



May 8, 2023

Sent Via Email

Graduate Tuition Remission Committee

Wojtek Chodzko-Zajko, Graduate College, *Chair*

Mike Devocelle, Grainger College of Engineering

Wendy Heller, College of Liberal Arts and Sciences

Nichole Isaac, College of Agricultural, Consumer and Environmental Sciences

Harley Johnson, Grainger College of Engineering

Suzanne Rinehart, College of Applied Health Sciences

Karen Thomas, Sponsored Programs Administration

Alexis Thompson, Graduate College

Mike Wellens, College of Liberal Arts and Sciences

Alex Winter-Nelson, College of Agricultural, Consumer and Environmental Sciences

Shelly Benson, System Government Costing, *ex officio*

Jamie Hackett, Office of the Vice Chancellor for Academic Programs and Provost, *ex officio*

Melanie Loots, Office of the Vice Chancellor for Research and Innovation, *ex officio*

Catherine Ocen, Graduate College, *ex officio*

Sharee Robinson, Office of the Vice Chancellor for Research and Innovation, *ex officio*

Dear Colleagues,

While the University must remain competitive in the stipends we pay research assistants (RAs), expected increases to stipends will lead to concomitant increases in fringe benefits, tuition remission and F&A costs, all of which strain already limited grant budgets. The current OBFS policy for assessing tuition remission on sponsored projects, while relatively straightforward to administer, has the disadvantage of coupling tuition remission charges to the stipend. To address this situation, we invite you to serve as members of a committee to recommend appropriate and strategic changes in policy and processes to restructure our systems for graduate tuition remission recovery. Professor Wojtek Chodzko-Zajko, Dean of the Graduate College, has agreed to chair the committee.

We ask that you review the current policies and processes for recovering tuition remission from sponsored projects, examine alternatives, and recommend an improved and equitable process for charging tuition remission to sponsored projects that complies with federal accounting standards. Many of our peer institutions follow processes that decouple tuition charges from stipends. Please focus on the following tasks.

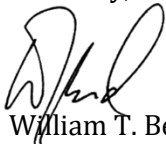
1. Determine the overall advisability and feasibility of reducing the amount of tuition remission charged to sponsored projects for graduate research assistants to accommodate likely future stipend increases in grant and contract budgets.
 - a. Assess the financial impact of potential reductions on the academic colleges and central campus.
 - b. Determine advisability. If advisable, please proceed with the charges below.

2. Recommend policy changes required at the system and campus level to permit 1) reductions in tuition remission assessed for research assistants funded on sponsored projects and 2) changes in the process for assessment.
3. Drawing on the expertise of the ex officio members, propose an improved business process to recover tuition remission for research assistants paid on sponsored funds.
 - a. The process should treat investigators and units across the campus fairly.
 - b. Consider the need to modify Banner processes or other IT systems.
 - c. Address the constraints presented by federal cost accounting requirements.
 - d. Address the need for an automated process.
 - e. Conform to established policies for granting tuition waivers.
 - f. A phased plan may be considered, in which an approach is deemed feasible for implementation in the short term, while the feasibility of other approaches for long term solutions and implementation are assessed.

An informal working group has examined the potential financial impact of increasing research assistant stipends, as well as the challenges presented by the current system of assessing tuition remission for RAs appointed on sponsored projects. Many of the staff who have participated in this effort are included in this committee as ex-officio members.

Given the concerns expressed by faculty regarding the high cost of supporting graduate students on sponsored funds, it is important that we proceed as expeditiously as possible. We would appreciate receiving your interim recommendation(s) by June 23, 2023, and final recommendations by August 1, 2023.

Sincerely,



William T. Bernhard

Interim Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs and Provost



Susan A. Martinis

Vice Chancellor for Research and Innovation