funding, the Graduate College knows what money is available and can move it to positions as needed. Her office communicated to each department. She apologizes if anyone was not given this information. Budget managers would have approved the movement of money to the Graduate College. She consults with deans before allocating money out. This new method affords more flexibility. Helen Bland (JPHCOPH) said it seems that budgeting for GAs has been cut in the 2020-2021 budget. Ashley Walker Colquitt responded that this is possible because we don't have the same amount of end-of-the-year funding. Carl Reiber (Provost) noted that permanent money has been maintained, but the special request money has been affected by budget cuts. The provost's office had extra money from vacant lines. These lines were cut to meet budget lines. Thus, that money is no longer available. He has tried to hold the Graduate College as harmless as possible during this budget cut. When enrollment flattens out, we will take chunks of money that colleges and departments consult on. That money will be apportioned to colleges for GAs.



President's Response:
